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“DHONI HELPS BUT DOESN'T
OFFER COMPLETE SOLUTIONS”

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USUAL SUSPECTS
SWAPAN DASGUPTA

India not China, life is first priority here

In early-1972, me and another school-friend decided — on a total impulse — to travel to the newly-liberated Bangladesh from Kolkata. For both, it was our first 'foreign' visit and we didn't even have passports — just a piece of paper allowing travel to Bangladesh. The week-long visit to Dhaka (or Dacca as it was then spelt) was memorable, exciting and instructive to our teenage imaginations. A narration of that visit should await our memoirs, if either or both of us should care to write one.

In these lockdown days what suddenly came to mind was the experience of a medical student who was also an activist of the National Awami Party led by Maulana Bhashani in East Pakistan. Although distinct from Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's Awami League, the NAP was also deemed subversive by the Pakistani authorities. After the Pakistan army crackdown of March 25, 1971, the student simply went 'underground.' By that, he simply stayed at home and remained cooped up in his room. He made no attempts to resume his political activities, nor did he contact anyone but his closest friends. Having escaped the Pakistan army's radar in the early days, he simply disappeared from view and remained that way till the Pakistan army surrendered to the Indian Army on December 16, 1971.

Cutting himself totally off from society and making himself invisible probably saved his life. All it needed was one 'informer' or a 'collaborator' — and there were enough of them hanging about Dhaka — to whisper his whereabouts to the army or the Razakars for a student activist to come to a sticky end. By his own admission, he was bored stiff with this long period of isolation. But he kept his nerve, exercised patience and lived to enjoy a happy and successful life thereafter.

For many of us, the ongoing lockdown which may extend till May 16 — if not longer — there is a feeling of restlessness, even exasperation. We may not be stranded in

Even in times of conventional war, the GDP would have been subsumed by the integrity of the nation and the safety of the people. It would have been a different matter if India had the same political system as China

some unfamiliar place, unable to return home, but the sense of anxiety is all too evident. The initial novelty of enforced rest has given way to edginess — and for some, anger. A lady known for her acerbic social media posts critical of Narendra Modi was angry that Delhi was still in the Red Zone. "Will I be able to buy alcohol after May 3?" she asked. My cousin, a pensioner, asked how much longer he would have to pay the salaries of domestic staff who were absent. Another small businessman, always cautious with his money, wondered how much longer

he could afford to dip into his savings. The examples can be multiplied but it points to one thing: the prolonged lockdown is beginning to affect everyone in different ways — financially and emotionally. The concern is all the more because there is no end in sight. No one really knows whether things will improve in mid-May and no one can tell us if there is going to be a cure found at the end of the day.

It is in this context that I read an article in *The Times* (London) on April 27 by Max Hastings, a reputed military historian and a former newspaper editor. Entitled 'We need to toughen up for the pain ahead', Hastings argued that the world is overwhelmed by "sentimentality, blame-gaming and poor risk assessment": "We are slowly recognising realities about Covid-19. There will be no tidy, early ending: it will ebb and flow, with resurgence and possible heavier death counts, for months and perhaps years. Yet the chances that it will kill a healthy, youngish person are less than those of their being eaten by a great white shark." He went on to argue that the "national lockdown is essential, but the economic and social consequences of sustaining it until we can all be labelled 'safe' would be generationally catastrophic."

Comparing the present situation to a war, Hastings has stressed the need to opt for "the least bad from a range of unwelcome options, accepting the need to pay a price in lost lives in the greater interest of the nation."

This was also the theme of an intervention by NR Narayana Murthy, a founder of Infosys and an entrepreneur who has often donned himself in a saintly garb. "What is important ... is that India cannot continue in this situation for too long", he is said to have told a web seminar, "because at some point of time, deaths due to hunger will far outweigh deaths due to coronavirus."

Hunger, it seems, was just a convenient piece of sentimentality that Murthy used to press his real argument: "When you look at nine million people dying naturally, and when you compare it with the death of 1,000 people in past two months, obviously it is not as much of a panic we think it is."

If Murthy had been a politician, he would probably have been drummed out of active politics. In effect he was asserting two things. First, that in the list of national priorities, the GDP was paramount; and secondly, that a section of the population, particularly the aged — who die the most from Covid-19 — is dispensable.

