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TAYLOR WINS KIWI  
CRICKET'S TOP GONG

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY MAY 2, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



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# Diluted lockdown till May 17

## Curbs stay in Red zone, buses can ply in Green zones at 50% capacity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry extended a diluted lockdown for two more weeks from May 4 by allowing a series of relaxations and classifying the districts into three categories — Red, Orange and Green Zones — for this purpose. Except in 130 Red zone district, major shares of normal activities will resume with different sets of restriction in 80 per cent of the country comprising 284 orange zones districts and 319 green zones districts.

Public movement will not be allowed for non-essential activities in all zones from 7 pm to 7 am.

In green zones, all activities are permitted except the limited number of activities which are prohibited throughout the country, irrespective of the zone. However buses can operate with up to 50 per cent seating and depots can operate at 50 per cent capacity.

In Red Zones which are high risk areas or containment zones, private vehicles are permitted with two persons and driver for four wheelers. Two wheelers can zip around without a pillion rider. Liquor shops, malls and barber shops will remain shut in red zone. However, liquor shops and pan shops will be opened in green



A view of the localities in the vicinity of Jama Masjid during ongoing Covid-19 lockdown in Old Delhi on Friday

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zones with a caveat that not more than five persons will be present there at a time. Since Delhi and all other metropolitan cities are Red zones, the booze lovers will have to keep waiting for further relaxation.

Red and Orange Zones are known as Containment Zones, where local administration is asked to ensure the usage of Aarogya Setu App by all, including daily monitoring and surveillance of Covid-19 situations on regular basis. Hotels, Restaurants, Cinema Halls, gyms, etc. are not allowed in Containment Zones.

Private offices with 33 per cent attendance will be permitted to open in Red Zone, but public transport, including taxis and even auto-cycle rickshaws will not be allowed.

In Orange Zones, in addition to activities permitted in Red Zone, taxis and cab aggregators will be permitted with 1 driver and 1 passenger only. Inter-district movement of individuals and vehicles will be allowed for permitted activities only.

Four wheeler vehicles will have maximum two passengers besides the driver and pillion riding will be allowed on two-wheelers. In Orange Zones, buses are allowed with 50 per cent seating.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Metros brought to complete standstill

## India split into 3 zones: 130 dists in Red, 284 Orange, 319 in 'free' Green

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the total tally of coronavirus cases zoomed past 36,000 on Friday, the Centre split 733 districts across India into Red, Orange and Green zones, designating all metropolitan cities (Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad) into the "no activity" zone.

According to the list, there are 130 Red zone districts, where more stringent restrictions will be enforced post May 3. However, there will be partial easing in Orange zones (284 districts) and liberal easing in Green zones (319 districts). Current classification is



Policemen stand guard near barricades in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

based on the incidence of coronavirus cases, doubling rate, the extent of testing, and surveillance feedback.

In a letter to Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories, Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan gave details of the grading districts in three categories, Red, Orange and Green.

According to the letter, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar each have 5 districts in the Red zone, Delhi has 11 while Jammu & Kashmir 4. Jharkhand has 1, Karnataka 3, Kerala 2, Maharashtra 14, Odisha 3, Tamil Nadu 12, Uttar

Pradesh 19 and Bengal 10.

As per the letter a district will be considered under green zone if there are no confirmed cases so far or there is no reported case for the last 21 days in the district.

"All States are accordingly requested to delineate the containment zones and buffer zones in the identified red and orange zone districts and notify the same," she said.

All the six metros — Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad — have been classified as red zone by the order.

*Continued on Page 2*

# Special trains to take stranded back to home

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After repeated flip-flops on the issue of mode of transport for millions of migrant workers stranded across the country in the lockdown, the Centre on Friday allowed using of trains for ferrying them to their home States.

Addressing a Press conference, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Punya Salia Srivastava said stranded people such as migrant workers, tourists, pilgrims and students can now be transported using trains. "States and the Railway Board will make the necessary arrangements for the same," she said.

Only a day ago, the Centre said buses can be used to transport these workers. This was opposed by several States which demanded that special trains should be introduced to transport these migrant workers, claiming that it would be impossible to arrange tens of thousands of buses for this purpose.

Before that the Centre repeatedly opposed the demand to send them back home, saying it would lead to spread of coronavirus.

The Ministry of Railways announced to six "Shramik Special" trains — Lingampally to Hatia, Nasik to Lucknow, Aluva to Bhubaneswar, Nasik



Migrants onboard a special train for Bhubaneswar to reach their native places, amid ongoing Covid-19 lockdown, at Aluva Station in Kochi on Friday

PTI

to Bhopal, Jaipur to Patna and Kota to Hatia to move migrant workers, pilgrims, tourists, students and other persons stranded at different places from the Labour Day (May 1).

According to Railways, based on Home Ministry guidelines and as per the demands received from the various State Governments, Railways decided to run six special Shramik Special trains from Friday.

Many more such trains will be required in the coming days to transport these workers. Even if one train could accommodate 1,000 workers after maintaining social distancing, Bihar itself would require 20,000 such trips to complete the movement of workers.

*Continued on Page 2*

# 2,300 new cases in 12 hours on Friday

## Maha adds over 1K; Telangana joins the race

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On a day the Centre announced lockdown extension by two weeks, the country saw its biggest single day surge of 2,300 plus new cases in just 12 hours on Friday with Maharashtra alone logging 1,008 new cases, taking the tally of cases to 11,506.

While 106 patients were discharged on Friday upon recovery, 26 Covid-19 patients died, the State Health Department said. The death toll in the State thus reached 485 and number of discharged patients reached 1,879.

Maharashtra continued to be the most affected State in the country with a total number of positive coronavirus cases jumping to 11,506 while the death toll stood at 485. For the first time Telangana became the latest State to cross more than 1,000 confirmed cases to touch at 1,044.

In terms of the cases reported, Maharashtra was fol-

lowed by Gujarat at 4,721 cases with 236 deaths, Delhi at 3,738 cases and Madhya Pradesh at 2,719 cases and 137 deaths. Gujarat added 326 new cases, Delhi and MP 90 respectively.

The other States that have reported total cases in four digits were Rajasthan (2,642), Tamil Nadu (2,526) and Uttar Pradesh (2,328).

Tamil Nadu saw a major surge on Friday with day's cases soaring by 203 and Punjab added 105 cases to follow a worrying trend following several Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchal Nagar Sahib pilgrims testing positive again on Friday.

In West Bengal, the official death count is 33 while the Government has said 72 others who had coronavirus and died, passed away because of their co-morbidities.

Among other major States, Andhra Pradesh has reported 1,463 cases and 33 deaths, Bihar stood at 426 cases and two deaths, Haryana at 313 and three deaths, Jammu & Kashmir at 614 cases and eight deaths, Karnataka at 576 and 22 deaths and Kerala clocked 497 cases and four deaths.

*Continued on Page 2*

## PRESCRIPTION-PROSCRIPTION

### Prohibited in all zones

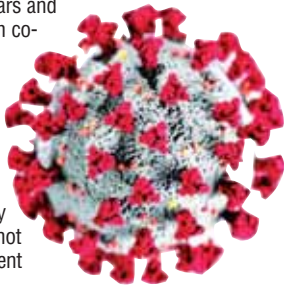
- Travel by air, rail, metro and inter-state movement by road prohibited in all zones
- Running of schools, colleges, and other educational and training and coaching institutions
- Hospitality services, including hotels and restaurants
- Places of large public gatherings such as cinema halls, malls, gymnasiums, sports complexes etc; social, political, cultural and other kinds of gatherings and religious places or places of worship for public
- Movement of individuals, for all non-essential activities shall remain strictly prohibited between 7pm and 7am
- People above 65 and below 10 years and pregnant women and persons with co-morbid issues are advised to stay home

### Permitted in all zones

- Out-Patient Departments (OPDs) and medical clinics shall be permitted to operate, with social distancing norms and other safety precautions. However, these will not be permitted within the containment zones
- All goods traffic is to be permitted and no state or Union Territory shall stop the movement of cargo for cross land-border trade under treaties with neighbouring countries

### In Red zones

- Movement of individuals and vehicles is allowed only for permitted activities, with a maximum of 2 persons (besides the driver) in four-wheeler vehicles, and with no pillion rider for two-wheelers
- Industrial establishments in urban areas, viz., Special Economic Zones (SEZs), Export Oriented Units (EOUs), industrial estates and industrial townships with access control have been permitted
- Private offices can operate with up to 33% strength as per requirement, with the remaining persons working from home. All Government offices shall function with senior officers of the level of Deputy Secretary and above at full strength, and the remaining staff attending up to 33% as per requirement
- Most of the commercial and private establishments have been allowed in the Red Zones. These include print and electronic media, IT and IT enabled services, data and call centres, cold storage and warehousing services, private security and facility management services, and services provided by self-employed persons, except for barbers, etc, as mentioned earlier



## High test rate 2,300/million in Delhi: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Against the national average of 654 coronavirus tests per million population as on May 1, Delhi is conducting about 2,300 tests.

Even as the national Capital has high number of Covid-19 patients, above 3,600, the high rate of testing every 10 lakh population can be one of the reasons for the high rate of coronavirus cases in Delhi, said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday.

"When we see this number, it seems that cases are rapidly increasing in Delhi. It is happening because we are conducting tests on a large scale in Delhi. We are conducting 2,300 tests per 1 million people in Delhi," said Kejriwal.

The CM also said that the Delhi Government will not stop clinical trials of plasma therapy to treat severely-ill Covid-19 patients as its initial results are good.

The announcement by the Delhi CM came days after the centre said that plasma therapy for treatment of coronavirus patients is at an experimental stage and it has the potential to cause life-threatening complications.

# Make-in-India goods to protect Covid fighters

## Desi firms to make PPE, ventilators, masks to cut down export dependence

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Make in India' will protect the frontline healthcare warriors from Covid-19 with the Government on Friday emphasising that the Indian firms will now take care of the country's need for most of the vital medical components like Personnel Protection Equipment (PPE), N-95/N99 masks and ventilators.

Claiming that the country can't be dependent on import of these items which are in high demand globally due to the Covid-19 outbreak, PD Vaghela, Chairman of the Empowered Group-3 of the Central Government said these medical equipment are being manufactured in the country itself to protect the healthcare workers as well as the patients from the deadly virus.

"Earlier, there was no



Health workers wear personnel protective equipment kit before their shift at a Covid-19 check area in Gauhati Medical College Hospital in Guwahati on Friday AP

domestic manufacturing of PPE in the country and almost all of them were imported. We now have 111 indigenous manufacturers," he said.

"Demand for PPE kits has been projected at 2.01 crore in India. We have placed orders for 2.22 crore kits out of which 1.42 crore kits are being procured in the domestic market. 1.87 lakh kits are being produced daily in the country," he said at a Press briefing here.

Similarly, out of the total 2.49 crore N-95/ N-99 masks

and 2.01 crore PPE kits ordered, 1.49 crore and 1.42 crore respectively will be procured from domestic manufacturers. The Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed 3 types of new PU coated nylon/polyester and technology transfer to manufacturers of India.

The Union Health Ministry has indicated a projected demand of 75,000 ventilators till June, 2020.

*Continued on Page 2*

## CAPSULE

### TRUMP: WHO SHOULD BE 'ASHAMED' OF ITSELF

Washington: US President Donald Trump has said the World Health Organisation should be "ashamed" of itself, as he likened it to a public relations agency for China amidst the coronavirus pandemic after it originated in Wuhan. The Trump administration has launched a probe into the role of the WHO on coronavirus, and has temporarily suspended the US' financial assistance to it.

### TWELVE MORE CRPF PERSONNEL TEST POSITIVE

New Delhi: Twelve more personnel from a Delhi-based battalion of the CRPF tested positive for Covid-19 on Friday, officials said. The men belong to the 31st battalion of paramilitary, based in Mayur Vihar phase-3 area of the national Capital, that was entirely sealed after 52 personnel were infected.

## Maha Council polls on May 21: Poll panel

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a significant development that paved way for Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to get elected as an MLC before the stipulated six month-deadline of May 27, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday announced it would hold the biennial elections on May 21 to fill nine MLCs seats.

Acting on the request made by Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari to schedule the elections "at the earliest", the ECI announced the schedule between May 4 and May 26 to complete the process of elections to fill the nine vacant seats in the Upper House of the Maharashtra Legislature.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Bengal faults Centre's list, asserts only 4 Red zones

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A fresh war of words erupted between the BJP and the TMC on Friday over the number of Covid-19 "red" zones in West Bengal, with the ruling dispensation insisting that the State has just four hotspot districts and not 10, as listed by the Union Health Ministry.

Bengal Health Principal Secretary Bibek Kumar the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Friday, described the list as "an erroneous assessment" and said Bengal, keeping in view the parameters set by the Centre, has earmarked four "red" zones — Kolkata, Howrah, North 24 Parganas and East Midnapore.

# Forces to shower petals on corona warriors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a unique way to honour all "corona warriors" engaged in the battle against the pandemic, fighter jets will stream across the skies from Srinagar to Thiruvananthapuram and Dibrugarh (Assam) to Kutch (Gujarat) in thrilling fly past, while helicopters will shower petals on some hospitals. Army bands will enthral citizens in almost all districts of the country. All these activities marking show of solidarity with the frontline "warriors" will take place on May 3.

As part of these nationwide thanksgiving gestures, the Navy will also deploy its warships at shores at various coastal towns and light them up on Sunday evening. Navy's helicopters will shower flower petals on some hospitals treating corona-affected people, Chief of



Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat (2L), Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh (2R), Chief of the Army Staff General MM Naravane (L) and Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria during a Press conference in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat said here on Friday.

The three Services chiefs, including General MM Naravane, Air Chief Marshal RK Bhadauria and Admiral Karambir Singh, were also pre-

sent on the occasion.

Rawat also said on behalf of the armed forces, "We want to thank" all Covid-19 warriors like doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, police, home guards, delivery boys and media which has been reaching

out with the message of Government on "how to carry on with lives in difficult times."

"We (wish to) convey our gratitude to each and every corona warrior and all the citizens of our nation. On May 3 there will be some special

activities as a gesture of special gratitude by all three forces," Rawat said.

"The nation stood together, it showed resilience to overcome this crisis. In our country, everybody understands that when it comes to the nation we have to stand together," he added.

Highlighting the crucial role played by the police, he said the armed forces will also lay a wreath here at the National Police Memorial on May 3 as a mark of support of the police forces.

Incidentally, this plan of action for expressing gratitude to the "corona warriors" was discussed earlier in the day in a high-level meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval besides the CDS and three chiefs.

*Continued on Page 2*



**NANDED HAZUR SAHIB**

# Gurdwara shut after 91 more pilgrims test +ve

**Aurangabad/Chandigarh:** Local authorities sealed Nanded's Hazur Sahib gurdwara on Friday, hours before Punjab reported that 91 more people who returned from the shrine in Maharashtra had tested positive for coronavirus.

So far, 197 pilgrims out of the 3,500 brought back from the Maharashtra gurdwara, among the holiest sites in Sikhism, have contracted the infection, according to authorities in Punjab.

The returning pilgrims formed the bulk of 105 fresh cases reported in Punjab on Friday.

The 197 Nanded pilgrims are a third of the 585 confirmed coronavirus cases reported so far in Punjab. Taking into account the 20 deaths and people who have recovered, they represent about 40 per cent of the "active cases" in the state.

In neighbouring Haryana, 18 Nanded pilgrims are in quarantine, officials said.

About 4,000 pilgrims from Punjab had remained stranded for about a month at Hazur Sahib gurdwara in Nanded due to the nationwide lockdown to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Gurdwara Langar Sahib on the same premises, which serves food to all visitors, has also been closed, officials said in Nanded.

"District and civic officials reached the gurdwara in the morning on Friday and directed that it be closed and the langar service be stopped," gurdwara superintendent Gurvinder Singh Wadhwa said.

The pilgrims heading back to Punjab had made halts at Indore, one of the country's worst coronavirus-affected cities, Bhillwara and Hanumangarh in Rajasthan, and Bhatinda, according to gurdwara functionaries.

Baba Balwinder Singh of Langar Sahib said there are still about 175 people from different states in the complex.

In Punjab, Shiromani Akali Dal asked Amarinder Singh to apologise to the Sikh community for "mismanaging" the repatriation of pilgrims from Nanded.

SAD leader Sukhbir Singh Badal demanded that Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu should be sacked for "failing" to ensure the pilgrims' safety. In a video clip, Akal Takht jathedar Harpreet Singh on Friday claimed there was a conspiracy to "malign" the Sikhs just as the Muslims were after the Tablighi Jamaat episode. The reference by the Amritsar-based jathedar was to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi in March. Hundreds of people who participated and then returned to their homes across the country had tested positive.

"It is being propagated as if Takht Sri Hazur Sahib was the home to coronavirus and these people carried it with them to Punjab," he alleged. **PTI**

## New Parl project gets Central Vista panel nod

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Central Vista Committee, a special advisory group of Central Vista and Central Secretariat of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, has given its nod for the new Parliament building. The no objection was given at the fifth meeting the Central Vista Committee held on April 23.

The minutes of the meeting stated there was "no objection" from the Chief Vigilance Commissioner (CVC), with suggestions that features of the proposed Parliament building be in sync with the existing Parliament.

The minutes of the meeting said a request from the external members to put off the meeting because of the Covid-19 lockdown was overruled in view of the project's importance for the national interest.

## Diluted...

**From Page 1**

In all zones, educational institutes, public and social religious gathering will not be allowed. The States are empowered to add Red or Orange Zones, but they can't decrease them. The Union Health Ministry will decide the classification of Red, Orange and Green Zones on weekly basis.

At present out of total 773 districts, 130 districts are classified into Red Zones and big cities like entire Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai fall under Red Zones. As many as 284 districts are under Orange Zones and rest 319 falls under Green Zones.

In all zones, persons above 65 years of age, persons with co-morbidities, pregnant women, and children below the age of 10 years, shall stay at home, except for meeting essential requirements and for health purposes.

Out-Patient Departments (OPDs) and Medical clinics shall be permitted to operate in

Red, Orange and Green Zones, with social distancing norms and other safety precautions; however, these will not be permitted within the Containment Zones, said MHA's new guidelines issued on Friday evening.

"The Green Zones will be districts with either zero confirmed cases till date; or, no confirmed case in the last 21 days. The classification of districts as Red Zones will take into account the total number of active cases, doubling rate of confirmed cases, extent of testing and surveillance feedback from the districts. Those districts, which are neither defined as Red nor Green, shall be classified as Orange zones," said Union Home Ministry's new seven page guidelines issued on Friday evening.

There is a sub classification in Red Zones which are very big districts in big cities having Municipal Corporations and having relatively non-affected outer areas.

"A number of districts of the country have, within their boundaries, one or more Municipal Corporations (MCs). It has been observed that due to higher population density within the MCs, and

## Searches zoom for ration dukaan, how to homeschool kids amid coronavirus

**New Delhi:** People turned to Google to search for ration dukaan (grocery store), how to homeschool kids and even, best trading platforms — with these terms seeing a huge spike in the January-March — as people seek ideas on how they can stay productive indoors amid the coronavirus outbreak.

According to data released by Google, "near me" searches have seen a massive uptick, especially queries like "pharmacy near me" (58 per cent rise), "grocery delivery near me" (550 per cent) and "ration dukaan" (300 per cent).

It added that unlike 2019 when queries like "best headset" or best mattress" were popular, 2020 was all about "best movies" (35 per cent rise) and "Best trading platforms" (45 per cent jump).

With a majority of users being homebound, there has also been high growth in queries like "learn online", "teach online, and "at-home learning". In fact, 1 out of every 2 consumers is seeking personalised information from brands by searching for queries like "how to homeschool kids" and "how to WFH", the data showed. Interestingly, queries in the health category have recently pivoted toward "immunity" (500 per cent rise). Searches for vitamin C, which grew by 40 per cent in 2019, have surged by over 150 per cent in recent weeks, as have queries for herbs with medicinal properties like giloy (380 per cent rise) and Ayurvedic home remedies like Kadha (90 per cent rise). **PTI**

## Lockdown offer: Adopt cobra @ ₹2K/per annum, elephant @ ₹1.75L at Bengaluru zoo

**Bengaluru:** Wish to adopt an Indian cobra for as low as ₹2,000 per annum or Asiatic elephant for ₹1.75 lakh?

Bengaluru's Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP) has come out with a programme during the lockdown period for those looking for an opportunity to conserve wildlife and adopt animals at the zoo.

Certain privileges such as gift voucher for zoo visit and display of name in adoption board would be extended for adopting an animal, depending upon the adoption amount.

"The animal adoption programme is an opportunity for you to get involved in supporting feed and veterinary care expenses for zoo animals with provision for Income Tax rebate under 80G. There are 21 elephants which can be adopted online!" say zoo officials.

The BBP has released a list of animals that can be adopted. One can adopt the likes of King cobra and Indian rock python for ₹3,500 per year, and jungle cat and Assamese Macaque for ₹5,000.

Adoption of black buck and

sambar will cost you ₹7,500 per year, Emu ₹10,000, spot-billed Pelican ₹15,000, Golden jackal ₹20,000, Indian leopard and sloth bear ₹35,000, Zebra ₹50,000, Hippopotamus ₹75,000, and Bengal tiger and Giraffe a flat ₹1 lakh, among others.

"The purpose of the adoption programme is to create awareness and connect with people involved in conservation activities, not just generating revenues," the Executive Director of the government-run BBP, Vanashree Vipin Singh told PTI on Friday. "We dont run this programme with profit motive."

The zoo, which sees an annual footfall of around 15 lakh, has been closed since the middle of March following lockdown declared in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. It received a record 23,000 people on a single day on January 13 this year.

The animal adoption initiative is part of the BBPs outreach programme as people are not able to visit the zoo due to the lockdown. In other times, interested people sign up to adopt animals during their visits to the zoo, she said. **PTI**

## 2,300 new cases in 12 hours on...

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States and Union Territories which have reported less than 10 cases are Tripura, Mizoram, Puducherry, Manipur, Goa and Arunachal Pradesh. Globally,

## Maha Council...

**From Page 1**

As per the schedule, the ECI will issue notification for the elections on May 4. The last date for filing nominations is May 11, while the papers will be scrutinised on May 12. The last date of withdrawal of nominations is May 14. The poll will be held from 9 am to 4 pm on May 21 and the votes will be counted an hour later. The ECI will complete the election process by May 26.

The biennial elections have been necessitated by the retirement on April 24 of Neelam Diwakar Gorhe (Shiv Sena), Hemant Prabhakar Takle, Anand Rajendra Thakur (both NCP) Smita Uday Wagh, Prithviraj Sayajirao Deshmukh (both BJP), Kiran Jagannath Pawaskar, Arunbhan Jarnardan Adasad (both NCP), Chandrakant Batesing Raghuvanshi (Congress) and Harisingh

## Forces to shower...

**From Page 1**

The IAF chief said his service, so far, had not reported even a single case of Covid-19 but added "we will not lower guard and have enforced all precautions." The Army chief said at least 14 cases of corona virus occurred in the force and five of them have been cured and now on active duty. Rawat last week had said "discipline and patience" had helped the defence forces in checking the spread of the Covid-19 virus within its ranks, noting that the coronavirus had affected the Army, Air Force and Navy in a "limited manner." Meanwhile, after contributing one day salary of all employees of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to the PM CARES fund to fight Covid-19 pandemic, a proposal has been moved to contribute one day's salary every month of

the novel coronavirus cases have surged past 3.3 million while more than 234,000 deaths were reported across the world. The number of infected people due to Covid-19 in the United States crossed one million and the fatalities rose past 63,000. The US is currently the hardest hit country in the world in terms of total number of cases recorded followed by Spain (239,639) and Italy (205,463).

Narsu Rathod (BJP).

In the normal course, the Election Commission was to hold the elections to fill the posts of nine MLCs, who would be retiring on April 24 from Upper House, and Uddhav was to contest these elections. However, the EC has postponed these elections in view of the coronavirus-triggered lockdown.

The ECI's decision to hold biennial elections to fill nine MLC seats in Maharashtra has come as huge relief to Uddhav considering that the State Cabinet made a recommendation to the Governor on April 9, requested him once again on April 27 to nominate the current Chief Minister as an MLC in one of the two vacant slots. A delegation of Ministers also met the Governor on April 28 to make a personal request in this regard. On April 29, Uddhav also spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to seek the latter's intervention.

this financial year to the fund, defence sources said.

The proposal is to deduct one day's salary every month this financial year and deposit it in PM CARES fund. The circular on this will be issued in a day or two. This will be purely on voluntary basis, they added. The Defence Minister in March end had approved a proposal for the contribution of one day salary by the employees of the MoD to the PM-CARES fund. The Ministry had then stated that "around 500 crore will be collectively provided by the MoD" from various wings — the three Services, Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU) and others. The employees' contribution is voluntary and those desirous of opting out will be exempted, it had stated. In addition, the DPSUs and Ordnance Factory Board made a contribution to the fund from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.

## Two more cops probing Markaz case test positive

**STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI**

Two more personnel of the Delhi police on Friday tested positive for novel coronavirus. Police said that the Covid positive personnel were from the team of crime branch probing Tablighi Jamaat case.

Police said that they have been sent to quarantine centres. Earlier, a Delhi Police constable of the Crime Branch who visited the Nizamuddin headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat in south Delhi tested positive for coronavirus.

The constable had visited the Markaz building in connection with the probe into the religious congregation held there last month where many people were reported to have contracted the virus.

On March 31, Delhi Police's Crime Branch lodged an FIR against seven people, including Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad Kandhalvi, on a complaint by Station House Officer, Nizamuddin, for holding a religious congregation here allegedly in violation of the lockdown orders and not maintaining social distancing to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Earlier on Thursday, two police personnel from Khajoori Khas police station in North-east Delhi were tested positive for Covid-19.

A letter from Muktesh Chander, Special Commissioner of Police, Operations stated that it has been reported that two police personnel from Khajoori Khas have tested positive for Covid-19. They were residing at Barrack Number 5 of PS Khajoori Khas.

"In the same barrack, the staff of Commissioner of Police reserve was also residing. It is important that they are also tested for Covid-19 and are quarantined immediately. Similar precaution need to be taken for all CP reserve staff at other locations too," the letter further stated.

More than 21 Delhi Police personnel have tested positive for the novel coronavirus

## Make-in-India goods to protect Covid warriors

**From Page 1**

"Of total demand of 75,000 ventilators, 19,398 are available and 60,884 ventilators have been ordered. "About 19,398 ventilators are available in India and orders have been placed for 60,884 more, and of these 59,884 will be made by domestic manufacturers." Imports are to the tune of 1,000 ventilators," he said.

The order has been placed with Bharat Electronic and Mysuru-based Skanray Technologies to manufacture 30,000 ventilators, while a second order for 10,000 ventilators has been given to a consortium of Maruti Suzuki and Noida-based ventilator maker AgVa Healthcare. Similarly, AMTZ will be supplying 13,500 ventilators, said Vaghela.

Also, "Over 4 lakh oxygen cylinders are available which is sufficient for today's requirements. Orders for more than 1 lakh oxygen cylinders have been placed and industrial oxygen is being converted into medical oxygen," he said.

On production of drugs and other medical equipment, he said "HCQ (hydroxy-chloroquine) production has increased from 12.23 crore to 30 crore per month".

He also informed that against a demand for 35 lakh combined RT-PCR testing kits, the ICMR has ordered more than 21 lakh and close to 14 lakh kits have already been received.

The Centre has decided to handhold States in purchasing VTM's and RNA extraction kits, the official added.

"The shortage of medical equipment is going to be the biggest challenge, although the Government has already banned the export of these devices with immediate effect," according to GlobalData which emphasised on indigenous production to meet the growing demand as the cases of the Covid-19 continue to rise in the country.

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**


General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person **Name:** Unknown, **S/o** Unknown **R/o** Unknown **Age** : About 35-40 years, **Height** :5'6", **Face:** Oval, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Blue colour Jeans and brown colour undershirt has been found dead in the jurisdiction of P.S. Janakpuri, Delhi on 25.03.2020. In this regard a case vide DD No. 40A dated 25.03.2020 has been lodged at Police Station Janakpuri, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this found dead person may kindly inform to the following:-

**SHO :**  
**P.S. Janakpuri, Delhi**  
**West Distt., Delhi**  
**Tel. No. 011-25553166, 25551410**

**DP/86/WD/2020**



**New Okhla Industrial Development Authority**  
**Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201 301 (U.P.)**  
**Website : [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com)**

**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com) & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

**(A).**

S.No.	Job No. / Work Name	Amount
1	<b>113/D(H)/DD(H)-I/2019-20</b> , Construction of Site store (5 Nos) and Toilet block in different location of Horticulture division-1st	Cost ₹ 32.73 Lacs
2	<b>115/D(H)/DD(H)-I/2019-20</b> , M/o Park in Sector-11,12,55,56,62, Rajat Vihar, 63A, 66, 70 & 71 (Playing Equipment)	Cost ₹ 48.07 Lacs
3	<b>116/D(H)/DD(H)-I/2019-20</b> , M/o Green Belt in Sector-67 & 71 with two years maintenance.	Cost ₹ 46.14 Lacs
4	<b>128/D(H)/DD(H)-I/2019-20</b> , M/o Green Belt (Repairing of footpath) in Sector-54	Cost ₹ 27.75 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date **19.05.2020 upto 5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date **20.05.2020 at 11.00 AM**

**(B).**

S.No.	Job no./Work Name	Amount
1	<b>81/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2019-20</b> , M/o All Park Sector-37 with Two year Maintenance	Cost ₹ 30.89 Lacs
2	<b>83/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2019-20</b> , M/o Park in Sector-74 Near Capetown city with two maintenance, Noida	Cost ₹ 26.28 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date **11.05.2020 upto 5.00 PM**. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date **12.05.2020 at 11.00 AM**

**Office:** **Director (Hort.)**  
**Sector-39, Noida** **NOIDA**

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# Mask vital part of school uniform post lockdown

## Centre devising new guidelines for functioning of academic institutions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With corona pandemic scare likely to impact functioning of all establishments and institutions for some time to come, the Centre is devising new guidelines for the modus operandi of academic institutions.

Sources in the HRD Ministry said that new seating arrangements in classrooms, hostels, common spaces, libraries and assembly among others keeping in mind the social distancing mantra to fight COVID-19 will be enforced when the classes resume.

For schools, suspension of morning assemblies and sports activities in the playground, norms for school buses, do's and don'ts in washrooms and cafeterias and regular disinfection of entire buildings, could be part of the guidelines even as masks will be a mandatory part of school uniforms. For residential schools, guidelines will detail social distancing norms to be followed in messes and hostels.

A HRD Ministry official said whenever schools and colleges reopen, proper social distancing norms will have to be followed as health and safety of students have to be the priority.

The guidelines are being formed by the Ministry's

Department of School Education and Literacy for schools and by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for universities and higher education institutions.

Universities and schools across the country have been closed since March 16 when the Central Government announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as one of the measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Later, a nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24, which was extended till May 3.

While the UGC has already recommended that academic session for freshers may begin in September and for enrolled students in August, schools are also doing teaching-learning activities through different virtual mediums.

"The guidelines will include a checklist and recommended measures to ensure student and staff safety. However, the COVID-19 situation in a particular area will also be have to kept in mind and the institutions will have flexibility to adapt to the guidelines accordingly.

The Minister has reiterated many times that the safety and health of students has to be prioritised," said the official.

The guidelines are being formed and will also be shared with States so they can prepare accordingly before reopening

schools and colleges.

"Districts will be tasked with the implementation of the guidelines and certain spaces in the campuses will have to be revamped to ensure social distancing," the official added.

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' had also deliberated upon the issue of safety guidelines in a meeting with state education ministers last week. Nishank will interact with students from across the country through webinar on Saturday afternoon.

Several Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are also working on chalking out ways for students to follow social distancing, including restricting entry of visitors, classes in shifts and staggered laboratory timings.

As per UGC recommendations, semester exams can be conducted in July either online or offline.

"So, far the exams happening online, the safety guidelines will have to be followed and same will apply to conduct of competitive examinations," the official said.

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has reiterated that it will conduct pending class 10 and 12 board exams in 29 subjects but has not announced the schedule yet.

# PM Modi reviews affairs of aviation, power sectors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday reviewed the affairs of the aviation and power sectors, a decision was taken that the Indian air space should be effectively used in a manner that flying time for travellers is reduced and airlines also save costs.

And this will be done in close cooperation with the Department of Military Affairs, an official statement said after Modi held the comprehensive meeting to review the strategies that could help in making India's civil aviation sector more efficient.

"For generation of more revenue as well as to bring in more efficiency at the airports, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has been asked to expedite the process of handing over of six more airports on PPP basis by commencing the tender process within three months," it said.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri among others attended the meeting, which also reviewed the e-DGCA project, aimed at bringing in more transparency in the DGCA's office and helping all stakeholders by reducing the processing time for various licences and permissions.

"It was also decided that all reform initiatives taken by

the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the organizations under it should proceed in a time bound manner," the statement added.

The civil aviation sector has been severely hit by the coronavirus pandemic, which forced governments around the world to impose restrictions on the movement of people and virtually shut flights.

As for the power sector, the Prime Minister discussed various long-term reforms for enhancing sustainability, resilience, and efficiency of the key sector.

"The discussions included measures regarding ease of doing business; propagation of renewables; flexibility in supply of coal; role of public-private partnerships; and boosting investment in the power sector. The need for effective enforcement of contracts for attracting private investments was discussed," the official statement said.

He emphasised the importance of 'consumer-centricity' and directed to work towards the goal of supplying 24x7 quality and reliable power to all consumers.

"Measures for improving viability of distribution companies, including tariff rationalisation and timely release of subsidies along with improved governance were also discussed," the statement said.

## Stranded migrants' plight

# Constant bickering, pessimism by Cong are not solutions: Patra



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP and the Congress continued to snipe at each other over the efficacy of measures under the lockdown as the ruling party on Friday expressed shock that its opposition counterpart sees guidelines of Ministry of Home Affairs as a joke and use pandemic as a "political opportunity".

In his response to Congress criticism of MHA steps to transport stranded workers to their native places, BJP National spokesperson Sambit Patra said rather than giving any positive suggestion, the Opposition was always trying to find fault with the steps taken by the Union Government.

Patra said constant bickering and pessimism during these times are not the solutions.

Hitting back, the BJP leader

said, "It's astonishing and shocking that senior Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi sees the MHA guidelines on migrant labourers as a joke."

Patra asked the Congress not to use the coronavirus pandemic as a "political opportunity" as he expressed shock at the opposition party criticising the Home Ministry guidelines on inter-state movement of stranded workers.

"The Congress should restrain itself from spreading canards, falsities and misinformation purely for political gain during a pandemic. The MHA guidelines lay down standard operating procedures (SOPs) for states to follow during migrants' transfer. States are in talks with each other to effectively carry forward this mammoth task," Patra said.

The BJP reacted after the Congress accused the Centre of "cruelly" and "mercilessly"

abandoning the entire category of migrant labourers and termed "a cruel joke" the order on inter-state movement of workers.

"A few days ago Rahul Gandhi had stated that lockdown is of no help... Our simple suggestion to the Congress is not to use the pandemic as a political opportunity," he said.

In his press conference, Singhvi said the "mismanagement" of migrant labour shows the approach the central government has adopted towards the poor of the country.

"The Centre has mercilessly, cruelly and without second thought abandoned the entire category of migrant labour," he had said.

The BJP and the Congress have been locking horns following the announcement of lockdown on March 24 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and over the measures taken since by the Government.

## CRPF's 31 battalion

# Number of Covid-19 positive cases jumps to 70

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The total number of Covid-19 positive cases in 31 Battalion of CRPF reached 70 on Friday of which one has recovered and another has died leaving a tally of 68 active cases even as the ITBP has now contracted the viral disease with five personnel getting inflicted with the pandemic.

Meanwhile, 49 personnel, including a Deputy Inspector General, of the Welfare Branch of CRPF headquarters here have been home quarantined after Havildar showed symptoms of the pandemic on Wednesday even as his test report for Covid-19 is awaited.

In the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), two personnel deployed here with the Delhi police company at Shastri Park and residing in Rohini area with the Company have been tested positive for the disease.

Another three personnel tested positive for corona virus



located at the paramilitary's Tigri Camp here. Following the detection of the positive cases in the ITBP ranks, about 100 personnel have been quarantined after detailed contact tracing of the people who came in contact with the infected personnel.

All the development like detection and quarantine of the personnel has been effected during the last 48 hours, ITBP

officials said.

As many as 17 positive cases have been identified in the CRPF's 31 Battalion during the last 24 hours, officials said. Entire 31 Battalion of the CRPF located at the paramilitary's Mayur Vihar camp here has been quarantined following the death of Sub Inspector Mohammad Ikram Hussain. Swab samples of over 400 personnel of the CRPF's 31

Battalion have already been collected and the test reports are coming in batches, CRPF officials said.

Out of the 70 positive cases in 31 Battalion, one patient has recovered while Hussain succumbed to the disease owing to underlying conditions of diabetes and hypertension.

On Wednesday, Havildar Om Prakash Sahu exhibited Covid-19 symptoms like sore throat and headache following which his swab sample was sent to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital for testing. While his report is awaited, Sahu is said to be showing improvement in his condition.

However, 49 personnel including DIG Rajeev Ranjan Kumar, two Commandants, one Second-in-Command officer, two Deputy Commandants and an Assistant Commandant among others were home quarantined for 14 days as they had come in contact with Sahu, officials added.

# PPE not 100% skin injury-free for corona warriors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The protective gears meant to protect them during their fight against the deadly contagion are harming corona warriors globally in more ways than one. If the risk of falling prey to the deadly invisible virus wasn't enough, frontline healthcare workers are battling an altogether different problem — their protective gears are leaving them bruised.

A new study of medical staff treating Covid-19-infected patients has found that 42.8 per cent experienced serious skin injury related to the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks, goggles, face shields, and protective gowns.

Researchers concluded that the skin injuries put staff at increased risk of infection, with insufficient prevention and treatment measures in place, according to the study published in Advances in Wound Care, a monthly peer-reviewed journal from Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers.



The article entitled "The Prevalence, Characteristics and Prevention Status of Skin Injury Caused by Personal Protective Equipment Among Medical Staff in Fighting Covid-19: A Multi-Center, Cross-Sectional Study" was coauthored by Qixia Jiang, Nanjing University School of Medicine (Nanjing, China) and a large team of Chinese clinicians.

The researchers identified three main types of PPE-related skin injuries: device-related pressure injuries; moist associated skin damage; skin tear.

Several factors increased the risk for skin injury: heavy sweating, greater daily wearing time, being male, and using grade 3 versus grade 2 PPE.

"These significant findings are consistent with independent observations in

Europe and United States, and call for systematic studies addressing skin injury and repair in Covid-19+ patients as well as in their healthcare providers," said Editor-in-Chief Chandan K. Sen, PhD, Distinguished Professor at the Indiana University School of Medicine and Executive Director of Indiana University Health Comprehensive Wound Center, Indianapolis, IN.

# Five more States, including Bihar and Punjab, join 'One Nation-One Ration Card' system

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Five more States, including Bihar and Punjab, have joined the 'One Nation-One Ration Card' system, taking the total ration card portability to 17 States and Union territories helping 60 crore beneficiaries. The food ministry is aiming to implement this facility across the country from June 1. "Today, 5 more States - Bihar, UP, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Daman and Diu - have been integrated with One Nation-One Ration Card System," Union Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said in a tweet.

Under the 'One Nation-One Ration Card' initiative, eligible beneficiaries would be able to avail their entitled food-

grains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) from any Fair Price Shop in the country using the same ration card. Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Jharkhand and Tripura are 12 states where ration card portability has been implemented. The beneficiaries can lift 50 per cent of their entitlement.

On January 1 this year, 12 states were integrated among each other and now 17 states are on integrated management of the public distribution system (PDS), also called ration shops/fair price shops, he added.

"About 60 crore beneficiaries from 17 states and UTs can benefit from the ration card

portability and they can purchase the subsidised foodgrains using the existing ration cards," an official statement said.

According to the statement, the ministry has decided to integrate the five states after assessing their technical preparedness.

The State officials were given technical assistance and training for the same.

The five States have been asked to immediately begin monitoring of the new system, it said, and added that the Centre is pursuing with other states to join the ration card portability system at the earliest. There are over 81 crore beneficiaries in the country registered under the NFSA for subsidised foodgrains of 5 kilo per person at ₹1-3/kg.