I don't believe there is a single responsible politician who would agree with either Hastings or Murthy. Had India pursued the Swedish model of life-as-usual, the number of deaths would have been socially and politically unacceptable. People care about material possessions but, principally, they care about the well being of themselves, their family, their community and their country. Once these are safeguarded, they care about the GDP.

In a war involving a visible enemy, the priorities would have been rejigged somewhat. But even in times of conventional war, the GDP would have been subsumed by the integrity of the nation and the safety of the people. It would have been a different matter if India had the same political system as China.

Migrant workers carry virus home

7 in UP, 5 in Odisha, 2 in Chhattisgarh, 9 in Bihar test +ve



Migrant workers wait to board a special train to return to Agra, at a railway station in Ahmedabad on Saturday

AP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With tens of thousands of migrants workers beginning to return to their respective States, the fear of corona spreading thick and fast — as was contended by the Home Ministry while repeatedly opposing their movement — is coming true.

Seven of these workers who returned to Uttar Pradesh from Maharashtra have tested positive. Five migrant workers have tested positive in Odisha

and two in Chhattisgarh. Nine migrant workers from Bihar tested positive in Bangalore.

The Government had told the Supreme Court in the past that there were fears that one third of the total migrants could be infected. However, there was test carried out before starting the process of transporting them by train.

According to Basti's district magistrate Ashutosh Niranjani, the seven labourers had travelled from Maharashtra via Jhansi in Government buses to

Basti tested positive. They were quarantined at a Government shelter in Haraiyya area.

Their samples were taken and they have tested positive for Covid-19. Heavy sanitisation of premises has been done where they were quarantined.

"The labourers have been shifted to a community health centre (CHC) in Munderwa area. Out of the total 31 cases in the district, 1 Covid-19 patient has died while 13 patients have been discharged from the hospital after they

recovered. There are presently 17 active cases," Basti DM said in a statement.

UP was one of the first States to send buses to bring back migrants. The UP Government has made plans to bring back 10-12 lakh migrant workers home from different parts in the country, especially Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana and Punjab.

On Thursday, nine migrant workers tested positive in Bangalore. Their roommate was a 54-year-old migrant worker from Bihar who tested positive on Wednesday. With no mass scale testing done in case of migrants and quarantine being the only basis for their movement back to home, the fear they could be carrier of the virus has kept everyone worried.

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Buses allowed only in Green zone: MHA

New Delhi: Union Home Ministry on Saturday clarified that buses are not allowed in Orange Zones and they can run in Green Zones with 50 per cent passengers to maintain social distancing norms. In Orange Zones, taxis and cab services like Uber and Ola are allowed with two passengers and a driver.

Punjab blames Maha as pilgrims return with Covid

None of 4K pilgrims tested in Maha, says Punjab; India's cases 39,242, deaths 1,300

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus cases saw a back-to-back second day of 2,000 plus rise in numbers with Punjab registering its highest single day count of 187 cases. Overall, the number of cases pushed the country's total tally to 39,242 and death count of 1,300 with 77 mortalities in a day on Saturday.

Punjab's count has doubled in the last four days due to surge in cases following arrival of nearly 3,500 Sikh pilgrims from Nanded in Maharashtra. Nearly 400 of the total cases in the State are linked to the pilgrims.

Nearly 4,000 pilgrims were stranded at Hazur Sahib Gurudwara in Nanded from where they were brought in 90 buses to Punjab and sent to home quarantine after a normal screening. An alarming



A Muslim priest in protective gear offers funeral prayers for a CRPF official who died from the Covid-19, at a graveyard in New Delhi on Saturday

AP

number of these people have now tested positive for the deadly coronavirus, doubling the total number of Punjab cases in just four days at 772.

Nearly half of the total infected persons are linked to the Nanded pilgrimage. The figure of total death in the State is 20.

Thirty two of the 187 pilgrims who tested positive on Saturday belong to just one district — Hoshiarpur.

Punjab Health Minister Balbir Sidhu has accused Maharashtra authorities of being careless, saying none of the around 4,000 pilgrims were tested for the coronavirus despite them being stranded there for around a month. Maharashtra has rebutted the accusation and said the pilgrims may have been infected on way to Punjab when they halted at Indore.