# Dist collector's role in PMEGP proposals nixed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant policy decision, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), headed by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, has done away with the role of District Collectors in recommending the proposals under the Prime Minister Employment Generation Program (PMEGP), thereby simplifying the entire procedure.

As per the amended guidelines, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), the nodal agency for implementing PMEGP scheme, after due diligence, will directly clear the proposals/applications of the prospective entrepreneurs and will forward it to the Banks for taking credit decisions. As of now, the proposals were scru-

tinized by the District Level Task Force Committee (DLTFC) that often led to inordinate delays in sanctioning of the projects.

KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena said a major bottleneck has been removed with the discontinuation of the DLTFC in approving the projects under PMEGP. He thanked Gadkari for taking swift action in the interest of the country.

The government's move has come at a time when the employment sector has taken a hit due to nationwide lockdown in the wake of the Corona disease. The amendment in the policy would pave the way for swift implementation of projects and create new employment opportunities in rural and semi urban areas under the PMEGP scheme.

The District

Collectors/Magistrates heading the DLTFC were often preoccupied with local administrative issues and hence deciding on granting approval of PMEGP applications was not on their priority list and proposals under the scheme remained pending for several months.

"We are grateful that the Hon'ble Minister accepted our request and decided to discontinue the role of DLTFC. This will ensure swift and timely implementation of the projects. The government's decision will safeguard the interest of lakhs of people in the country seeking employment opportunities under PMEGP," Saxena said.

As per the new guidelines, the KVIC after receiving the applications will scrutinize and examine the proposals and the corrected applications will be forwarded to the banks for taking credit decisions. Under the

PMEGP scheme, loans up to Rs 25 lakhs are given for manufacturing and service industries, in which 15 to 35% subsidy is provided by the KVIC depending upon the area.

Since its launch in 2008, the PMEGP scheme was receiving an average of 35,000 applications per year. However, KVIC in 2016 developed an in house, user-friendly PMEGP portal and launched it in July 2016 to receive online applications under the scheme. The online facility received massive public response and the number of online applications increased manifolds up to four lakh applications per year, which itself shows the popularity of the scheme.

In 2019-20, the KVIC released over Rs 1951 crore margin money subsidy and set up 66,653 projects in the country.

# SC grants reprieve to Prashant Bhushan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Friday granted protection to activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan from any coercive action in an FIR lodged against him at Rajkot in Gujarat for allegedly hurting religious sentiments of the Hindus.

The FIR was lodged by former Army personnel Jaidev Rajat Rajkot alleging that Bhushan hurt religious sentiments of Hindus by tweeting against re-telecast of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

# Firewood from Fani cyclone uprooted trees to run Lord Jagannath kitchen

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The firewood extracted from 20 lakh trees which were uprooted last year in the wake of Fani Cyclone in Odisha's Balukhand-Konark Wildlife Sanctuary will be used for running the kitchen of Lord Jagannath temple in Puri.

The Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife of the Union Environment Ministry in a recent meeting also allowed the State forest officials to use a portion of the 18 lakh quintals of wood from the 20-lakh damaged trees at a crematorium at Swargadwar, Puri and households situated

around the wildlife habitat besides the temple.

As per provision of Section 29 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, salvaged firewood will be handed over among 6355 households situated around the sanctuary for their bonafide needs as per the estimation of total requirement of firewood

per annum made by the DFO, Puri(Wildlife ) Division.

Surplus firewood, if any, after distribution among the EDC members, was proposed to be supplied to Swargadwar, Puri for cremation purpose and to the kitchen of Lord Jagannath Temple through the Odisha Forest Development

Corporation on payment of royalty.

At a meeting held here, the Board members agreed for removal of FANI uprooted/damaged trees from the sanctuary after the State Government expressed apprehension that they were not only fire hazardous but also hinder

movement of wild animals.

It pointed out that they need to be cleared to create space for re-afforestation, meadow development and for free movement of protection staff and rescue teams.

The extremely severe cyclonic storm that ravaged Odisha on May 3 last year had

severe impact on Balukhand-Konark Wildlife Sanctuary where a large number of trees were uprooted and damaged.

However, the Board members rejected the State Government's proposal to sell the salvaged firewood in open market through the ODFC.

The Board said that the

royalty amount so realized shall be utilized for cleaning of sanctuary area and other developmental works in the sanctuary. The State has also been asked to prepare a scheme for undertaking post FANI rehabilitation works in the sanctuary in conformity with the Sanctuary Management Plan.



# 1,200 workers leave Kerala for Orissa via train

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A passenger train carrying 1,200 migrant labourers set off from Kerala's Aluva Railway Station to Bhubaneswar in Orissa late Friday evening. This is the first passenger train to operate in the State during the last 35 days. The details of the train and the destination were announced only by Friday noon.

The migrant labourers mainly working in the plywood factories in Perumbavoor and surrounding areas who had registered with the revenue officials were screened by the department of health in the labour camps itself and were transported to the railway station in sanitised buses which were guarded by the police. The railway officials had made elaborate arrangements at Aluva railway station as part of social distancing norms and medical examination of the labourers.



The food for the passengers have been arranged by the Railways.

A senior official of Southern Railway told The Pioneer that only labourers from Orissa are being allowed to travel in this train. "We will operate four or five trains on Saturday for the benefit of migrant workers who are from Assam and Bengal. All these trains are exclusively for the migrant workers who are employed in Kerala," said the official.

Kerala Government officials are finalising the details of the migrant labourers who would be boarding the trains to be operated from the State on Saturday and Sunday.

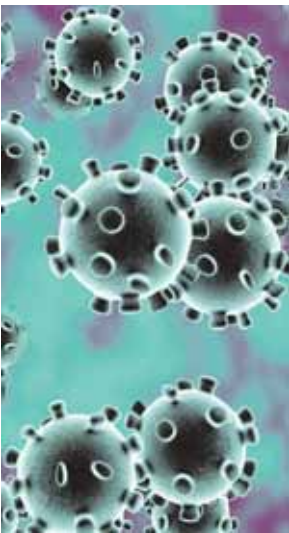
# After 203 +ve, TN gets tough with virus

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Tamil Nadu Government has pressed the panic button and tightened the regulations to check the spread of coronavirus in the State in general and Chennai city in particular as there was further increase on Friday in the number of persons tested positive for coronavirus.

Dr C Vijaya Baskar, minister for health, said in his media briefing that 203 persons tested positive for coronavirus in the State on Friday. This is the highest number of persons testing positive on a single day. Chennai continued to be a cause of worry as 176 out of the 203 were from the metropolis. A 92-year old man succumbed to Covid in a Chennai hospital taking the total number of fatalities in the State till date to 28.

While medical experts like Dr C V Krishnaswamy, Dr Rajesh Kesavan and Dr Ranjit Vijayahari are of the view that the coronavirus in Chennai has entered the phase of community transmission, the health minister made light of the figures by stating that it was because of increased number of samples being tested that the numbers appear high.



"We have 45 laboratories in the State to test the samples. The figure of 176 persons testing positive for coronavirus is because we could test 3200 samples on a single day in Chennai alone. Our medical teams have tested 1,29,000 samples all over the State which is second only to Maharashtra," said Dr Baskar.

The Minister said Tamil Nadu has the highest recovery rate in the country and also the highest testing rate. "We perform 120 tests for every 1,00,000 people in the State

and there are 73 containment zones. We have to be careful but there is no need to panic," he said.

But the Tamil Nadu has beefed up the police security in the capital city and has announced that persons who are caught loitering or jay-walking would be sent to 15 days prison term. In a major development, Tamil Nadu Government on Friday appointed J Radhakrishnan, principal secretary/ commissioner, Revenue Administration, who is a veteran in managing disasters and mishaps, has been appointed as the Special Nodal Officer to co-ordinate with Covid-19 related issues and to contain the spread of the disease in the capital district.

Medical experts and social activists in Chennai are aghast over the indifferent attitude of the people towards the regulations and protocols ordered by the Government to check the spread of the pandemic. Dr Krishnaswamy said the move by the government to lift the shut down while the national lockdown was in place has upset the rhythm of the war against coronavirus. "The disease could be checked only by following the social distancing

norms and staying indoors as per the guidelines. But what I see is a free for all crowd and shopping in Chennai. There were instances of genuine people on their way to hospitals being send back by the police while shoppers and loiterers going scot free," said Dr Krishnaswamy.

Dr Renjit Vijayahari, gastroenterologist, closely studying the spreading of the coronavirus in Tamil Nadu is of the view that the pandemic has entered the phase-three of its spreading which means the Chennai is on the verge of community transmission. "The number of persons tested positive on Thursday and Friday are not the same people who were tested negative on Wednesday. The magnitude of testing is very low in India as well as in Tamil Nadu. Why the government is not accepting the fact that community transmission has set in is surprising. Any person with basic knowledge of diseases like coronavirus could make out that in a city like Chennai where the density of population is high, it is difficult to prevent the progress of the disease from reaching the community transmission," said Dr Vijayahari.

# 6 new Covid cases in T, tally touches 1,044

Hyderabad: Telangana reported six new Covid-19 cases on Friday, taking the State's total tally to 1,044.

After a sudden spurt with 22 cases on Thursday, the numbers again declined to single digit. Unlike the previous day when three fatalities were reported, there were no deaths on Friday.

Health Minister Eatala Rajender told reporters that the death toll stands at 28. He also announced that 22 people were discharged from hospitals after their recovery. With this the number of recoveries rose to 464. Currently, there are 552 active cases in the state, he said.

IANS

# Nodal officer appointed to tackle Covid in Chennai

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu government on Friday announced the appointment of J. Radhakrishnan, Principal Secretary/Commissioner, Revenue Administration, Disaster Management and Mitigation, Chennai as the Special Nodal Officer for Greater Chennai Corporation for Covid-19 matters relating to Chennai.

As per the Government Order issued on Friday, as Special Nodal Officer, Radhakrishnan will co-ordinate the Covid-19 related issues with the Commissioner of

Greater Chennai Corporation and other teams constituted for specific purpose of containing the spread of the disease further in Chennai district.

Radhakrishnan will also ensure effective implementation of various guidelines issued by the state government, the order said.

The appointment comes with Chennai reporting higher number of persons testing positive for coronavirus.

As on April 30, a total of 960 persons have been tested positive for coronavirus in the city.

IANS

# 25 more test positive, J&K virus tally 639

Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir on Friday reported 25 new Covid-19 cases, taking the total number of cases in the Union Territory to 639.

"Today's status update: 25 New Cases, 31 Recoveries; Total Cases now 639. Active Cases 384 (Jammu 6 Kashmir 378)," government spokesman Rohit Kansal tweeted.

So far, 247 Covid-19 patients have completely recovered while 8 have succumbed to the dreaded virus. The number of active cases is 384 in J&K, out of whom 6 are in the Jammu division while 378 are in the Kashmir division.

IANS

# Entire population of J&K's worst-affected Covid cluster tested

Srinagar: For the first time in J&K, the entire population of UT's worst affected Covid-19 cluster has been tested for the virus.

Out of 52 positive cases in Gund Jahangeer village of Bandipora district, the Dangerpora locality, with 48 positive cases, was the worst-affected in entire J&K.

However, now the entire population of Dangerpora and its periphery has been tested for Covid-19.

Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari, officer in charge Covid control in Bandipora told IANS that "of the total 52 positive cases, there are 47 in Dangerpora Mohalla and only 4 in other mohallas of Gund Jahangeer village".

"One Covid patient from Dangerpora had succumbed initially," he added.

"The good news is that as a first in J&K, the entire population of 450 people in Dangerpora and another 300 living in the periphery of the Mohalla have been tested for Covid-19.

"Except for the 47 positive cases, all others in a population of 750 have tested negative.

"To add to the relief of the local population and the front-line warriors, 25 out of the 47 positive cases have been discharged after they tested negative in repeated tests till yesterday," Bukhari said. "I am told another 13 positive cases out of this lot of 47 have also been discharged today (Friday) from SKIMS medical college hospital in Bemina Srinagar after they recovered fully," he said. There are 127 positive cases in Bandipora district which is the highest among the 20 districts of J&K.

IANS

# T industries to hit hard by exodus of migrants

Hyderabad: Various segments of the industry in Telangana are likely to be hit hard by the exodus of the migrant workers, who constitute a major workforce in the state.

As the workers, majority of them belonging to northern and eastern states, begin to return home, industrial units in different sectors are keeping their fingers crossed on its impact and whether they will ever come back.

Industry representatives are unanimous that the return of migrants will hit different sectors, especially construction and manufacturing but are divided over the degree of impact. While some expect things to return to normal in a couple of months, others foresee a long-lasting impact.

After the lockdown began in March, Telangana had announced a series of measures to look after the migrant workers. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao assured that no one will starve and termed the migrant workers members of Telangana family and partners in the state's development.

The chief minister had also announced 12 kg rice and Rs 500 for every migrant worker and asked the employers to give them shelter and provide them all necessary facilities.

The state authorities claimed to have identified 3.5 lakh migrant workers through a survey. However, following criticism from various quarters they revised the numbers.

The industry bodies say the actual number of migrant workers is more than eight lakh. Trade union leaders claimed that the government's help has not reached majority of the workers, forcing many of them to set on the risky journey of walking towards their states.

"The impact will be severe, especially in unskilled segments in construction, infrastructure, MSMEs, cement and steel plants," Ramakanth Inani, Senior Vice President, Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry, told IANS.

According to him out of 100 people employed in every Micro, Small, Medium Enterprise (MSME) in Telangana, 80 are migrants.



They are mostly from Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar and some from Madhya Pradesh.

Similarly, the migrant labourers constitute 90-95 per cent of the workforce in infrastructure projects and rice mills and over 70 per cent in the construction sector.

An overwhelming majority is employed in and around Hyderabad while the migrant labourers in districts are employed in brick kilns, granite, construction of power projects, fertiliser plants and rice mills.

Inani said despite all the efforts by the state government to take care of them, the workers want to go home. After the state government extended lockdown by May 7, they started fearing another extension and grew restless.

He, however, hopes that they will come back in 2-3 months. "They have to come back. The unemployed go wherever there is employment and since nobody mistreated them here, they will come back."

The booming construction sector in and around Hyderabad is likely to be the most affected by exodus of migrant workers. The labourers from Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh constitute majority of the workforce in construction. There are also workers from neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

K. Madhusudan Reddy, director, Dwelton Reality Private Limited, believes the exodus of workers lead to slowdown in the sector

"They will not come back easily because of COVID-19 fear. There is also awareness among them," he said. He believes there will not be much

activity for 3-4 months and the problems may remain for six months.

However, Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (CREDAI) Telangana unit president Ramchandra Reddy said the impact will not be much.

He pointed out that the migrant workers go to their native places for one to one-half month every summer. "This year the period has clashed with pandemic and the lockdown. As per our feedback they will come back. It depends on the lockdown situation," he said.

He said that since Telangana and Hyderabad don't have much unsold inventory, the impact on the sector will not be long-lasting.

CREDAI Hyderabad General Secretary Rajasekhara Reddy recalled that they were the first to suggest to the government to send back migrant labourers. "We had suggested that it is better to send them home. They will be happy with their families and when things settle down they can come back."

He pointed out that when the government ruled out this and asked the real estate developers to take care of their workers, they did everything possible to look after them.

"They were getting calls from their homes. They were sitting idle and it was stressful. Some started going on foot. We are saying that those who want to go, let them go," he said.

Rajasekhara Reddy said since survival was important for everyone the workers will come back. "The pandemic is not going to end till the vaccine is found. Everyone has to learn to work with precautions. For their survival they have to work. We have to take measures to improve the working conditions."

# Open liquor shops as alcohol can kill Covid: Rajasthan MLA

Jaipur: Rajasthan Congress MLA Bharat Singh has written to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot requesting him to open liquor shops in the State highlighting the fact that if alcohol can kill corona after being applied on hands, it will also "kill corona inside the body when consumed".

In his letter to Gehlot, the Sangod legislator on Thursday, wrote: "It's better to open liquor shops than to see people dying in state by gulping down handmade liquor." He was referring to an incident in Bharatpur where two people died after consuming handmade liquor



recently.

"Open the liquor shops. There are people who have

been longing to have alcohol. While they can get what they want, the state at the same time, can also add more revenue to its kitty," he added.

Similarly, former BJP MLA Bhavani Singh Rajavat also issued a statement saying that liquor has always played a major role in winning any war. "In Satyug, Gods consumed Somras, Later, kings also won wars after consuming drinks. The opening of liquor shops shall help in checking virus and will bring in revenue for state government. However, the ban on tobacco, cigarettes etc should continue," he said.

# J&K releases 371 prisoners during April

Srinagar: The Jammu & Kashmir Government has released 371 prisoners since April 1 that include 72 inmates who were serving detention under Public Safety Act (PSA).

Sources said the decision to release the prisoners was taken after the need to decongest the jails was felt in the wake of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed eight lives in J&K so far.

The Review Committee in J&K headed by Home Secretary Shaleen Kabra took a series of meetings to review the cases of prisoners to be released.

Latest figures available with the IANS reveal that 72 PSA detainees were released from April 1 to April 30 that include 19 from Central Jail Kotbalwal, 43 from Central Jail Srinagar, four from Kathua Jail, one from Udhampur and one

each from Anantnag, Baramulla and Kupwara prisons.

Figures suggest that 97 undertrials were also released from these jails after a decision by the Under-Trial Review Committee. Besides this, 160 other prisoners were also released over the past one month.

64 detention orders of prisoners from J&K lodged in jails outside the UT were revoked from April 1 to 30 and so far 43 PSA detainees were released.

Figures suggest that 23 prisoners lodged in Agra Central Jail were released while two were released from district jail Bareilly in UP, six each from District Jail Ambedkar Nagar (UP) and Central Jail Varanasi and three each were released from District prison Karnal and District prison Jhajhar in Haryana.

IANS

# Lockdown may be extended in Mumbai, Pune, hints CM

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday indicated that his Government may extend the lockdown in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Pune Metropolitan Region (PMR), Nagpur and Aurangabad, after May 3.

Addressing the people across the state through social media on the occasion of "Maharashtra Day", the chief minister said: "What is to be done after May 3 is a big issue. You may all be thinking as to how long can we should sit at home. The lockdown has affected our economy. It is true that economy will increase. More than economy, what is more important for the coun-

try and state is the welfare of people. That is the primary responsibility. People have to be saved"

"Red (Covid-19) is a live volcano, while orange is a dormant volcano. Green Zone may not erupt at any time, but there will be chaos if fresh infected cases are reported from this zone. The infected cases are increasing in cities like Mumbai and neighbouring areas, Pune and neighbouring areas, and some places in Nagpur. It is not our interest that we do something in these places," the chief minister said, while indicating the extension of lockdown in these places.

Uddhav, however said that in orange zones, excepting places where there is no increase in the number of cases

but there are still active cases, "the state government is considering relaxing the lockdown." "In green zones, we have already relaxed lockdown," he said.

If the indications given by the chief minister are anything to go by, the lockdown will be extended in areas like MMR – which among other areas comprises Mumbai, satellite towns like Thane, Kalyan-Dombivli, Navi Mumbai, Panvel, Vasai-Virar, Mira-Bhayandar and Ulhasnagar, PMR – which comprises the areas under the Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporations, Pune, Khadki and Dehu road cantonnments, and some parts of Nagpur and Aurangabad cities, after May 3.

Among other things, the



chief minister said that the state health authorities had carried out tests on nearly two people. "Seventy five to 80 per cent of the people who have tested positive are showing very mild and mild symptoms for Covid-19. If there has been a rapid increase in the number of cases in Maharashtra, it is because of contact tracing and containment zones that we have created".

Uddhav announced that

the State government would set up a Primary Health Centre at Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) in Mumbai. "We have raised an army of 20,000 Covid-19 soldiers. Of them, 10,000 are being trained in handling Covid-19 situation...We are happy that the mayors of Mumbai and Kalyan-Dombivli municipal corporations – who were nurses once – have shown interest in working as nurses once again," the chief minister said.

# Covid tally 1,463, Kurnool causes concern in Andhra

Amaravati: For the first time in almost a week, Andhra Pradesh saw a noticeable decrease in coronavirus cases over a 24-hour span. On Friday morning, the State nodal officer reported that 61 positive cases were detected. However, the good news was overshadowed by the news of 2 deaths – taking the death toll to 33 in the state.

Kurnool district continues to cause concern as the tally continues to mount with every passing day. On Friday morning, it once again topped the tally chart, with 25 cases reported from the district alone. The



cumulative tally of the district now stands at 411 cases. The highest number of 10 deaths have also been reported from the district.

Guntur district reported 19 cases, taking its cumulative tally to 306. The district ranks

behind Kurnool, both in numbers of cases as well as in the death toll. So far 8 people from the district have died due to COVID-19.

Anantapur and Kadapa districts reported 6 cases each while 2 cases were reported

from Visakhapatnam and West Godavari districts, respectively.

The death toll rose to 33 as Kurnool and Nellore districts reported one death each.

The last 24 hours saw 82 persons cured of coronavirus and discharged from hospitals. With 403 persons cured and discharged from various hospitals till date, the number of active cases in the state is 1,027. The cumulative tally is 1,463 in AP.

While 7 districts have not reported any new cases over the past 24 hours, Vizianagaram

district remains the only district in the state to remain untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the state government is swiftly moving to fill up vacancies it had created for specialist doctors in Covid specialty hospitals, and district hospitals. It has invited applications for the positions of 830 doctors to work at Covid specialty hospitals in the 13 districts of the state. Similarly, it has also invited applicants for the vacant positions of 240 specialist doctors on contract basis.

IANS

# Heavy firing exchanges on LoC, 3 jawans hurt in Uri

PNS ■ JAMMU

Three Indian soldiers and two civilians including a minor girl received injuries during heavy exchange of crosses LoC firing in Rampur sector of Uri in Baramulla on Friday.

According to ground reports, Pakistani army violated ceasefire agreement in Hajipera area of Rampur sector in Uri around 3.30 p.m. Several civilian structures were hit in heavy exchange of firing on the Indian side in which two civilians

TWO CIVILIANS, INCLUDING A MINOR GIRL, WERE INJURED DURING THE FIRING

including a minor girl also received injuries.

Defence PRO in Srinagar, Col Rajesh Kalia said, "three Indian soldiers received injuries due to ceasefire violation by the Pakistan army in Uri sector on Friday".

He said, Indian army gave a befitting reply to Pakistan army. Unconfirmed reports

claimed, several structures of Pakistan army were hit hard by the Indian army during retaliatory firing in the sector.

A class 12th student was earlier killed in Mankote sector of Poonch on Thursday minutes before attending Iftar. Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Rahul Yadav Friday visited the native village of teenager and handed over a cheque to Rs 1 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased, a sum of Rs 10,000 under Red Cross and 5000 to an injured person identified as Zaffar Iqbal.



## Makeover too late

Well-meaning yes, but Rahul Gandhi needs to convince people with hands-on leadership than online conversations



It is tough to be in Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's shoes these days. For no matter what his best intentions are, nobody buys his attempt to mean serious business in COVID-19 times. Or his effort to be a credible determinant of national revival as a concerned citizen-volunteer. The timing of the makeover is a tad too late, howsoever eager and convincing he might want to appear. Even if he does get the Congress' reins, there's a long way before he gets taken seriously as a national alternative. The way he handled the last Lok Sabha debacle of the Congress, barely able to demonstrate proof that his leadership did work in reinvigorating India's grand old party, hasn't been lost on people's minds, even among those willing to give him the benefit of doubt. Recalcitrance, of the kind he demonstrated by resigning and hiding in the woods of Wayanad simply because the old guard didn't go along with him, didn't show him up as a leader who could rebuild. Or take everybody along step by step despite the odds. Rather he was seen as a quitter who had plunged the Congress into a cesspool of stagnation topped by the residue of dynastic politics. Over months of absence from political life and pushing himself into an abyss of irrelevance meant he became the subject of public ridicule. Loyalist partymen may have tried projecting him as their prince but his wilful transgressions over the months have only lent credence to the BJP's campaign of him being a "Pappu." So though he is crafting an image change in the middle of a pandemic, appearing to contribute to the national revival effort, it's not reaping results. Particularly at a time when capable leaders of the Congress have proven their mettle as Chief Ministers in the battle against the pandemic, be it Rajasthan's Ashok Gehlot or Punjab's Amarinder Singh. Both incidentally are the old guard. So though Rahul has been making the right projections about the COVID-19 crisis in India since February and justifiably raised some questions before the Government on social media, his party colleagues on the ground got all the attention. Besides, the Opposition Chief Ministers, too, are going out an arm and a leg to contain the disease spiral and Rahul, at this point of time, doesn't seem hands-on enough. Even his think tank-like advisories seem too tutored and self-serving than well-meaning.

But to his credit, his recent attempts have been at least sincere. He performed creditably at a recent press conference, too, where he refused to be baited by journalists into commenting on the shortcomings of the lockdown. The Congress' latest plan to rebrand him as a serious ideologue and a thinking leader will see him participate in a series of online conversations with public intellectuals, the idea being to strip down his dynastic entitlements and project him as a leader who has every issue in his grasp. The first of these publicised dialogues got off with economist and former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan. Not entirely a bad one as Rajan made some specific observations about a post-COVID scenario, like an infusion of ₹65,000 crore for the poor. But the point is Rajan has already made revival recommendations on various fora and will probably be heard and consulted. He won't need Rahul's forum to establish his credentials. On the other hand, when Rajan asked him to compare the response to COVID in India and the US, all Rahul could come up with was the social inequity in our country in getting treatment. Clearly, his critics made mincemeat of him for not seeing through the US oversight of the situation, Trump's flip flops and absurd theories and that nation's own discriminatory tests. Perhaps Rajan was a bit taken aback, too. And if the Congress had thought that appropriating Rajan would mean taking on the BJP, the economist himself was reasonably careful not to fall into that trap and said things like they should be at this moment of crisis. The Congress shouldn't try to make Rahul look "sharp" and then land with a PR disaster. Experts from India feature in world institutions and the Government could requisition their services anytime in rebuilding the nation. Rahul's conversations won't change that. But what he and his strategists must do is to diminish the trust deficit in him as a leader and build on his natural strengths like when he did *padayatras* and entered people's homes. Perhaps, he could lead a pan-India Congress community kitchen and health camp project to help the poor and migrants and rebuild the human touch that he had lost over the last few months. Perhaps, he could take up cases of starting up local economies. He has enough advisors, too, he just needs to show that he can be a leader through such simple connects.

## Redoubling Reliance

After a boom run lasting decades, is Reliance Industries finally admitting that growth is slowing down?



₹53,125 crore from the markets through the largest rights issue in Indian history? On the face of it, things are not going too bad for the company as despite the negative economic sentiment even before the Coronavirus impact, its consolidated profit was stable and revenues rose by over five per cent.

Well, Mukesh Ambani has stated time and again that he wishes the Reliance Industries reduces its debt load. After the Government first stalled the potential \$15 billion investment in Reliance's uber-profitable oil and gas business by the Saudi Arabian oil major, Aramco, it was speculated that things might not be all kosher between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ambani. While that is just speculation, the fact is that today, with a collapse in oil prices, Saudi Aramco may not be able to invest in Reliance in the first place. And while Reliance can raise debts across the world, even in India, with its stellar record of repayment, Ambani realises that it will likely be easier for him to capitalise on his company's reputation to raise funds much more easily. At the same time, raising money from investors will not increase the debt burden on the company, particularly when the economy will most likely be fragile over the next few quarters. At the same time, Ambani also likely realises that the world is pivoting away from oil and plastics, the two cornerstones of his business. The current pandemic might just be a turning point as to how the public consumes these products. Raising money now will likely keep Reliance's war chest ready as the company starts new consumer ventures over the next few years and prepares for a new world, a more sustainable one. But what impact will Reliance Industries' rights issue have on the overall capital market? It will almost certainly reduce the appetite for any new public issue over the next few quarters as it will suck a huge amount of money out of investors' pockets. That would have been the case in a healthy market, but in this market, it means that any other public offering will probably have to offer a deeper discount than earlier planned to get the public to bite.

# Frailty of man vs animal

As the debate continues over the origin of Coronavirus in Wuhan's wet markets, the fact is such places must be banned altogether given future threats to humans and animals as well



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

While a contentious debate rages as to whether the COVID-19 virus emerged from a "wet" market selling live animals, including exotic ones, and their meat in Wuhan, China, or escaped/let out of a virology laboratory at the same place, the case for banning such markets in every country needs to be pursued vigorously. Simply put, these should not exist. There are two main reasons for this. Animals — including crocodiles, deer, raccoons, pangolins and dogs — suffer horrendous cruelty. They are kept in utterly cramped and most unhygienic conditions, which cause them stress 24/7, and are grossly underfed. The stress factor is heightened by the fact that they often have to watch others of their species kept with them being slaughtered in their presence and their meat sold. In fact, wet markets owe their nomenclature to the blood spilled on the floor when animals are killed. Many in India, who have bought chicken meat from often-illegal roadside stalls, have seen it. Many buyers have also witnessed their feathers being plucked from them even when they are alive, with them screeching in agony.

All this is nothing secret. Worse, it comes at the end of the long journeys in the worst possible conditions of confinement involving dehydration and starvation. The inhuman manner of prolonged transportation, as well as the abominable conditions in which they are kept in the markets, weaken their immune systems and leave them most vulnerable to diseases. Besides, keeping wild animals along with domesticated ones enables viruses to jump species, including transmutation to affect humans, which has happened in the case of COVID-19. Not surprisingly, a number of epidemics, including that of SARS, have originated from such markets and will emerge again if the latter are not closed worldwide.

Apart from the medical consequences for humans, the existence of wet markets raises fundamental questions relating to their future. These exist because people not only eat meat but believe, consciously or sub-consciously, that they can treat animals — which exist for their benefit — any way they want to. This, in turn, springs from the belief that they can treat nature, of which animals are a part, just as they desire, which, again, lies at the root of the environmental crisis which threatens humankind with extinction.

Clearly, one needs to examine humankind's attitude to both animals and nature. The belief that animals are inferior to humans and meant for their benefit and, hence, can be treated in the cruelest manner, is a result of the Graeco-Roman, Judaeo-Christian and post-Renaissance-Enlightenment mindset which dominates modern discourse. Its essence has been best



expressed by Aristotle in *Politics*. He wrote that nature made all animals for the sake of man and that it was permissible to enslave people who did not possess reason as it was to enslave animals.

Saint Augustine wrote in *The City of God*, "when we read 'Thou shalt not kill', we do not understand this phrase to apply to bushes, because they have no sensation, nor to unreasoning animals that fly, walk or crawl, because they are not associated in a community with us by reason... Hence it is by a very just ordinance of the Creator that their life and death is subordinated to us." Given such views, it is hardly surprising that Matt Carmill writes in *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History*, "animals were routinely treated with a mixture of brutal indifference and sadism" in the Graeco-Roman world.

The attitude continued beyond it. In *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*, Charles Patterson quotes Saint Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the greatest exponent of medieval Scholasticism, as saying that it was all right to kill animals because "the life of animals... is preserved not for themselves but for man." He denied not only rationality but afterlife to animals. Patterson further points out, "Like Aristotle, whose work he incorporated in his theology, only the reasoning part of the

soul survived after death. Since animals lacked the capacity to reason, he claimed that their souls, unlike human souls, did not survive after their death."

As it has been repeatedly shown, the characterisation of rationality as the defining attribute of humans, is untenable. People are equally prone to irrationality. Otherwise, they would not have supported creeds like Nazism and Fascism — or any of the fundamentalist religious doctrines of our time — and voted Hitler and Mussolini to power. Besides, rationality can hardly be regarded as a supremely laudable faculty in itself. It is an instrument for drawing conclusions from premises. The capacity for reasoning, which is central to it, can be used to justify both moral and immoral ends. Also, not all persons are equally capable of reasoning. Does one, who is less capable than others, deserve to be treated with the kind of horrifying savagery that is reserved for animals? If the answer is yes, the question arises as to what is that level of rationality below which such treatment to humans is permissible?

Historically, madness, which came to be designated as mental illness at the end of the 18th century, has been considered as something that puts a person beyond society's pale. As Michel Foucault points out in *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, "in

the majority of the cities of Europe there existed throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance a place of detention reserved for the insane..." There have been many definitions of madness. This writer believes that it is best considered as existence in a separate, personal reality very different from, and inconsistent with, what is accepted by the masses of people. The behavioural manifestation of madness lies in a person's reaction, which can be violent and/or disruptive when there is a clash between his/her and the society's version of reality. Thus, a person may consider himself to be Jesus Christ and fly into a rage if people laugh at his claim.

Questions arise. What if a person's separate reality is the true one? There have been people in advance of their ages, such as Nicolaus Copernicus, whose model placed the sun rather than the earth as the centre of the universe and who held that the earth spun on its axis and orbited the sun annually. His doctrine, however, was pronounced heretical in 1616 and the Inquisition in Rome forced Galileo Galilei to recant his support of the Copernican view on June 22, 1633. In our time, we have seen dictatorial regimes like the Soviet Union silencing a dissident by proclaiming him/her insane and dispatching him/her to an asylum.

From this angle, it is quite

clear that harping on animals' lack of reason is a rationalisation of unpardonably cruel way in which humans have been treating them. It is not just animals. There are implications for humans. Patterson points in *Eternal Treblinka*, "Since violence begets violence, the enslavement of animals injected a higher level of domination and coercion into human history by creating oppressive hierarchical societies and unleashing large-scale warfare never seen before." He further quotes the historian Keith Thomas as believing that domestication of animals created a more authoritarian attitude since "human rule over the lower creatures provided the mental analogue on which many political and social arrangements were based."

Clearly, human beings cannot escape the adverse consequences of their own inhumanity be it in respect of themselves or other living beings. We are in the midst of the devastating consequences of COVID-19 pandemic. What next? Two telling lines by a Carter Family song, quoted by James Baldwin at the beginning of *The Fire Next Time*, run, "God gave Noah the rainbow sign/ No more water but the fire next time." Will it be a virus instead of fire?

(The writer is Consultant Editor, The Pioneer, and an author)

## SOUNDBITE

Migrants sneaking into the State in the second phase of the lockdown are posing a real threat. There is little the Government can do about such clandestine travels.

**Bihar Health Secretary**  
—Sanjay Kumar



I will always remember how you (Rishi Kapoor) made me feel, Chintu uncle. Your love, encouragement, humour and honesty. Some losses are too personal to discuss publicly.

**Actor**  
—Abhishek Bachchan



I hope countries will follow the remarkable example of South Korea, which has been extremely successful in addressing the Coronavirus pandemic.

**UN chief**  
—Antonio Guterres



Incidents and comments against Muslims are bound to attract negative reactions abroad. It is more important to change the domestic reality than do damage control.

**Congress leader**  
—Shashi Tharoor



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Personal loss

Sir — It has been a terrible week for Indian cinema with the sudden deaths of actors Irrfan Khan and Rishi Kapoor. The feeling of grief is such that it will not go away too soon. For the fans, who may not have any shared any close moment with them, the loss is quite personal.

Undoubtedly, Kapoor was an evergreen romantic hero and a wonderful human being. The greatest thing about him was that he made a distinct mark in Bollywood amid a galaxy of superstars such as Amitabh Bachchan, Shatrughan Sinha, Vinod Khanna and Sanjeev Kumar, all of whom were his contemporaries. Kapoor charmed millions with hit films like *Mera Naam Joker*, *Bobby*, *Chandni* and *Amar Akbar Anthony*.

Irrfan was a distinguished and charismatic actor who made his name in both Bollywood and Hollywood. He stunned the audience with audacious roles in movies like *Paan Singh Tomar*, *Life of Pi* and *The Lunchbox*. Both actors enriched our lives so well.

**Ramesh G Jethwani**  
Bengaluru

### Stuck between the devil and the deep sea

A weary World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11 and roughly two weeks later, India ordered a nationwide lockdown to check its brutal swoop on countrymen. The intervening days presented the ruling Government precious time to study the pathogen and its pace, formulate a comprehensive strategy and make foolproof arrangements. When the lockdown came into effect, India had just 618 confirmed positive cases and had reported only 13 deaths. These numbers have gone up to 35,000 cases and 1,147 deaths now. Maps of India based on infected numbers and deaths then and now are totally different. Both the ruling Government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are in a Catch-22 situation, which is either to extend the lockdown beyond May 3 and face a rebellion or unlock the country and expect an apocalyptic turn in the hotspot States. This virus crisis is not amenable to cosmetic exercises. It calls for a structured strategy, one which is sagacious, thoughtful and fair, and which is free of theatrics and rhetoric. Further, a strategy that ignores the strengths and skills of the federal States in the Indian Union can never enlist the success expected either. And a formula suitable for Maharashtra or Gujarat is unlikely to test positive in Karnataka or Kerala.

### Set priorities right

Sir — The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted the world economy and India is no exception to this. In this hour of crisis, the Government must salvage the

economy by stopping all projects that are not essential in the short run. Instead, the Centre has decided to freeze the hike in dearness allowance for Government employees. Unsurprisingly, the Congress is up in arms against

this decision. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi pointed out that the Government should have put on hold the Central Vista project instead of taking away money from the middle class.

It is true that the Narendra



Migrant workers deserve to be treated with dignity. An action plan for the journey of the stranded, exhausted and those longing to return to their native homes, as also a financial package to save them from penury, are not avoidable options. The work for a National Register of Migrants (NRM) should begin forthwith to afford them a sort of identity. It is important for us to introspect as images of workers, men with headloads and women holding infants on the highways are not great advertisements for the "sovereign socialist secular democratic republic" the Constitution had guaranteed to usher in.

**Haridasan Rajan**  
Kozhikode

Modi Government seems to have kept aside an enormous amount of money for development projects — the Central Vista and bullet train projects are examples. Decisions that affect the citizens directly can be justified only when the Government is in a real financial crisis. But it is clear that the Government prefers its development projects more than the people. This is condemnable.

**TK Nandan**  
Kochi

### Mounting grief

Sir — In this crucial time when we are fighting a dreadful virus, the sad demise of actors Irrfan Khan and Rishi Kapoor has doubled the grief. Irrfan was a brilliant performer and a magnificent actor and did justice to every role he was given. He would have contributed tremendously to the film industry had he survived. Rishi Kapoor was the superstar of his time. It is an irreparable loss. May they rest in peace.

**Shambhavi**  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

The world needs new leadership

We need to produce powerful leaders, who have the qualities of clear thinking, decisiveness and courage of conviction



VK BAHUGUNA

In normal times, leadership is generally discussed only in terms of governance and influencing a large chunk of people to a particular way of thinking. In this century, we have missed producing leaders in social and spiritual fields, who see human beings as a part of a larger cosmic ecosystem. Right now, the world needs leaders who can visualise ways to find solutions to everybody's needs and problems. Mahatma Gandhi, who was the source of inspiration for freedom from colonialism for millions in the world and who used to say, "The world has enough for everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed", was one such world leader of the last century. Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Junior were among the other luminaries who are remembered for providing leadership for ending apartheid in South Africa and civil liberties in America, respectively.

Many believe that it was the reckless killing of live animals like bats and snakes in China's hotels/restaurants that led to the transmission of the Coronavirus to humans. And now, the world is collectively paying the price for this unsatiated greed for animal meat from non-traditional sources and for disturbing nature's balance. The Coronavirus is reminding humanity that "howsoever, small I may be, I can play havoc with your lives and prove your science helpless in dealing with me." This outbreak is also an indication that nature has its own way of striking an equilibrium among the different components of the ecosystem. Nature cannot be taken lightly because in the past it has banished highly-evolved civilisations like the Indus Valley, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and so on.

The pandemic and the resultant global lockdown have thrown up some challenges to the present civilisation to act and think of providing new leadership to the world which is in harmony with nature and the cosmic world. We should, therefore, also see some of the positives that have come out of this outbreak and learn lessons from this. Any adverse situation always brings some opportunity for leaders to rise to the occasion and devise new policies and strategies and the Corona crisis has also given us some food for positive thought. The first positive is its impact on the environment. Even the most polluted cities like Delhi are now clean and people are breathing fresh air after a long time. Even the countryside has been rejuvenated and the tops of the Himalayan ranges are now visible from far and wide. There has been a resurgence in wildlife and animals are coming into urban and rural human settlements all over the world, reminding us how selfishly we have behaved and cornered all the space and resources of the world for ourselves. All our rivers, including the dying Yamuna and Ganga, have become crystal clear.

More significantly, today we are united as a nation. Indian citizens have shown unprecedented unity — barring a few instances that were sparked out of sheer desperation for survival — to fight this. The bureaucracy and civil society are working together like never before. We have also discovered that Indians have better immunity and this has left the world scientific community puzzled. It could be due to our food habits, inoculations, culture and so on. We are going back to our roots like never before and our ancient Ayurvedic prescriptions are coming back in use for immunity boosting.