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Capital to open liquor shops, but all 11 dists in Red zone till May 17

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has decided to open liquor shops in non-containment zones in Delhi in accordance with the latest guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). However, on Saturday itself Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that all 11 districts in the national Capital will remain in Red zone till May 17, triggering some confusion.

The Excise Department has directed four Government-run agencies, which are responsible to sell liquor in the city, to identify such outlets which fulfil all conditions prescribed

by the MHA.

Till Friday, the national Capital had recorded 3,738 cases of coronavirus and 61 fatalities. On Friday, 223 new cases were reported. According to Jain, 49 people are in ICU and five are on ventilator.

A "limited" lockdown which includes suspension of air, train and inter-State road travel will continue to remain in force for two more weeks from May 4 across the country, but some activities would be allowed after classifications of districts into red, orange and Green zones based on Covid-19 risk profiling, the Government had announced on Friday.

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Tirupati ends job contract of 1,300 workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tirupati Balaji temple in Andhra Pradesh, one of India's richest Hindu shrines, has decided to do away with the services of nearly 1,300 contractual sanitation workers amid the coronavirus outbreak. They were asked not to report to duty from May 1.

The Temple trust (TTD) with ₹3,309 cr yearly budget told the firm supplying the manpower that the contract of the workers will not be renewed on expiry on April 30. The workers appealed to the TTD to retain them during the coronavirus crisis, however their plea has been rejected.

"The issue was brought to my notice. We will explore the ways to help them," YV Subba Reddy, TTD chairman, told the *Mumbai Mirror*.

140 CRPF men test +ve, its Mayur Vihar camp campus sealed

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The number of Covid-19 positive cases in the 31 Battalion of CRPF has spiralled up to 140 making the situation scary at the paramilitary camp at Mayur Vihar here.

The 140 Covid-19 positive cases include one Sub Inspector Mohammad Ikram Hussain who succumbed to the disease last week and a recovered patient, besides two private individuals contracted by the 31 Battalion.

Majority of the men who have tested positive for Covid-19 are Constables to Assistant Sub Inspectors. Reports of other personnel are awaited and the number of positive cases is likely to further spiral up, officials said.

The Mayur Vihar camp of the CRPF houses one battalion (1,000 personnel) strength of the force. The entire campus has been sealed as a precautionary measure to check the spread of the disease.

All the patients have been admitted to Quarantine Centre



A municipal worker sprays disinfectants outside CRPF's 31 battalion building in East Delhi on Saturday

PTI

at Mandoli, Shahdara, Choudhary Brahmaprakash Ayurvedic Hospital, Delhi and Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital here.

Following the development, the paramilitary directorate here has issued an advisory to all the formations across the country that the personnel should strictly wear face masks, hand gloves and carry hand sanitisers when entering hotspots or containment zones for performing duty.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs a high-level meeting to discuss ways to boost investment, both international and domestic in New Delhi

PTI

which deferred release of monthly GST collection numbers on Friday, also gave a detailed presentation to the PM later in the day on the state of economy and several initiatives that it plans to undertake

to stimulate Indian economy and reset the flow of money.

The PM already had meetings with different Ministries, including civil aviation, labour and power, on Friday.

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CAPSULE

LOKPAL MEMBER JUSTICE TRIPATHI DIES OF COVID

New Delhi: Lokpal member Justice AK Tripathi (retired) has died due to coronavirus infection, sources said. He was 62. He had been admitted to AIIMS in Delhi on April 2. His daughter and cook who were infected with the Covid-19 have recovered, sources said. Justice Tripathi, a former Chief Justice of the Chhattisgarh High Court, had been in the ICU of the trauma care centre at AIIMS.

CHINA'S CORONAVIRUS CASES DROP TO ONE

Beijing: China, where the deadly coronavirus first emerged in December last, reported just one Covid-19 case, the National Health Commission said on Saturday.

TWO ULTRAS KILLED IN PULWAMA ENCOUNTER

Srinagar: Two unidentified militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Pulwama district of Jammu & Kashmir on Saturday, while another anti-militancy operation is underway in Kupwara, police said.

3 COPS POSTED OUTSIDE MATOSHRI TEST POSITIVE

Mumbai: Three police personnel posted outside Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray's private residence 'Matoshri' at Bandra (East) in north-west Mumbai have tested positive for coronavirus.