Governments the world over must treat this as an opportunity for establishing a world which is in harmony with nature's fundamental values of respecting all living and non-living forms. We must collectively try and bring the world's precious ecosystems back to normal in consonance with our own sustainable development goals and those set by the United Nations for the world to follow.

All good leaders should think that way and give able leadership in this difficult time. However, let us think of producing new leaders by using the present synergy the world and our country has achieved. We must rewrite the norms of governance, social fibre and spiritual attainment. Let us evolve into a balanced, peaceful society marching ahead silently in harmony with nature and the cosmos. We need to produce effective and powerful leaders in all fields, who have the much-needed qualities of clear thinking, decisiveness, courage of conviction, tolerance for dissent, passion, humility and compassion.

The future leaders should equip themselves with facts about what they are in-charge of and then prepare an action plan with the involvement of all stakeholders. One of the most important attributes of a leader is that s/he must be positive in his/her approach and create a team to execute his/her plan, particularly during a crisis. S/he must lead from the front, not panic in the face of adversity nor allow others to panic.

S/he should always be in touch with the people and the outside world and keep all in good perspective and motivated. As an old saying goes, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." George Bernard Shaw once said, "A life spent making mistakes is not only more honourable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing." No matter what, leaders make mistakes down the road but they learn from them. They must show decisive leadership skills and be remembered for their deeds. New India must produce such leaders.

*(The writer is a retired civil servant)*

CHINA WILL DO ANYTHING THEY CAN TO HAVE ME LOSE THIS RACE. BEIJING WANTS JOE BIDEN TO WIN THE ELECTION TO EASE TRADE PRESSURE ON IT.

—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP



CHINA HAS NO INTEREST IN INTERFERING IN THE US PRESIDENTIAL POLLS. BEIJING HOPES THAT AMERICANS WILL NOT TRY TO DRAG CHINA INTO IT.

—CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN GENG SHUANG

# Will private sector stand up?

Till now only Government healthcare professionals are combatting the pandemic. Where are the other stakeholders in the healthcare sector?



SAKHI JOHN

KRITIE PASRICHA

Given India's resource limitations and constraints, both at the Centre and State level, it is amply clear that the measures to battle the Coronavirus require more than just State efforts. There is a need for a comprehensive public health national policy to make adequate capacity available, in true letter and spirit, till the grassroot level. When the clock is ticking and much remains to be achieved to handle an unprecedented pandemic, it is the time for the private sector to stand up and be counted and open up for the public.

**The present scenario:** On the one hand, we hear that the pandemic will last up to 2024 and on the other, we are told that the virulence of the strain will be low but infectiousness high. This gives rise to so many questions. Is herd immunity the only answer for us? Who are the major players in India who are protecting the country from the shackles of this disease? We all know that the task at hand is humongous as we have to manage a population of 1.3 billion, discipline them, take care of their basic needs and provide them with appropriate healthcare. Even the fastest-growing trillion-dollar economy in the world will need help at a time like this. There is an old adage that, "Charity begins at home." Hence, the private sector, which gains a lot from the Government, must stand by it now and provide equal support to the country's infirm and powerless population.

**The role of the health sector:** The Corona-warriors, hailing from the Government sector mostly, are giving their all in the fight against the pandemic but the resources are limited. Some private hospitals have come forward and they have been included in the list of hospitals approved by the Government for COVID-19 testing and treatment. They have the exact modules to be followed for treatment and submit daily data to the Director, Preventive Medicine. However, the big question is where are the others? Till now only Government healthcare professionals are combatting the disease. Where are the other stakeholders in the healthcare sector? If this were a war and all the security forces were not a part of it or doing enough, nobody would have spared the Government. This is a similar situation, just that the warriors are from the medical fraternity. Whether a war happens or not, the military is trained for it. Similarly, these are the situations for which doctors/nurses are helped, given resources and educated to serve.

What about the Hippocratic Oath that doctors take? If not in these situations, then when is a doctor supposed to protect patients? It's the same "Do or Die" situation for both, soldiers and medical professionals. It is the same threat to life and a family to provide for. It's the same as keeping the country before self. It's the same selfless and unconditional love for the countrymen that should be the guiding principle for healthcare professionals in the private sector now. The private sector hospitals should rise to the occasion now and take the responsibility of training healthcare staff, organising sessions and making their infrastructure available for the nation to fight this Corona war.

The same goes for pharmaceutical giants. All grants, permissions, compensations and concessions were made by the Government to bring them to this stature. So what about their responsibility towards the nation? How come everyone is selling masks and sanitisers at double the cost? Where is the personal obligation and commitment to the country? Aren't we meant to give back to the country in times of need? What about the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of these pharmaceutical companies and corporate hospitals? In spite of the present Financial Year 2020 CSR estimate of ₹2,000-₹3,000 crore, this is only a drop in the ocean when

“ IF THIS WERE A WAR AND ALL THE SECURITY FORCES WERE NOT A PART OF IT OR DOING ENOUGH, NOBODY WOULD HAVE SPARED THE GOVERNMENT. THIS IS A SIMILAR SITUATION. JUST THAT THE WARRIORS ARE FROM THE MEDICAL FRATERNITY. WHETHER A WAR HAPPENS OR NOT, THE MILITARY IS TRAINED FOR IT. SIMILARLY, THESE ARE THE SITUATIONS FOR WHICH DOCTORS/NURSES ARE HELPED, GIVEN RESOURCES AND EDUCATED TO SERVE

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it comes to the support that is actually required on the ground to fight the pandemic. This is the time that India Inc. should give with both hands to support the populace and country which has made them what they are, in the first place. Sadly, there are very few examples emerging from this direction.

Also, now that the Government itself has a PM Cares Fund dedicated for the COVID-war and is open to accepting all CSR funds, it needs to be decided whether these funds must be merged in the Central repository or used for welfare measures in States. There is a need for a centralised system which will reduce duplication of efforts and make the funds immediately available for use without disturbing the already planned projects.

**Major challenges:** COVID testing, even at subsidised rates and a cap of ₹4,500 per test, is a luxury even for the middle class, let alone the underprivileged. Hence, the people who are most susceptible to disease will not have affordability or accessibility to these tests. How many tests can be done daily? And how many days will it take to screen the whole population? The Indian healthcare workforce of around four million is majorly employed in the private sector and that, too, mainly in metro and Tier-I and II cities.

This lopsided availability needs to be addressed once we are on our way to fighting COVID-19 throughout the country. The World Health Organisation (WHO) standard of 22.8 doctors and nurses per 10,000 population is met by India, keeping aside the distribution patterns. A whopping 70 per cent of the population lives in rural India, which is backed by only 33 per cent of the healthcare workforce.

The Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) are the ones on whom the onus of care lies in these testing times. These centres, which have been made outdated by private practice, now have to be at par to combat the disease. So where are the privileged and fund-surplus clinics and

private practitioners now? If they cannot open their clinics to help the nation in its time of need, why can't they work in these PHCs? Primary healthcare workers are already scanning zones for Corona-positive cases. It is time for the specialised lot to come in and offer their services.

There is going to be an absolute dearth of ventilators, beds, ICU set-ups, nurses and doctors. COVID-19 has impacted hugely the supply of medical aids, be it electrical, mechanical, pharmacological or economical. The increasing demand needs to be taken care of and planned for, both in terms of availability and supply logistics. In an economic slump, how will the expenses be met, and on what opportunity costs? Pharmaceutical giants need to step in and take full responsibility for making supplies available with logistics, whereas the hospitals need to provide services and make operations smooth.

The Coronavirus crisis at the moment has an unclear path. Actions will depend on a hypothetical acceptance of either a delayed recovery or a prolonged contraction. Delayed recovery if we see a count rise till April, followed by control through social distancing, when the testing is fast and the virus is seasonal, will give an optimistic public approach by April.

Or else the prolonged contraction phase where peak is not achieved until May, with ineffective testing and failed social distancing, and the virus is non-seasonal, the virus will trail till the end of the year keeping all engaged and resources exhausted. In both the scenarios, the role of the private industry and pharmaceutical giants is large, with immediate action required. At the moment, the major challenges that are apparent are bridging the gap between knowing and doing. That the COVID-19 has an exponential growth is easy to know but tackling it is difficult unless similar experiences were seen and lessons were learnt in the past.

**Response management:** Private hospitals need to start planning critical care

massively to control the pandemic surge in healthcare systems. Without this the number of deaths cannot be contained. Achieving it once can give us the confidence to fight resurgence later, if any. Capacity-building to empower the Government by private hospitals is required. Simple things being done religiously right in a controlled and quick manner is required. Surveillance of the disease, followed by contact tracing and then quarantine, needs all private hospitals, pharmaceutical companies and IT giants to step up together. The quicker and wider we screen, the better we can control the devastating outcomes. This will in turn relax social distancing measures once we are down the slope for positive cases.

The credibility and accessibility to antibody test screening needs to be widely made available to understand zero-prevalence and to start with the concept of herd immunity. If the private sector will not help now, it will become very difficult to restart the economy. The vicious cycle needs to break.

Corporate Social Innovation via philanthropy, media advocacy, social responsibility tasks and shared values by the private sector will need to leave a positive impact not only for the present but also for the future, when all will be well. It can also be taken as brand development.

If the private sector doesn't come to the aid of the nation on its own, then the Government will have to take over hospitals and laboratories for some time for creating ICUs, isolation wards and testing samples. Universal healthcare is everyone's right and the Government will need to ensure its availability across all strata of population throughout all geographical boundaries. It is time to double up the responsibilities. After all, we are all in this together.

*(John is faculty member at the Public Health and Hospital Management Department, Jamia Hamdard and Pasrichaa is a research scholar)*

# India must strike while the iron is hot

We must act fast to capitalise on the flight of firms from China. Initial indicators are suggesting that we are unable to project ourselves as an alternative to China and Japan has already made a move in this direction by offering major incentives



SHASHANK SAURAV

The lockdown has been extended yet again although this time there is a relaxation of some restrictions to enable economic activity. It will be interesting to see how the Government as well as the industry negotiate this challenge.

Despite the doom and gloom scenario in the country right now due to the lockdown, the fact remains that the current Corona crisis has provided an opportunity, too, for India. But

for the country to take advantage of this spell, it would require major initiatives and that too, at a fast pace. COVID-19 has provided the much-needed elbow room to the political leadership to push for transformation, more particularly land and labour reforms. If a Communist China can serve the economic interests of the capitalist West, then India is even better positioned to do that.

Now, more than ever, global firms are aware of the dangers of putting all their eggs in one basket and they must implement strategies to reduce that risk. It is quite surprising that the risk-governing framework of all these corporates didn't highlight the concentration of manufacturing in one territory as a key risk and even their boards overlooked this aspect. China has established

itself as the manufacturing hub for the global economy and it is also positioned as the first-tier supplier in the overall global supply chain. Even India is hugely dependent on China for raw material, chemical and engineering goods. Our telecom, pharmaceutical, power and mobile accessories sectors are largely dependent on China for raw material, semi-finished goods and skilled manpower.

It would not be easy for any country to replace China and position itself as an alternative to it, but we can start leveraging our competitiveness in areas like information technology, to gradually move in this direction. The world order is expected to change and diplomacy will play a key role in establishing India as an alternative, low-cost manufacturing destination. For this to happen, first

and foremost, Indian manufacturers must start thinking globally. Integration with the global supply chain is the key to this and instead of just setting up assembly lines, our companies should start thinking of developing industrial clusters where India can be a first-tier supplier in the global supply chain. It is worthwhile to understand the difference between first-tier and second-tier supplier. All the entities and activities in the supply chain are dependent on the first-tier supplier and, therefore, placing India as one will provide sustainable economic development which can be enjoyed for decades.

This is a long-term task and apart from structural reforms (like land, labour, sanctity of contracts, tax certainty and so on), this will require skilled manpower and latest technol-

ogy, for which the Government and private players, both, must come forward.

Some sort of additional tax incentives should be considered as a stimulus for local players to start investing in these areas. Friendly nations like Japan can be our potential technology ally and this would serve the economic as well as political interests of both the countries.

However, under all circumstances India must act fast to capitalise on flight of firms from China. Initial indicators are suggesting that we are unable to project ourselves as an alternative to China and Japan has already made a move in this direction by offering major incentives.

India is lagging despite lowering income tax rates last year, which has increased the competitiveness.

However, policymakers should understand that tax rates are just one among the various factors which a person looks at before committing his resources. As per a Nomura report, out of 56 companies which have decided to shift operations from China, only three have decided to come to India.

We can either continue to blame the bureaucracy or India Inc. can realise that it is high time to get the bull by the horns.

In 2017, Deloitte research identified five countries, which it dubbed the MITI-V (Malaysia, India, Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam) as an alternative to China in which India was positioned at top.

We have our advantage in terms of a young population, cheap labour, domestic consumer market, rising

income levels and so on, but this will remain in theory only till the time policy interventions grab the eyeballs of investors.

If we lose this opportunity, then we will lose out for at least the next three decades and provide millions of employment opportunities to our Asian peers.

India must take a host of measures and do it fast while the iron is still hot, to convince Western investors to come here and position itself as an alternative in the global supply chain. Initially our manufacturers can supplement the Chinese global supply chain but we should think of establishing ourselves as an alternative to China for all time to come.

*(The writer is a Chartered Accountant)*



# May brings reopenings around globe as toll climbs

AP ■ NEW YORK

May is bringing cautious reopenings from coronavirus lockdowns, from Beijing's Forbidden city to shopping malls in Texas, as the grim economic toll from the pandemic ticks higher.

Many communities around the world are inching toward normalcy without certainty over whether they've vanquished outbreaks of the virus. But bleak new figures released Thursday underscored the pain inflicted by the disease and added to pressure on leaders to end shutdowns.

The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits surpassed a staggering 30 million and the European economy shrank a record 3.8%

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS	GLOBALLY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	1,111,400	64,883		3,364,110	2,37,465
Spain	2,42,988	24,824			
Italy	2,07,428	28,236			
France	1,67,178	24,376			
UK	1,77,454	27,510			
Germany	1,63,542	6,640			
Iran	95,646	6,091			
Turkey	1,22,392	3,258			



in the first quarter as hotels, restaurants, construction sites and manufacturing were frozen by lockdowns.

As bad as those and other numbers are, some are outdated because of the lag in gathering data so the true situation is almost certainly much worse.

Still, analysts saw a glimmer of hope in the way new unemployment claims have

fallen for four straight weeks. Andrew Stettner, a senior fellow at the Century Foundation, said the wave of layoffs at vulnerable businesses such as restaurants, hotels and stores may have largely run its course.

Layoffs amount to 1 in 6 American workers and encompass more people than the entire population of Texas. Some economists say the US

unemployment rate for April may be as high as 20% - a figure not seen since the Depression of the 1930s, when joblessness peaked at 25%.

China's ancient, majestic Forbidden City reopened on Friday with all tickets for the May 1-5 holiday period sold out, and a limit of 5,000 visitors a day, down from the earlier maximum of 80,000.

The Chinese capital reopened its parks and museums, with controlled entries, about three months after hundreds of millions of people were ordered into a near lockdown as the coronavirus outbreak erupted in the central city of Wuhan.

China on Friday reported 12 new cases, six of them brought from overseas, and no new deaths for the 16th day.

In the US, where large numbers of people are still dying from Covid-19, health officials are warning of the danger of a second wave of infection, and some employers and employees have expressed fear of going back to work.

In some states, authorities are adopting a more cautious stance: California Governor Gavin Newsom ordered beach-

es in Orange County closed until further notice after tens of thousands of people flocked to the sand last weekend.

In other parts of the world, shutdowns are winding down, with caution.

Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said most business activities will reopen from Monday, days before a two-month lockdown is due to end, after infections fell sharply in recent weeks.

Thailand was preparing to reopen parks and some retailers, hair salons and restaurants, while keeping a 10 pm-4 am curfew in place and extending its ban on sales of alcohol.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who recently recovered from Covid-19, said the UK is "past the peak" and

"on a downward slope" in its outbreak but was expected to extend precautions, while Germany, Portugal and the Czech Republic were set to start loosening their restrictions.

With signs that the outbreak has stabilised in places, and after news that the economy shrank at a 4.8% annual rate in the first three months of the year with a crushing 40% drop projected for this quarter, President Donald Trump chose not to extend the White House's social-distancing guidelines past their expiration on Thursday.

Those guidelines encouraged people to work from home and avoid restaurants, groups and nonessential travel. The virus has killed over 2,30,000 people worldwide,

including more than 61,000 in the US, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Confirmed infections globally topped 3.2 million, with 1 million of them in the US, but the true numbers are believed to be much higher because of limited testing, differences in counting the dead and concealment by some governments.

## Around the Globe

- Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said that "where we stand now means not everyone can return to work as they did before the corona crisis." The Scandinavian country has slowly reopened by allowing some classes to return to school and hairdressers, physiotherapists and tattoo parlors, among others, as well as courts of law to reopen
- The Singapore Government is setting up on-site community care facilities in the most affected dormitories for Covid-19 positive migrant workers who are clinically well or display mild symptoms, health authorities said on Friday. Patients will be moved to the Community Care Facilities (CCFs), set up by the Inter-agency Task Force, immediately after diagnosis instead of waiting to be transferred to an off-site medical facility, they said
- Spain's Government expects that the Eurozone's fourth largest economy will shrink by 9.2 per cent this year and that unemployment will reach 19 per cent of the working-age population. Deputy Prime Minister Nadia Calvino announced the grim forecast on Friday when she explained Spain's economic stability plan that it has presented to the European Union
- South Africa began easing one of the world's strictest lockdowns on Friday, with runners and dog-walkers returning eagerly to the streets but not all wearing the face masks that are now mandatory in the country with Africa's most coronavirus cases. In Johannesburg, Cape Town and elsewhere, people took a breath of fall air and some headed to the malls to buy warm clothes for winter, which brings a new challenge in combating the virus: flu season
- Under Japan's coronavirus state of emergency, people have been asked to stay home. Many are not. Some still have to commute to their jobs despite risks of infection, while others continue to dine out, picnic in parks and crowd into grocery stores with scant regard for social distancing. On Wednesday, the first day of the "Golden Week" holidays that run through May 5, Tokyo's leafy Shiba Park was packed with families with small children, day camping in tents
- Iran's death toll from the outbreak of the new coronavirus increased by 63 in the past 24 hours to 6,091, health ministry spokesman Kianush Jahanpur said in a statement on state TV on Friday. The total number of diagnosed cases of the new coronavirus in the Islamic Republic, one of the Middle Eastern countries hardest hit by the outbreak, has reached 95,646, including 2,899 in critical condition, he added

# Trump speculates that China released virus in lab 'mistake'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has speculated that China could have unleashed the coronavirus on the world due to some kind of horrible "mistake," and his intelligence agencies said they are still examining a notion put forward by the president and aides that the pandemic may have resulted from an accident at a Chinese lab.

Trump even suggested on Thursday that the release could have been intentional.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the clearinghouse for the web of US spy agencies, said it had ruled out the

virus being man-made but was still investigating the precise source of the global pandemic, which has killed more than 220,000 people worldwide.

Though scientists suggest the likeliest origin of the pandemic remains natural, that it spread from an infected animal to a human, Trump claimed to have seen evidence to support the theory that the origin was an infectious disease lab in Wuhan, the epicenter of the Chinese outbreak.

He said the U.S. now "is finding out how it came out."

"It's a terrible thing that happened," the president said. "Whether they made a mistake

or whether it started off as a mistake and then they made another one, or did somebody do something on purpose."

The intel statement said the federal agencies concur "with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not man-made or genetically modified."

"The IC will continue to rigorously examine emerging information and intelligence to determine whether the outbreak began through contact with infected animals or if it was the result of an accident at a laboratory in Wuhan."

In recent days the Trump administration has sharpened its rhetoric on China, accusing the

geopolitical foe and vital trading partner of failing to act swiftly enough to sound the alarm about the outbreak or to stop the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. U.S. officials have said the Chinese government should "pay a price" for its handling of the pandemic.

This all comes as the pace of Trump's own original response continues to come under scrutiny, questioned as too meager and too slow. Earlier Thursday, before Trump's comments, the Chinese government said that any claims that the coronavirus was released from a laboratory are "unfounded and purely fabricated out of nothing."