TIME TO GIVE INDIA

UNITED WE SING

In these testing times, the frontline workers are doing their bit to fight the pandemic — COVID-19. Individuals too can do their bit to help those in need by tuning in to a global concert, says SUNDAY PIONEER

The Coronavirus-led lockdown is changing the way we are doing things. Be it the work from home culture or online classes or even our normal socialising routine, we are slowly adapting to the new normal. However, in these times of crisis not everything is going left. From earth getting time to rejuvenate itself to the entertainment industry seeing new breakthroughs, there are several reasons to beat the blues.

The quote that music can heal the wounds that medicine can't touch stands true in the current situation. That's why, stakeholders are geared up for taking concerts too on online platforms. Almost everything is taking the digital route.

With the Indian entertainment industry coming together for a home-to-home fundraiser concert, 'I for India', in partnership with Facebook and GiveIndia is rightly utilising the power of music keeping in mind the social distancing norms. All proceeds from the fundraiser concert will go to the India COVID Response Fund managed by GiveIndia.

The mother of concerts, this four-hour long musical evening will be live globally on Facebook today at 7:30 pm and will feature performances and personal messages from more than 85 Indian and global stars — A R Rahman, Akshay Kumar, Arijit Singh, Aamir Khan, Alia Bhatt, Priyanka Chopra and Rani Mukerji to name a few.

The vision for the concert by leaders from the entertainment industry is three-pronged — first, to entertain those locked down in their homes. Second, pay tribute to those who are working on the



frontlines. Third, to raise funds for those who have no work and no home and do not know where their next meal is coming from.

Atul Satija, CEO, GiveIndia, says that it's the concert backed by several stars feels like a nation coming together. "The fundraiser concert, backed by a fabulous line up of stars, feels like a nation coming together—though we are isolated, we are united in our efforts to win this battle against COVID-19. We have already received tremendous support for our missions to provide humanitarian aid to those most affected by this crisis. But with the concert going live on the world's largest social media platform, it will help reach the millions of people who want to contribute to this war-like effort. We are extremely grateful to the organisers for putting their trust in us as the donations partner," he says.

Priyanka Chopra shares her thoughts on how virtual event is bringing everyone together. "Unexpected, uncontrolled, unparalleled. The coronavirus has forged a brutal path across the

world, and in the line of fire is well — you me and pretty much everyone across the world. Lockdowns, quarantines, social distancing — yeh hain humara naya normal. *Khud ko surakshit rakhne ke liye hume ek dusre se dur rehna pad raha hai. Phir bhi mann hi mann main hum ek saath hain, as always,*" she says.

Anushka Sharma says that she in this digital age, even being miles apart, she is feeling more connected than ever. "While we may be social distancing, and that's the requirement. I don't

think we've ever been more connected. People helping each other, spreading awareness just so that we can protect each other and that is the victory of human spirit," Sharma opines.

On the other hand, Rani Mukerji calls for people to become more vigilant keeping in mind the increase in child abuse.

"Instances of child abuse have increased during lockdown. I urge you all to stay more vigilant. If you see or hear anything, suspicious or odd please report it to the authorities immediately. My daughter Adira calls this coronavirus an invisible monster lurking in the streets, she tells me mamma, this monster will surely go away one day," she says.

Zoya Akhtar says that may we remember the lessons learnt and never forget we aren't above nature, we're just a small part of it.

Shabana Azmi too agrees with Akhtar and says that it's time to stand united and understand how interdependent we are.

"It's time we realised how interdependent we are on each other. Irrespective of caste, class, gender, religion or country. It's time for introspection. It's time to shed our prejudices, it's time to come together in kinship and harmony," Azmi says.

Katrina Kaif hails the frontline workers and says that every penny that will be collected will equip these heroes better. "There are 1000s of frontliners and emergency workers who are putting their lives on the line every day in the fight against COVID-19. Every rupee we collect today will help equip these heroes better thus protect them better. So please help keep safe those who keep us safe," Kaif says.