## WHO should be 'ashamed' of itself, it is like a PR agency for China: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has said the World Health Organisation should be "ashamed" of itself, as he likened it to a public relations agency for China amidst the coronavirus pandemic after it originated in Wuhan.

The Trump administration has launched a probe into the role of the WHO on coronavirus, and has temporarily suspended the US' financial

assistance to it.

"I think that the World Health Organisation should be ashamed of themselves because they are like the public relations agency for China," Trump told reporters in the East Room of the White House on Thursday.

Ever since the virus outbreak came to light in Wuhan in December last, speculation has been rife on whether the viral strain originated from China's premier Wuhan

Institute of Virology (WIV) or from its nearby Huanan Seafood Market.

The US has launched an investigation into whether the deadly virus "escaped" from the WIV.

China has come under increasing global pressure over lack of transparency in its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, which has so far infected over 3,257,000 people and killed 233,400 others across the world.

# China lowers Hubei province's emergency response level

PTI ■ BEIJING/WUHAN

China will lower its Covid-19 emergency response from the highest level to the second-highest in Hubei province and its capital Wuhan, the epicentre of the deadly virus outbreak, on Saturday, as most tourist sites in the country were opened for May Day holidays.

The lowering of the emergency level shows a major breakthrough in Hubei's prevention and control against Covid-19, but it does not mean that Hubei has downgraded its risk alert or decreased work intensity against the epidemic, Vice-Governor

of Hubei Yang Yunyan told the media on Friday.

After more than three months of precise and tight prevention and control, the virus spread is "basically cut off" in Hubei, Yang said.

Hubei province was locked down for three months since January 23. Now, the lockdown has been lifted and people are allowed to travel after health checks.

"The unprecedented emergency measures during the initial phase have basically cut off the spread of the novel coronavirus," Yang said. "In line with national regulations and the provincial contingency plan,

Hubei has basically met the condition to lower the emergency response level," state-run Xinhua news agency quoted the governor as saying.

The emergency level was downgraded as the province did not report new Covid-19 cases in the last 27 days. However, Hubei province has reported 631 asymptomatic coronavirus in the period.

China's National Health Commission (NHC) on Friday said 25 new asymptomatic cases were reported in the country, taking the total tally to 981, including 115 from abroad, who were still under medical observation.



## Fast, sensitive antibody blood test for Covid-19 developed

PTI ■ BEIJING

Scientists have developed a quick, sensitive test for antibodies against the novel coronavirus in human blood that could help doctors track a person's exposure to Covid-19, as well as confirm suspected cases that tested negative by other methods. Because Covid-19 symptoms range from mild to severe, with some people apparently having no symptoms, the number of people who have been infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus at some point is likely much higher than the number of confirmed cases, the researchers said.

Although more research needs to be done, it is possible

that people with antibodies to the virus could be immune to future Covid-19 outbreaks, according to the research published in the journal Analytical Chemistry.

To help identify people with current or past exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the researchers, including those from Southern Medical University in China, wanted to develop a fast, sensitive antibody test.

They based their test on a technique called a lateral flow immunoassay (LFA); a home pregnancy test is an example of this kind of assay.

The team attached a viral coat protein to a specific region on a strip of nitrocellulose, and then added human serum.

# UN chief: World should follow SKorea

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations chief said he hopes many countries in the world will follow the "remarkable example" of South Korea, which he said has been "extremely successful" in addressing the coronavirus pandemic and is planning to tackle climate change in its recovery from Covid-19.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pointed to Thursday's announcement "that there was no new case in the Republic of Korea," the country's official name. At the same time, he said, South Korea has presented plans for "a very ambitious green deal" for its recovery from the pandemic, including a ban on new coal-fired plants

and a reduction of emissions from existing coal-fired plants.

"We hope that this example of the Republic of Korea will be followed by many other countries in the world," Guterres said at a news conference. The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a statement early Thursday that four cases in the previous 24 hours, all imported, took the country's total to 10,765, with 247 deaths and 9,059 recoveries.

South Korea's caseload has been slowing in recent weeks after it recorded hundreds of new cases every day between late February and early March. It has subsequently relaxed some of its social distancing guidelines and is expected to

ease up on more restrictions in the coming days if the downward trend continues.

South Korea had its first confirmed coronavirus case January 20, the same day as the

## SKorea reports 9 new cases, none in Daegu

**Seoul:** South Korea reported nine new cases as infections continue to wane. The figures released by South Korea's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday brought national totals to 10,774 infections and 248 deaths. None of the new cases were from the hardest-hit city of Daegu, where more than 6,800 people have been sickened since February.

United States.

But unlike the US, officials there used a test focused on the same gene targets as the World Health Organization's recommended test, according to the website of a test manufacturer. The Government then quickly allowed private sector labs to produce it.

As a result, a nation with less than one-sixth the population of the United States mobilised to test more than 20,000 people a day. South Korea also instituted drive-through testing centers, allowing quicker identification of those who were infected but might not be displaying symptoms, thus slowing the emergence of new cases to a more manageable level.

## Japan debuts robots at hotels for virus patients

**Bangkok:** Robot staff debuted at a Tokyo hotel used for mildly sick coronavirus patients under a new plan to free up beds at hospitals overburdened with more severe cases.

1Pepper, a talking robot, greets new guests at the lobby, while Whiz, a cleaning robot, operates in areas where patients pick up meals and other daily necessities to reduce infection risks for human staff. 1Pepper, wearing a white surgical mask, greeted Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike as she walked into the hotel during Friday's demonstration.

Pepper also reminds patients to check their temperature and rest well. PTI

## GLOBE TROTTER

**CHINA TO MEASURE HEIGHT OF MT EVEREST**  
Beijing: China, which differs with Nepal over the height of Mount Everest, has begun a new survey to measure the altitude of the world's highest peak.

**EXPLOSIONS HIT SYRIAN MILITARY WAREHOUSE**  
Beirut: Explosions at a Syrian military base housing a weapons warehouse were the result of "human error" while moving ammunition, the defense ministry said. Ten civilians outside the base were hurt.

**5G SIGNAL NOW AVAILABLE AT MT EVEREST**  
Beijing: Climbers to Mount Everest from the Chinese side can now enjoy high-speed 5G coverage after the world's highest-altitude base station started operation in the remote Himalayan region of Tibet, the state media reported on Friday.

## UN: Ozone depletion briefly spiked over Arctic in March

**Geneva:** The UN meteorological agency said depletion of the ozone layer, which protects the Earth from harmful levels of ultraviolet radiation, briefly reached an unprecedented level over large swaths of the Arctic in March.

The World Meteorological Organization reported Friday that the spike stemmed from the lingering presence of man-made ozone-depleting substances in the atmosphere and very cold temperatures in the stratosphere that prevented ozone from reaching the northern region.

WMO spokeswoman Clare Nullis said conditions were "back to normal again" in April, describing the temporary depletion as "not a cause for exceptional concern."

AP

# 'Never, never happened': Biden on sexual assault allegation

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden on Friday categorically denied allegations from a former Senate staffer that he sexually assaulted her in the early 1990s, saying "this never happened."

Biden's first public remarks on the allegation by a former employee, Tara Reade, came at a critical moment for the presumptive Democratic nominee as he tries to relieve mounting pressure after weeks of leaving denials to his campaign.

"I'm saying unequivocally, it never, never happened," Biden said in an interview on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." Biden said he will ask the National Archives to determine whether there is any record of a com-

plaint being filed, as Reade has claimed, but he said repeatedly that he doesn't believe such a record exists.

Reade did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday. The National Archives also did not immediately reply to an AP inquiry.

"The former staffer has said she filed a complaint back in 1993," Biden said. "But she does not have a record of this alleged complaint. The papers from my Senate years that I donated to the University of Delaware do not contain personnel files."

Biden said, "There is only one place a complaint of this kind could be - the National Archives." The former vice president said "there are so many inconsistencies" in

Reade's various accounts. But Biden said he does not "question her motive." He said that over his five decades in public life, none of his employees, including Reade, were asked to sign nondisclosure agreements.

"There's no NDA signed," Biden said. "No one's ever signed, I've never asked anybody to sign an NDA. There are no NDAs, period, in my case. None." The National Archives also did not respond to an AP inquiry about Senate records. Republicans worried about President Donald Trump's increasingly precarious political standing are seizing on Reade's allegation to portray Democrats as hypocrites who only defend women who allege wrongdoing against conservatives.

## Aussie cops fatally shoot man who stabbed 7 at mall

AP ■ PERTH

Australian police fatally shot a man who stabbed and slashed seven people at and near a shopping mall on Friday, officials said.

None of the victims of the rampage in the northwest coastal town of South Hedland suffered life-threatening injuries.

Five were hospitalized with stab wounds, including two who remain in serious but stable condition, officials said. Police have not revealed a motive.

There was no indication the assailant, aged in his 30s, was politically or ideologically motivated, Western Australia state Police Commissioner Police Commissioner Chris Dawson said.

## HK police spray tear gas in protest at shopping mall



AP ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong police used pepper spray on Friday to disperse over a hundred protesters in a shopping mall who were singing and chanting pro-democracy slogans.

The demonstrators sang the protest anthem "Glory to Hong Kong" and chanted "Glory to Hong Kong, revolu-

tion of our times" in the New Town Plaza mall in Hong Kong's New Territories.

As protesters gathered in the mall, riot police stopped and searched some and later told them to leave, saying they were violating social-distancing rules. The police then sprayed tear gas to disperse the crowd before cordoning off the atrium of the mall.



# Automakers score nil sales in April for 1st time

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India's top carmakers, including Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai, on Friday reported zero monthly domestic sales for the first time ever in April after the nationwide lockdown halted output and shut sales network. Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HML), Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M), Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) and MG Motor India reported nil sales as they suspended operations even before the imposition of lockdown on March 25 to check the spread of coronavirus.

Maruti Suzuki, which produces more than half of the cars running on Indian roads, said it did not sell any

vehicle in the domestic market in April.

It, however, exported 632 vehicles after Mundra port in Gujarat resumed operations, MSI said in a statement.

Similarly, HML said it did not sell any vehicle last month in the domestic market due to suspension of manufacturing activities at its Chennai plant.

The company, however, exported 1,341 units last month.

The overseas dispatches took place by adhering to all guidelines set by the government and export regulating authorities while ensuring adequate safety and protection for everyone, it added.

Homegrown automaker M&M also reported zero sales of passenger and commercial

- Maruti Suzuki, which produces more than half of the cars running on Indian roads, said it did not sell any vehicle in the domestic market in April.
- Similarly, HML said it did not sell any vehicle last month in the domestic market due to suspension of manufacturing activities at its Chennai plant.
- Homegrown automaker M&M also reported zero sales of passenger and commercial vehicles in the domestic market. It, however, dispatched

vehicles in the domestic market. It, however, dispatched 733 vehicles to overseas markets during the last month.

“We are hopeful that our dealerships will open soon and have stocks to cover the first few weeks of sale,” M&M Chief Executive Officer, Automotive Division Veejay Nakra said.

Similarly, TKM said the restart of the entire value chain cycle and its restoration will be

gradual as the industry is faced with varied challenges like low consumer sentiments, rebuilding of disrupted supply chains and return of workforce.

“As with many other sectors, with the closure of dealerships and manufacturing, the operation of the automotive value chain has come to a grinding halt,” TKM Senior Vice President (Sales and Marketing) Naveen Soni said in

a statement.

These are critical times and the company was aware that there would be no wholesales in the month of April 2020, he added.

“As we prepare for a restart, we are working closely with our dealer partners to offer them the best support to re-stimulate demand in a safe and healthy atmosphere,” Soni said.

MG Motor India said it has resumed operations at its Halol facility in the last week of April and now hopes that the production will ramp up in the month of May.

In two-wheeler segment, niche bike maker Royal Enfield said it had zero sales in the domestic market but exported a total of 91 units last month.

## Auto industry bodies: Allow entire value chain in automotive sector re-commence operations in unison

**New Delhi:** Three industry bodies of the automotive sector, SIAM, ACMA and FADA, on Friday asked the Government allow the entire value chain in the auto industry to re-commence operations in unison.

In a joint representation to Home Secretary Kumar Bhalla, the Society of Indian Automobile Industry (SIAM), Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) and Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said if any of the segment does not commence operations the value

chain will not be able to re-start. They also said the sector is losing revenue to the tune of ₹2,300 crore per day and therefore starting of economic activity in the sector is critical.

“The automotive industry in India, which was already facing a severe downturn for over 15 months, with the lockdown, is now confronted with total disruption of its entire value chain,” they said, adding with challenges of working capital across the sector, several of the players in the industry, right from the component suppliers to the dealerships, are faced with the challenge of staying solvent.

Asking the sector to be allowed “to resume operations in complete unison”, the three apex chambers representing the entire automotive value chain said “the automotive value chain is highly complex, integrated and interdependent”.

“A vehicle manufacturer cannot commence operations if any one of its suppliers is unable to undertake production. Further, production for a vehicle manufacturer would only amount to adding to inventory and thus blocking working capital in case dealers are unable to sell vehicles,” the joint representation said. **PTI**

## Survey finds majority support for 2-week lockdown extension to contain Covid-19

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Majority of respondents favoured continuation of the lockdown for another two weeks to fight coronavirus, according to a survey by think-tank National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER).

The Government on Friday extended the lockdown for another two weeks from May 4. It had imposed a 21-day nationwide lockdown on March 25 and extended it further till May 3 to contain the spread of deadly coronavirus.

The second round of Delhi National Capital Region Coronavirus Telephone Survey (DCVTS), conducted during April 23-26 by the NCAER, is based on responses from 1,800 adults.

In the survey, respondents were asked whether they would

support continuing the lockdown for an additional two weeks.

In Round 2 (April 23- 26), about 88 per cent of respondents expressed some degree of support for continuing the lockdown for an additional two weeks, compared to 86 per cent in Round 1 (April 3-6).

“Quite remarkably, support for continuing the lockdown was about the same in Round 2,” the NCAER said in a release.

In Round 1, 62 per cent strongly supported the continuation of the lockdown and 24 per cent expressed some support, it added.

Round 1 of the DCVTS-1 was conducted between April 3 and 6 and responses of 1,756 adults were obtained.

When asked what activities they would resume immediately if the lockdown were to be

lifted after May 3, more than a third of respondents said they would in effect continue social distancing.

Some 37 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that they would not resume activities such as going to their work place, educational institutions, a bank, ATM or post office, a market, religious places, health facilities, visiting family and friends, or attending social functions, the survey showed.

On the impact of the lockdown on the livelihoods of people, the vast majority (82 per cent) of the DCVTS-2 respondents reported some level of reduction in their income or wages in the two weeks before the Survey with the reduction being the highest for casual wage workers and businesses, similar to the findings of DCVTS-1.

## Non-subsidised cooking gas price cut by a record ₹162.50 per cylinder

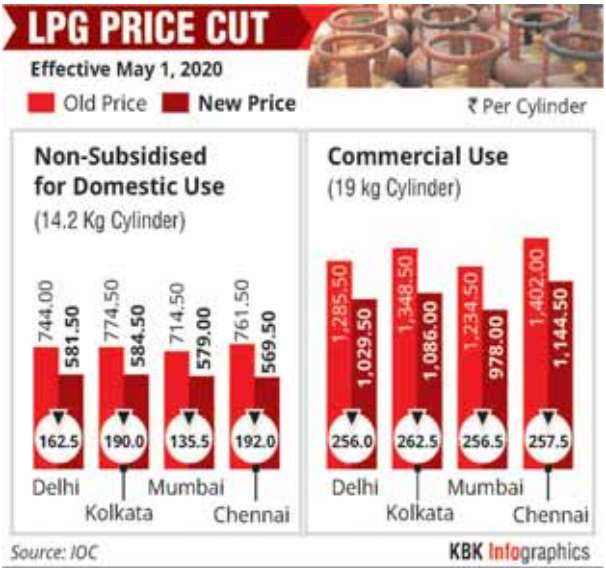
**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Non-subsidised LPG or market-priced cooking gas prices were cut by a record ₹162.50 per cylinder on Friday, in line with the slump in benchmark international rates.

This is the third straight monthly reduction in rates of non-subsidised LPG, which users who have given up subsidy buy. Also, this is the gas that domestic household consumers buy after exhausting their quota of 12 cylinders of 14.2 kg each at subsidised prices.

The outbreak of coronavirus and the lockdowns imposed by nations to curb its spread has evaporated demand for oil, sending international oil prices crashing.

Benchmark Brent crude oil last month dropped to a



two-decade low of USD 15.98 a barrel, but has rebounded

since to USD 26.43 a barrel on Friday.

## RBI Guv to hold meeting with bank chiefs today

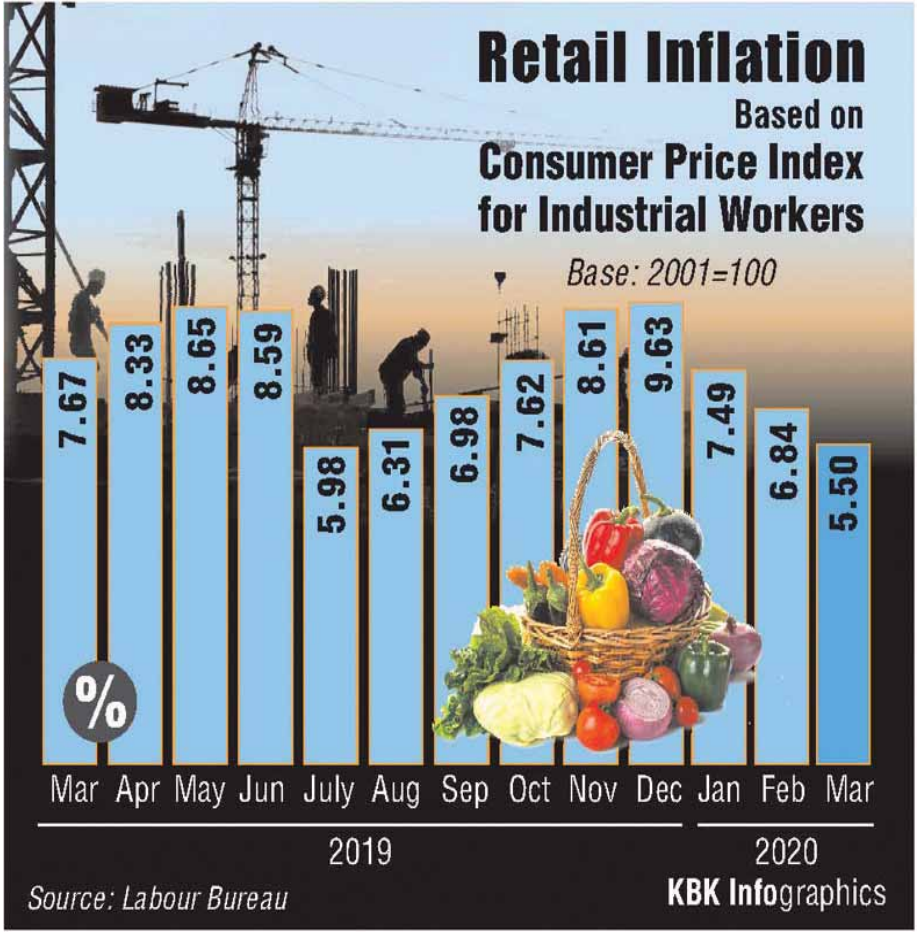
**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das has called a meeting with bank chiefs on Saturday to take stock of the financial sector and deliberate on steps to be taken to boost industry amid the Covid-19 crisis, sources said.

The meeting will take stock of implementation of several steps announced by the RBI, including moderation in interest rate and its transmission, as well as liquidity infusion measures to support the industry.

Besides, various facilities provided to help the stressed MSME industry and rural sector would also be reviewed.

It would also provide a platform for bankers to give their suggestions for further action required to ease stress in the economy, the sources said.



## Smartphone sales in India hit zero in April

**New Delhi:** The extended lockdown in India has resulted in zero shipments for the smartphone players in India in the month of April as factories are shut and it will take two-four weeks time for the manufacturing units to resume normal operations once lockdown is relaxed. The month of March saw a steep annual decline in smartphone shipments, at -19 per cent, due to Covid-19 nationwide lockdown that settled in from March 24.

Since then, factories are closed, retail shops are shut and online sellers are busy delivering groceries and other essential items. Result: April has seen almost zero sales.

“We see zero activity on smartphone shipments part in April and lockdown now entering May amid uncertainties, the Q2 2020 is going to be real challenging for the smartphone makers in the country,” Tarun Pathak, Associate Director, Counterpoint Research, told IANS.

## Survey: Business travel may revive in 6 months, but Budget to decline

**New Delhi:** Around 80 per cent of corporate industry leaders expect business travel to get back to pre-Covid levels in their organisation within 6 months, according to a survey by FabHotels.

A statement by FabHotels said that 58 per cent of the corporate chiefs expect budget per trip to reduce by 15 per cent or more.

“The survey found that 58 per cent of corporates expect reduction of 15 per cent or more in travel budget, 19 per cent expect a reduction of less than 15 per cent, while 24 per cent corporates expect travel budgets to remain same post the lockdown is lifted,” it said.

While one-third of respondents said they would not move employees to lower-tier hotels to save expenses, other two-thirds said they are expected to make this transition to reduce their travel budgets. **IANS**

# Virus worries haunt workers demanding rights on May Day

**AP ■ ATHENS**

No job at all, or a job without enough protections — millions of workers worldwide marked international labour day trapped between hunger and fear Friday, as more countries and states reopen for business even though the coronavirus is far from vanquished.

Beijing's Forbidden City, the imperial palace turned museum that is one the country's biggest tourist attractions, cracked open its doors, and shopping malls around the

U.S. Were set to do the same, while world leaders try to salvage their battered economies without unleashing new waves of infections.

With traditional May Day labor marches curtailed by strict limits on public gatherings, Turkish protesters attempted to stage a wildcat demonstration. California activists planned strikes, and Parisians sang from balconies to plead their causes: workplace masks, health insurance or more Government aid for the jobless.

It was a melancholy International Workers' Day for garment workers across Southeast Asia such as Wiryono, a father of two in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, who was laid off last month as retailers slashed orders.

His side gig delivering coffee dried up, too, amid a virus lockdown. So he set up a clothing repair business to make ends meet.

“I don't earn as much as I got from the clothing factory. But I have to feed my wife and kids every day,” said Wiryono,

who goes by only one name.

In Bangladesh, production is starting back up despite a rising number of new cases of the virus that has killed at least 230,000 people worldwide.

A Government-ordered lockdown couldn't extinguish the May Day protest spirit in Greece, where demonstrators lined up 2 meters (6 feet) apart in careful rows in Athens' Syntagma Square. Organizers in masks and gloves used tape measures and large colored squares to set out exact positions for the protesters.

Greeks who work by making deliveries staged a motorized protest, driving through Athens on their motorbikes, and police were out in force to ensure residents didn't head from cities to the countryside, another May Day tradition.

“We are praying for all workers, so that no one will lack work and all will be fairly paid and can enjoy the dignity of work and the beauty of rest,” Pope Francis said at a private morning Mass. May Day labour protests started in the 19th century in the United

States, where this week the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits surpassed a staggering 30 million — and joblessness in April could hit numbers not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Essential workers were expected to strike around the U.S. On Friday to demand safer conditions, while other groups organized rallies to protest stay-at-home orders they say are crippling the economy. The nation's death toll was put at more than 60,000.

## Ramesh Babu V takes charge as Director (Operations), NTPC

**New Delhi:** Ramesh Babu V assumes his new role as Director (Operations), NTPC Ltd w.e.f.01.05.2020. Shri Babu graduated as a Mechanical Engineer from NIT Srinagar and completed his Masters in Thermal Engineering from IIT Delhi.

He joined NTPC as Executive Trainee (12th batch) in 1987 and has more than 32 years' experience in managing large Power Stations in the areas of operations & mainte-

nance, renovation & modernisation of old units as well as in the domains of efficiency & systems improvement of thermal plants.

Shri Babu as a Professional Manager and Strategic Planner has led several initiatives for improving reliability and efficiency of Power Stations. His experience in power sector includes Senior Management level expo-

sure as a “Business Unit Head” of NTPC Talcher Kaniha & NSPCL Durgapur.

As Director (Operations), NTPC, Shri Ramesh Babu will be responsible for the overall planning of safe, reliable and efficient operations of all power generating stations of the NTPC Group while ensuring fuel security and environmental compliance of these power stations.

## Ferozepur division loads 1.10 MT foodgrains in 401 rakes in April

**New Delhi:** In its continues endeavor to ensure availability of essential commodities like food grain across the country through its freight & parcel services during the nationwide lock down due to Covid-19, despite severe constraints, Ferozpur Division of Northern railway has started the financial year 2020-21 with record breaking loading of food grains in the month of April -2020. In this month, total 1.10 MT in 401 rakes of food grain has

been loaded which is the highest ever in a month. Previous best was 1.05 MT or 362 rakes loaded in August -2016 and 1.03 MT or 365 rakes loaded in March -2015.

In addition to above, Ferozpur Division has also formed and run 61 long hauls Annapura trains in the month of April -2020 which is also the highest ever in a month, surpassing the earlier record of 16 long hauls run in March-2020.

## BHEL optimises emphasis on staff Engagement during Lockdown

**New Delhi:** Undaunted by the unprecedented halt in operations due to the lockdown, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has achieved a major milestone by successfully implementing a huge employee engagement initiative. In the past one month, the company has reached out to nearly 21,000 employees to maintain continuity and to facilitate the transition to work-from-home.

Significantly, in addition to focusing on the health and wellbeing of its employees, BHEL has effectively used this lockdown as an opportunity to sharpen the skill set and creativity & productivity of employees.

The company has created more than 230 learning opportunities through various e-learning courses/ webinars/ trainings on technical, functional, managerial and behav-

ioral domains. These opportunities are the joint efforts of BHEL's Corporate Learning & Development Division, Engineering Division – Project Engineering Management and various training centres spread across BHEL's units.

BHEL has extensively used its in-house skill, expertise and domain experts in developing e-modules that are available on its e-Learning Portal (Unnayan).





**PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS**

It's heartbreaking to see the effect of COVID-19 on vulnerable children across the world. They now have to cope with food shortages, strained healthcare systems, violence and lost education. We need to protect them. The onus is on us. Join me in supporting this campaign by @UNICEF and @GretaThunberg.



**DISHA PATANI**

From sharpening my dancing skills to finally having a solo performance in *Baaghi 3*, the franchise has helped me come a long way. I have been very grateful to be a part of the *Baaghi* family again. I would also thank Sajid (Nadiadwala) sir for giving me this chance. I am glad it is making its digital debut so that more people can watch it.



**SHARAD KELKAR**

My journey has been quite nice. It's has had both ups and downs. From that, you learn what to do and what not. It's a journey full of experiences and learnings. It gave me a little maturity as an artiste. I have seen hits and flops, continuous work and no work for a year, too. But I have no regrets. I've become mature professionally.



**ALAYA F**

I've never done Yoga in my life but it's become my new favourite thing to find cool Yoga videos online and get super excited when I'm able to do what they're doing. I have been reading, watching films, undertaking online classes, cooking, and trying new ways to stay fit. All of this is helping me grow and calm in quarantine.



**SHAH RUKH KHAN**

As a young man entering the daunting world of films, I was insecure about the way I looked and afraid that I was not talented enough. The thought of failing meant nothing though, because even if I failed, I would have worked with the greatest actor I knew of — Rishi (Kapoor) sahib. He had no idea how he had encouraged me.

WALKTHROUGH 45 MINUTES



In the wake of Coronavirus pandemic, our attention has been drawn majorly towards migrant population. Dwelling on the photographs of master S Paul, I realised a number of them were studies of migrant labour. He has captured them in transition or while working.

These images echo the vitality and importance of the destiny of men and women. It makes one realise that their very existence is to create a new world, to reveal a new life, to remember that there exists a frontier for everything. In a quaint way, Paul is commenting on their ability to adapt, to resist, to believe and survive.

SPECTRE OF HOPE

There are two images of babies sleeping in a basket. The same basket is later used for carrying stones/bricks or any other elements used for construction. These two images offer a visual aura of a time in Indian history known as the Industrial Revolution, a time when men and women's work with their hands provided the central axis to the world. Relate it to today's world of real estate construction, and the story is the same.

In the very act of carriage lies a spectre of hope and continuity. It draws our attention to the simplicity and rustic resonance of the marginalised group in society. It also talks of paradoxes in the present world, which seem to be racing ahead yet stumbling over the future.

UNCERTAIN GRACE

In yet another image, we see the reality of migrant labourers and poverty. There are four figures and two children, walking

MAY DAY STORY

S PAUL's photographs document migrant labourers' vitality and importance, says UMA NAIR

past a stone wall. Here, it seems to be a telescoping of time, reminding us that this is the result of the work of people done across the world. We think of developed and developing nations and how the former produces only for those who can consume — approximately one-fifth of all the population. The remaining four-fifths, who could theoretically benefit from surplus production, have no way of becoming consumers.

Paul grabs our attention to the staggering phenomenon of migrant labour and its niceties. While these four photographs document the epic elegance of the people, it also points to small realities in a larger context — of natural disasters, environmental degradation, explosive population growth and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

DETAILED DULCET DIGNITY

The last among these four is a portrait of an individual with livestock on the go. There is a kid goat on a labourer's shoulder while another goat is held in tow. This photograph is a beautiful commentary on

the imagery of everyday idioms in living. And yet, this image has a dulcet dignity about it — never does the viewer feel an exploitative signature. The beautiful — yes, beautiful — imagery undoubtedly covers migration at one end but there is also a detailed dignity woven into the fabric of the moment. All these four images are not just about destitution. They are about singular moments of migrants in the landscape of flux, caught in the logistics of their own limbo.

UNIVERSAL CODE

This suite of four is an exercise in recall and reflection. It highlights a renewed focus on the desperate and unchanging plight of migrants and refugees all over the world. Indeed, in the Coronavirus hyper reality, where there is tragedy upon tragedy, it adds historical context to the global story of humanity on the move — their trials and tribulations.

The lot of migrants today in India and the rest of the world are unparalleled in human history. Their predicament presents profound challenges to the notions of

nation, community and citizenship. These images are a pictorial stamp of the current global flux of humanity. In many ways, Paul reveals the humanist element, dignity and simplicity of these subjects. With his unique vision and empathy, the eminent photographer gives us four pictures that echo enormous social and political transformations occurring in a world divided between excesses, utmost greed and greater needs. More than five decades after he captured these shots, the world has not changed.

By looking again at these images, we cannot help but reflect on the unchanging plight of those trying to seek a new home. And you think of how this great lensman documented so silently the nomadic labour at the frayed — and distinct — edges of humanity.

The journey of migrant labourers can be ruthless, with families often parting with life-savings to board hopelessly a dreamboat, of shattered dreams, steered by opportunists who care only about their own empires.

Photo: S Paul Studio



CELEB TALK 30 MINUTES

LETTING GO

JULIE BOWEN, popularly known as Claire from *Modern Family*, doesn't want the show to end but also admits that she cannot play the same character throughout her life. By TEAM VIVA



**Modern Family. Tell us about that.**

I was pregnant with the twins at the very beginning of *Modern Family*, in the pilot episode. And I have to put three kids through school. The twins are 10 and the older one, 12. And now this is the last season so I will have plenty of time to explain stuff to them and spend time with them. Maybe, going over the shower procedure — nuts and pits. Can I say that? Although you have to go in some order.

**You and Sophia have always been pitted against each other. While the other actors are nominated at the Emmys as *Modern Family* is always part of the conversation but it's always the two of you who get it. And**

**you've won two...**

It is friendly. But as she would probably say, 'Yes, you have two statues but I have a big bank account', I'd be like 'I would take her bank account or sell her a statue'.

**Tell us about the character who you would miss the most?**

Well, it has to be Phil. Of course, there is something that Ty Burrell has done with his character that has made him both odd and funny as well as the unicorn of TV dads.

**What's the most that you are going to miss about Claire?**

Claire can day drink. And I cannot. She is able to have a glass of

Chardonnay and be fine. It is so funny that people do like fan art and they send us really amazing ones. Claire's symbolic one is blonde hair and a glass of wine. And I know that I could never be like that in reality. So I envy Claire's ability to day drink but I will not miss her love for Halloween. I am amazed at people who love gore. Well, Claire loves it and takes it all the way. And it is quite fun to do those scenes, fun to scare people. Also, there are 70 professionals behind you pumping blood or making it look really gory. In my life, I hate putting up decorations which I will eventually have to take down.

**Do you think that there's some pressure on actors or writers to make the finale season great?**

I think the writers surely feel it. Really heavily. But it's equally on the actors as well because we have been doing this thing for 10 years and this is the 11th year. So, my goal is to deliver what we have been delivering for the last 10 years the best way possible to keep it memorable. Because we are never going to do it again!

**Since this chapter ends, what's next for you?**

I am going to produce and do some directing. I like bargain. I don't shop. I am a big saver because I don't like that feeling of desperation waiting for the

phone to ring with 'Somebody hire me'. I don't like that. I am going to try and produce a comedy for ABC, about female friendship. And then I am going to try and produce some other stuff that I am not allowed to talk about right now. It's a bit hush-hush! Also, I am tired of being a mom. I do love it but do I want that to be my identity in the world all throughout my life? I would like to reclaim this situation for something other than mom-ing for a little while.

I could just seal this up and never act again but I love acting. Also, I like these shorter formats that they have now. Where you can be on a show for six episodes or do an anthology series. And yes, would surely do more behind the camera. This business isn't very kind to women over 40 and I think that sometimes you do have to step away for a second, especially, after doing 11 years of Claire. I love Claire but I can't be only Claire.

**What do you think the legacy of the show is?**

There is so much. When we began, there was no gay couple on television — a stable married gay couple on network TV who had an adopted child and that represented something so vastly different. It seems so normal now and I love that that's been normalised and how we have almost forgotten how big a deal it was. This is the show that people sit down and turn on for comfort and laugh. I and my kids, we sit down and watch so many amazing shows like *The Office*, *FRIENDS*, or *Seinfeld*. We are so lost in these. And that what's I want for people — to go 'Oh! This feels like home'.

(The show's season 11 airs every Saturday at 7 pm and all seasons every Monday-Friday at 8 pm on Star World.)

Song of hope

Oscar and Grammy-winning composer AR Rahman and celebrated lyricist Praseen Joshi have united to give a musical tribute to the nation's fight against COVID-19, with song *Hum Haar Nahii Maanenge*.

The song has been conceptualised to spread hope, positivity and motivation. The emotional track reminds people that we all are in this together, stating that we will get through it together. The song is composed by Rahman, and the lyrics are penned by Joshi.

"This song has brought all of us together for a noble cause and we hope it inspires the nation to come together too," said Rahman.

Talking about the hope anthem, Joshi said, "Though this is not the most ideal of circumstances for creativity but as artists we have to break through adversity and catch the finger of hope. My poem is centred around the thought of the un-putdownable spirit of us humans. We have much to learn, but together we will surmount the odds, we won't give up."



Sriram, Shruti Haasan, Shashaa Tirupati, Khatija Rahman and Abhay Jodhpurkar. India's percussionist Sivamani, sitarist Asad Khan and bass prodigy Mohini Dey are also part of the project. The song has been released by HDFC Bank. Through the track, it shows its solidarity and support to the nation by encouraging more and more people to donate to PM CARES Fund. It will also contribute ₹500 each time the song is shared on social media.

"Music is universal. It lifts the spirit and soothes the soul. Through this tribute we want to touch the heart of every person in the country and let them know that they are not alone. Together, we will emerge stronger. Right now, every contribution, bolsters the nation's effort to fight the pandemic," said Ravi Santhanam, CMO.

—IANS



IMMERSIVE 45 MINUTES

# LOOK WITHIN

Through his recent film, *Yoga for Health & Global Harmony*, filmmaker, art historian and photographer **BENOY K BEHL** finds out that the purpose of yoga is to liberate us from the shackles of our innumerable desires

During this time of global health crisis and stress, Indian philosophy and yoga have become more relevant than ever. Yoga is the action part of Indian philosophy. It shows us the path, away from our fears and confusions of the world, to a century of peace, which can be found within. It points the way to love and harmony, which would be our best shields against the perils of the virus as well as of general ill-health. Our balance and peace are the foundations of our immune system. If we can preserve that, we are much stronger and less susceptible to diseases.

Yoga quite literally means to unite oneself with the higher self, which is in us and is all pervasive. It means to join the subject with the object. To do this, we have to strip away the many layers of momentary sensory perceptions, which assail our senses. These keep us forever bound to the material world. Our perceptions must be detached from the external world to look within.

We live amid much turmoil and confusion in the material world. The state of mental and physical health has deteriorated considerably. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the costs incurred on health are on chronic diseases, like diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and osteoarthritis. There are hardly any permanent solutions to these, either through medicines or surgery. Mental ailments are also expected to reach epidemic levels very soon.

I have recently completed shooting my film, *Yoga for Health & Global Harmony*. In an interview in the film, yoga and ayurveda expert from Santa Fe, USA, Padma Bhushan Dr David Frawley, shares, "What happened in the Western world is that we have been very good at pur-



suing the outer, material, media-based world. We have lost our connections to a great extent with the inner world of consciousness and direct perception. In Indian philosophy, our true state is that of *sukha* or eternal bliss. The purpose of yoga is to free us from our pain, to liberate us from the shackles of our innumerable desires, which lead us nowhere at all, to awaken true

**‘YOGA DECONSTRUCTS OUR OUTER WORLDVIEW BUT RESTORES OUR INNER SENSE OF THE IMMORTAL, TRANSCENDENT, OVERFLOWING UNIVERSE OF CONSCIOUSNESS’**

knowledge within us and to help us to be in harmony with all that there is."

He elaborates further, "In the world today, we have reached a stage of tremendous fragmentation. Our language, science, is running after the particularised... We have reduced human health to very complex chemicals. The question is how do we integrate our perceptions

and knowledge? How do we arrive at a holistic understanding of who we are as individuals? What is the nature of the universe? So yoga deconstructs our outer worldview of physical reality but restores our inner sense of the immortal, transcendent, overflowing universe of consciousness."

Dr Frawley believes that yoga is about uniting our individual mind with the universal consciousness which is full of bliss. He says, "Yoga takes us to true self-awareness. While doing yoga, we calm ourselves and realise that we are less affected by the noise and distractions of the ever-changing world around us. Step-by-step, we become aware, first of our bodies and then of our breath. It lets us take the control. In that moment, the transformation begins."

In another interview, Tulku Sherdor, director of Blazing Wisdom Institute, New York, highlights the importance of yoga. He says, "I think that all of the yogic traditions of India are all pointing to this same vision. It's the path of reconnecting with what is most essential for our own being."

Minakshi Devi Bhavnani, yoga guru from Puducherry, shares that love is the essence of everything. "Love transcends all personalities and as long as the personality is involved, there is no love. It has to become a universal experience. I would ask Swamiji what is love? And he would say love is profound interest... To have profound interest, you must be capable of concentration. And if we can sustain that love, it becomes *dhyana*. We become one with that object of love. If we can sustain that long enough, then love would take us right into *samadhi*, where our individual self that seeks liberation is dissolved, like the salt is dissolved in the ocean," she says.

JUKEBOX 30 MINUTES

## This is my quest

Broadway actor **BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL** has been serenading the frontline workers battling Coronavirus, following his own personal battle with the illness

It's a stunning sound, emerging amid the clanging and the whooping and the banging and the honking at 7 pm each night as New Yorkers cheer front-line workers: the velvety, buttery baritone of Brian Stokes Mitchell.

For decades, Mitchell's voice has been one of the most celebrated in the Broadway theater, evoking goosebumps in musicals like *Kiss Me, Kate*, for which he won a Tony, and *Man of La Mancha*, in which he played Don Quixote. Now, with Broadway's houses shuttered due to the Coronavirus, the voice rings out from a fifth-floor apartment on the Upper West Side — fittingly on Broadway, a couple miles up from the theatre district.

"This is my quest," Mitchell sings, leaning precariously out his window, launching directly into the meatiest part of *The Impossible Dream*.

Below and across the avenue in their apartments, neighbours cheer. But Mitchell, 62, is looking to serenade crews of ambulances, fire engines, police cars, or medical workers from the nearby urgent care facility. When they do stop and listen — as a city bus did recently — Mitchell sings directly to them. And when people clap, he sweeps his arms over the workers, as if to say: "Not me. Them."

Mitchell's gratitude, expressed nightly the last few weeks, stems from a very personal ordeal. He himself is a survivor of the Coronavirus, falling ill in late March. One night, he had a fever nearing 105 degrees, and almost was hospitalised. He's been symptom-free for three weeks. "I'd been going to the window to applaud for the health care workers like everybody else in New York," he says. "Then one night I spontaneously thought, 'Oh, I think my lungs feel like

I can sing now.'" And so, he did. He thought it would be a one-night gig. He was mistaken. People kept coming.

"To fight for the right, without question or pause, to be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause!" Mitchell smiles as he repeats the words, amazed at how appropriate they are for medical workers fighting an "unbeatable foe." "People think it's just called *The Impossible Dream*, but it's also called 'The Quest,'" he says. "It's not about doing the impossible. It's about trying."

It is, of course, a terrible time for the theatre community, with arts institutions suffering severe economic loss. Mitchell is chairman of The Actors Fund, which helps performing arts and entertainment professionals. He's donating all profits from his latest album, *Plays With Music*, to the fund.

When the city shut down, Mitchell was working on numerous projects. "Everything was canceled," he says. "I have no idea when they'll come back. A year? Six months? Unfortunately I think our sector will be one of the last to come back fully."

For now, though, Mitchell feels busy with his unpaid gig. "Broadway's closed, but someone's still singing on Broadway!" he quips. His performance ends with a flourish: "And the world will be better for this, that one man, scorned and covered with scars, still strove, with his last ounce of courage, to reach the unreachable star!"

Mitchell, though, adapts the lyrics to squeeze in words like "one first responder and health-care worker." The audience cheers. "It's three minutes," says onlooker Sari Rubin, "of me remembering that there's good in the world."

—AP



STUDIO CHAT 60 MINUTES

**Q**We heard that you really wanted to work with director Tim Burton, is that true?

**Colin Farrell:** Yes. He is brilliant in the world he creates and the way he transports you immediately into whatever he is presenting. He has the ability that very few filmmakers have, along with the awkwardness and the otherness of the characters that he presents, there's a heart at the centre of all his works. This heart, beauty and vulnerability in his work is there ever since *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*, *Beetlejuice*, *Edward Scissorhands*.

**Q**Which was the first film that introduced you to Tim?

**Colin:** Actually, it was *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*. I just forgot that he had made it. He's so brilliant, my brother showed it to me. *Edward Scissorhands* is my youngest boy's favourite.

**Q**Was it difficult to film scenes of character with a physical challenge?

**Colin:** Initially, I thought it will be more about the emotional and psychological difficulties. But I realised later that it was all mixed — my personal emotions about the character I was playing, as he was dealing with a lot. He lost his wife when he was away fighting in World War I. As a single parent, he then has to deal with his two children, who have grown up while he

# Love, hope and dreams

While actor **EVA GREEN** says that films like *Dumbo* are important because we live in a crazy chaotic world, actor **COLIN FARRELL** shares that it was more about overcoming his limitations. By **TEAM VIVA**

was away. They now have their own opinions, dreams, ideas and a way of behaving. So handling them is not too easy. Moreover, he is physically impaired. There is a canvas of all these different issues that he was facing. His journey is more about accepting himself and his children while overcoming his limitations.

**Q**How was the mood on the sets? Did you feel some kind of pressure?

**Colin:** Yes. There was tension everywhere. It was all practical and they had built the most extraordinary set that I've been on in 20 years. And I've been on a few really incredible ones like *Alexander*, *Total Recall* and many others.

The one that was put here had the little guy *Dumbo* flying around. But in some of the scenes, where he wasn't airborne, they had his static model who would help in moving the things that were kept far



away. However, it wasn't hugely helpful. Instead, Edd Osmond who played *Dumbo*, was dressed in green spandex from head to toe and they gave him sticks that elongated his arms and he would move, command and do other stuff. What he would do was really moving. This turned out to be helpful. He was extraordinary to work with. Everything else was great too. You'd walk onto the set and there were like eight Ford model T from the 20th century, a bunch of popcorn and hotdog concession stands, fairground rides everywhere, people on horseback — all inside the building.

**Q**Do you remember watching the original as a kid?

**Colin:** I didn't watch it as a kid. I didn't see it until months before I flew to London to do this. I hadn't seen it; I just had no reason. I had seen *The Aristocats*, *Lady and The Tramp*, *The Jungle Book* but never this.

**Q**How does it feel to be in a Disney modern classic, *Dumbo*?

**Eva Green:** Oh my god, I just can't believe I am in it too. It's such a surreal beautiful story. I saw it last night. Usually, a lot of actors don't like watching themselves on the screen but I completely forgot I was in it. I was really invested in the film and got really emotional. I really felt for *Dumbo*, it's just beautiful work.

**Q**How did you film flight scenes with *Dumbo*?

**Eva:** I was surrounded by Green screen and on some kind of weird mechanical bull, like the one cowboy's use to train on for rodeos. It was attached to a very long arm and you kind of lift it in the air and it moved. I don't know what exactly it is but maybe some kind of a weird car. It's an odd mixture between a bull in a car and an elephant. But it's completely surreal to have those wind machines as well, sometimes you really feel you are flying. It's completely crazy.

**Q**You had tweeted that this is a film we need right now...

**Eva:** We live in such a crazy chaotic world. So it's just wonderful to have a film about love, hope and dreams. It is important for us to believe that our dreams can turn into reality some day.

**Q**You have worked with Tim before also. What made this experience special?

**Eva:** It has always been special to work with him. He is such a wonderful man, a beautiful human being, very delicate, sensitive and a genius. He gave me roles that are different, *Dark Shadows* which was a 'crazy witch woman bird' and now a 'trapeze artist'. It's a real gift and privilege for sure.

(The film will be aired on Star Movies on May 3 at 1 pm.)



# PANDYA NO PATCH ON KAPIL: RAZZAQ

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Pakistan all-rounder Abdul Razzaq says Hardik Pandya is nowhere near the league of Kapil Dev and needs to work harder to become a world-class cricketer.

Razzaq also clarified that his “baby bowler” comment against lead India pacer Jasprit Bumrah was misconstrued.

One of the most prolific all-rounders to have come out of Pakistan, the 40-year-old also said India will continue to enjoy an unbeaten record against his team at the World Cup, as Indians handle the pressure of the big game much better.

Talking about Pandya, who has been battling fitness issues of late, Razzaq feels the 26-year-old doesn't seem to be working hard enough.

“Pandya is a good player but he can be a much better all-rounder. It is all about hard work. When you don't give enough time to game, it drifts away from you,” Razzaq said.

“He has to prepare better mentally as well as physically. As you have seen, he has been getting injured a lot of late (underwent back surgery last year). When you earn a lot of money, you tend to relax. For every player it is the same. Mohammad Amir did not work hard enough and his performance dipped.”

Pandya, who made his India debut in 2016, has drawn comparisons with the great Kapil, but Razzaq said it is way too premature.

“Kapil Dev and Imran Khan are the best all-rounders of all time. Hardik is nowhere near that league. Even I was an all-rounder but it doesn't mean that I would compare myself with Imran *bhai*.”



Hardik Pandya receives his maiden ODI cap from former Indian captain Kapil Dev in October 2016

Hardik Pandya/Twitter

“Kapil *paaji* and Imran *bhai* were in a different league” said Razzaq, who played 46 Tests, 265 ODIs and 32 T20Is.

Razzaq had courted controversy last year by calling Bumrah a “baby bowler” in comparison to the fast bowlers of his times. The Indian pacer has gone on to become one of the world's leading bowlers across formats after making his debut in 2016.

“I do not have anything personal against Bumrah. I was simply comparing him with the likes of Glenn McGrath, Wasim Akram, Curtly Ambrose, Shoaib Akhtar. It would have been much tougher to face them. My

comments were misconstrued. “He is heading towards becoming a world-class bowler. But in our times, the bowlers were of much higher calibre. Not many can dispute that.”

The standard of cricket has gone down, according to Razzaq.

“You don't feel the same pressure facing the current crop of pacers. Overall, there is a bad patch in world cricket. We are not producing world class players the way we used to 10-15 years ago.

“You had Tendulkar, Zaheer, Sehwag, Ganguly in the same team. They would have walked

into any team. May be too much T20 cricket is responsible for this decline,” he said.

Pakistan were the stronger team in the 90s but India have enjoyed an upper hand over the arch-rivals in the last decade. India have also extended their unbeaten World Cup record against Pakistan to 7-0.

“India will continue to maintain that record,” said Razzaq, who played in three Indo-Pak World Cup games (1999, 2003, 2011).

“It is rare that India and Pakistan play each other in knock-out matches of ICC events. They most play in the

league stage and India are favourites. Our players are not able to absorb the pressure that comes with this game.

“We used to win a lot against India in Sharjah, beat them in Canada twice. I remember the 1999 World Cup, people and media put pressure on the players before the game and we wilted. It has stayed like that unfortunately.

“The pressure builds on the players though it is like any other match. The players are not confident about beating India in World Cup,” he said, adding Pakistan had the best chance of beating India in the 2011 edition.

## Oz knock off India from top slot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India lost the top spot in the ICC Test rankings to Australia on Friday, dropping to third after their stupendous 2016-17 record was eliminated from the annual update as per rules.

India yielded the top spot in Test rankings for the first time since October 2016 but continue to lead the ICC World Test Championship, a league comprising six series played by each of the top nine sides.

India dropped in the ladder largely because the record of 12 Tests victories and just one Test defeat in 2016-17 was removed in the latest chart, the ICC said in a statement.

Virat Kohli's men had won all five series during that period including against Australia and England. On the other hand, Australia had lost to South Africa as well as to India in the same period.

The latest update rates all the matches played since May 2019 at 100 per cent and those of the previous two years at 50 per cent.

Australia not only moved to the top of the Test rankings but also grabbed the No 1 spot in the T20I list for the first time while England continued to lead the men's ODI rankings after the annual update, which eliminates results from 2016-17.

Australia now have 116 points and are followed by New Zealand (115) and India (114).

With only two points separating them, this is the second closest the top three teams

have been since the Test rankings were launched in 2003.

The closest for the top three teams was in January 2016, when India had led Australia and South Africa by a single point.

South Africa have suffered the biggest rating fall of eight points, which sees them drop below Sri Lanka into sixth place.

They had won three series in the period culled, while lost eight of their nine Tests since February 2019, playing against Sri Lanka, India and England.

In the ODI team rankings, reigning world champions England (127) have increased their lead over India from six to eight points.

New Zealand remain in third place, three points behind India. The top ten rankings remain unchanged.

In contrast, the updated T20I team Rankings see plenty of changes. Australia (278) top the list for the first time since the T20I rankings were introduced in 2011.

Pakistan, who had overtaken New Zealand to reach top position in January 2018 and then spent 27 months there, are now fourth with 260 points.

England have moved into second position with 268 points while India are up one place to third, just two points behind.

Afghanistan are down from seventh to 10th while Bulgaria are the biggest gainers, up 12 places to 51st in the 84-country list of teams that played the requisite six matches in the past three years.



## Bale would be interested playing in MLS

AFP ■ MADRID

Gareth Bale has said he would be interested in playing in Major League Soccer in America if he leaves Real Madrid.

Bale has not been a regular in Zinedine Zidane's team this season and the 30-year-old almost departed last summer, before a move to Chinese club Jiangsu Suning fell through.

Any MLS club keen to sign Bale would likely have to overcome the huge financial implications of a deal. Bale's Madrid contract ends in 2022 and earns him close to 30 million euros (\$33 million) a year before tax.

“I really like the league,” said Bale, speaking to the *Hat-Trick* podcast presented by the ICC, in an episode released on Thursday.

“I think it's grown so much over the years. When we come over and play them in pre-season, the games are difficult, the standard is getting a lot better. The clubs are improving, the facilities are improving, the stadiums are improving.

“I think it's a league that's on the up and still rising. I think a lot more players want to come over to America now and play. I would definitely be interested in it.”



## Taylor wins Kiwi cricket's top gong

**WELLINGTON:** Veteran batsman Ross Taylor bagged the prestigious New Zealand Cricketer of the Year award on Friday, winning the Sir Richard Hadlee Medal for the third time for excelling across formats.

In what has been a season of milestones, Taylor leapfrogged Stephen Fleming as New Zealand's leading run-scorer in Test matches and became the first cricketer from any country to play 100 International matches in all three formats.

He scored 1389 runs in the last season in all formats and was an integral member of the New Zealand team which reached the World Cup final in July.

“It's been full of ups and downs. A World Cup final, losing that final. The Boxing Day Test which was such a proud moment to be part of and to have so many Kiwis there supporting us was something I'll never forget,” Taylor told reporters as the three-day virtual awards ceremony concluded.

“The biggest thing, I think, is the hunger and the mental motivation to keep getting better, if that's still there then age is just a number,” the 36-year-old added.

Taylor also said he would remain with the Black Caps as long as he felt he deserved his spot and was contributing to the team.

“I'll see if I can get to (age) 38 or 39, which will be the next World Cup, and we'll see from there,” he said.

Hadlee, regarded New Zealand's greatest cricketer, congratulated Taylor on the achievement.



“I've followed your career since 2006 as I was part of the selection panel when you played your first ODI and then Test match,” Hadlee told Taylor via video link.

“I've watched your progress over the past 14 years and I just want to congratulate you on all your performances and records to date.

“You've been a wonderful performer, you've got a fantastic record and on behalf of New Zealand Cricket I'd just like to say thanks very much for your contribution, not only to New Zealand cricket, but to world cricket.”

Pacer Tim Southee on Friday followed his best bowler award with the Test Player of the Year recognition.

Southee scalped 25 wickets at an average of 16.4 in the four Test matches that New Zealand won during the awards period.

“To perform in the format is very pleasing and the stats are nice, but at the end of the day there's a lot of work from your teammates that go into those numbers,” said Southee. **PTI**

## Aussies put corona curb on ball

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Australia will not allow the use of saliva or sweat to shine the ball once cricket training resumes in the post Covid-19 world, says a framework released by the federal Government regarding the staged return of sports amid the pandemic.

There is speculation that use of saliva to shine the ball will be stopped to cut down the risk of the highly contagious

infection with reports suggesting that the ICC is considering the possibility of allowing the use of artificial substances to polish the red ball under the supervision of umpires.

According to *ESPNcricinfo*, Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in consultation with medical experts, sporting bodies and federal and state Governments, has come up with guidelines, restricting the use of saliva and sweat to shine the ball.

## Sanga urges Eng, Oz to tour Pak

PTI ■ LONDON

MCC President Kumar Sangakkara has advocated a revival of international cricket in Pakistan, calling on powerhouses like England and Australia to take the leading role in this endeavour.

Sangakkara was part of the Sri Lankan team, which was attacked by terrorists in 2009 near the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, but he says returning to Pakistan and playing cricket for the MCC, which is the custodian of cricket laws, was a good decision earlier this year.

In February, the Sri Lankan legend had travelled to Lahore for Marleybone Cricket Club's Pakistan tour for a documentary called *MCC: On tour in Lahore*.

“It doesn't matter an Asian side going there or a secondary side in terms of world prominence when it comes to



MCC Prez Kumar Sangakkara receives memento during Pak visit. MCC/Twitter

having security measures in place,” Sangakkara told *The Cricket Show* on *Sky Sports Cricket*.

“I think it's important that England or Australia, even South Africa, make up their minds to actually tour when security is assured and they have those discussions; the MCC tour will be a precursor to that.”

The MCC had won a 20-over match against Lahore Qalandars before losing by five wickets to the Pakistan Shaheens in a 50-over fixture two days later.

England last played a Test series in Pakistan in 2005 and since then Pakistan have played their home series at neutral venues against prominent teams.

Sangakkara said a full-fledged tour was not possible at this stage.

“I don't think you are ever going to see in the near future a five-Test match series coupled with a one-day series played back-to-back.

“I think it will be more a case of you play two Test matches, you take a break, you go back and play three one-dayers,” he said.

“A strong Pakistan side playing in front of their home crowds is one of the best things that can happen to world cricket,” he added.

## BWF gives Oly July 2021, settles for November

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The badminton world championship slated for August next year in Spain will now take place from November 29 to December 5, the sport's apex body said on Friday, postponing its showcase to avoid a clash with the Olympics.

“The Badminton World Federation (BWF) and Spanish Federation (FESBA) can confirm the BWF World Championships traditionally scheduled for August 2021 will now take place at the end of 2021 from Monday 29 November to Sunday 5 December,” the BWF said in a statement.

The world championship has traditionally been an annual event, which is however not held in an Olympic year. But, with the 2020 Tokyo Games postponed to next year owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, it

will be the first time that the prestigious event will be conducted in the Olympic year.

The decision to postpone the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games to 23 July to 8 August and 24 August until 5 September 2021 only confirmed this move, the BWF said.

The decision means reigning champion P V Sindhu will get a chance to defend her title when the tournament is held at the Carolina Marin Stadium, the arena named after the three-time world champion in her native city of Huelva in Spain.

FESBA president David Cabello said: “We hope the World Championships in Huelva will be a special occasion for badminton in Spain and the world. “We are satisfied that moving the championships to the end of the year will allow us to deliver the best tournament possible.”



## PL re-states commitment to finish season

AFP ■ LONDON

Premier League clubs on Friday reconfirmed their commitment to finish the 2019/20 season subject to coronavirus restrictions being lifted in Britain despite fears expressed by players.

The English top flight faces an eye-watering estimated loss of around £1 billion (\$1.25 billion) if no more football is played due to the global pandemic.

Playing the 92 remaining games behind closed doors would mitigate that loss, avoiding the need to repay hundreds of millions to broadcasters.

But the Premier League faces huge logistical difficulties in its attempts to return to action, with Britain one of the countries worst-hit by Covid-19.

The league and clubs discussed possible steps towards



resuming the season at a meeting on Friday.

“The league and clubs are considering the first tentative moves forward and will only return to training and playing with Government guidance, under expert medical advice and after consultation with players

and managers,” the Premier League said in a statement.

“The clubs reconfirmed their commitment to finishing the 2019/20 season, maintaining integrity of the competition and welcomed the Government's support.”

The league reportedly informed clubs that matches will have to be played at up to 10 neutral venues for the season to be completed.

Liverpool are on the brink of their first league title for 30 years with a 25-point lead at the top of the table.

However, the Premier League is keen to avoid potential legal challenges over the awarding of much more tightly contested European places, relegation and promotion if the season cannot be completed.

Key to any restarting of matches in the Premier League is Government support. Oliver

## Serie A teams set to defy Govt and return to training

**MILAN:** Italy's 20 Serie A clubs on Friday reiterated their unanimous desire to complete the season as the northern Emilia-Romagna region became the first to open the way to training despite Govt restrictions.

An emergency Lega Serie A assembly via video of the top-flight clubs took place on Friday and League president Paolo Dal Pino stated after the meeting “his openness to a dialogue with the Government from a constructive and collaborative

perspective, obtaining on this position the full agreement of all the clubs.”

The Emilia-Romagna region gave permission for local clubs, including top-flight sides Bologna, Parma, SPAL and Sassuolo, to resume training in sports centres from May 4 if they wished to do so.

Southern giants Napoli are also planning to return to training as their safety proposals have received the backing of local authorities. **AFP**

Dowden, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, struck a positive tone after a meeting with leaders of a number of sports on Friday.

“We just kicked off first of

many detailed meetings to plan for a safe return of elite sport behind closed doors when, and only when, it is safe to do so on the basis of expert medical advice,” Dowden tweeted.

## F1 looks for isolation to launch new season

**VIENNA:** Formula One managing director Ross Brawn said the Austrian Grand Prix's remote location makes it a logical choice as the opening race of a season heavily interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Organisers are aiming to start the championship, which was put on hold in March hours before the scheduled season-opener in Australia, with consecutive races at the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg on July 5 and 12.

“One of the logistical challenges is getting everyone tested and cleared to enter the racing environment,” Brawn told the *F1 Nation* podcast.

“Once we do that, it's very attractive to keep everyone in that environment, within that biosphere that we want to create, for another race.

“It's also pretty challenging to find the right sort of races

instance, there will be no motorhomes, but there will be full catering facility laid on that the circuit has.

“We can contain everyone within that environment and therefore once we are there it is appealing to have another race the following week.”

The Austrian Grand Prix will only be given the green light on the condition it is raced behind closed doors, the country's health minister told organisers on Wednesday.

“Unfortunately it will be without fans, which is a great shame, but we still feel we can take the race out to all the fans and watchers on TV and other means,” said Brawn.

“It's important for us to try and get the season going, many reasons for wanting to start the season. One is to excite the fans, who have all been frustrated with the delays. **AFP**