Plan Your Stay At Home Week



Thor (2011): The powerful, but arrogant god Thor, is cast out of Asgard to live amongst humans in Midgard (Earth), where he soon becomes one of their finest defenders.
Ant-Man (2015): Biochemist Dr. Hank Pym uses his latest discovery, a group of subatomic particles, to create a size-altering formula.
Later on, he develops an instrument that helps him communicate with and control insects.
Black Panther (2018): T'Challa, heir to the hidden but advanced kingdom of Wakanda, must step forward to lead his people into a new future and must confront a challenger from his country's past.
Captain Marvel (2019): Carol Danvers becomes one of the universe's most powerful heroes when Earth is caught in the middle of a galactic war between two alien races.

BAKE IT

If you are looking for few easy recipes to make in quarantine that does not require a ton of ingredients? We've got you covered. To make meal planning as easy as possible for you and your family amidst this coronavirus outbreak, we've rounded up recipes that call for fewer main ingredients.



LEMON CAKE

Ingredients	Quantity
Butter	70 grams
Sugar	145 grams
Eggs	50 grams
Flour	108 grams
Baking powder	2.5 grams
Cream	100 grams
Lemon zest	1.5 grams

PROCEDURE

1. Using a wooden spoon cream together the butter, lemon zest & sugar till light & fluffy
2. Slowly add in the eggs & mix till the eggs are incorporated into the mixture
3. Once all the eggs have

been mixed, fold in the flour & baking powder
4. Lastly mix in the cream
5. Pour the batter into a well oiled tin
6. Bake at 160 degrees Celsius for 25 to 30 minutes.

— By Chef Rubani,
Academy of Pastry and
Culinary Arts

MILK LOAF/MILK BREAD

Ingredients	Quantity
Refined Flour (maida):	500 grams
Salt	10 grams
Yeast	4 grams
Sugar	4 grams
Milk	160 grams
Eggs	120 grams
Butter	100 grams



PROCEDURE

1. Mix all ingredients together except butter and knead to form a smooth dough
2. Add butter part by part and continue kneading till uniform
3. Allow the dough to proof in a warm place for an hour and then knock back.
4. Leave it in the fridge overnight
5. Divide the dough as per requirement and shape it (this recipe is meant for 3 loaves of 300 gms each)
6. Proof till double in volume,

brush with egg wash (a thin, even coat of egg wash, adding a little liquid- 1 tablespoon per egg, or 1/2 tablespoon per yolk or white) and bake at 180o C until golden brown

Chef's Tip:

1. Refrigerate all ingredients for one hour before kneading the dough to get a lighter bread.
2. To bake it without eggs, replace eggs with same quantity of milk

By Chef Niklesh Sharma,
Academy of Pastry
and Culinary Arts

TELLYTALE

KINSHUK PAYS TRIBUTE TO RISHI



Stars have united in grief to pay tribute to the great legendary actor Rishi Kapoor following his demise.

Star Bharat's *RadhaKrishn* fame Kinshuk Vaidya who made a Bollywood debut as a child actor in the film *Raju Chacha* featuring alongside late actor Rishi Kapoor *ji* took social media to pay tribute to the veteran actor.

On speaking with Kinshuk and as he recollects fond memories while shooting with *Rishiji*, he mentions: "Rishi uncle was one of my mentors. On the sets of *Raju Chacha*, he would make me sit on his lap, tell me stories and share his experiences as a child actor. He was a father figure to all and we used to call him papa. I will cherish these memories lifelong. Rest in Peace Sir, you will be missed."

THE HOLIDAY ON MX PLAYER

Have all your new year resolutions to spend time with your besties and go on your long due holiday with them just get cancelled? Cannot wait for your big reunion? Well, we have perfect distraction in store for you. MX Player is exclusively bringing back



the trip of the year with *The Holiday*, a show that will definitely take you back to the best trip with your buddies or is sure to get you planning for your next one!

Breaking gender stereotypes through this story of friendship, The Zoom Studios Presents An MX Exclusive Series — *The Holiday*, which takes you through one of the most memorable bachelorette trips that Patrick, Armaan and Kabir played by the three hunks Priyank Sharma, Aashim Gulati, and Veer Rajwani Singh throw for their best friend and bride-to-be, Mehak, played by Adah Sharma.

On the show now being released on MX Player, Adah Sharma comments, "I truly believe that the best trips in life are the ones that aren't planned. The impromptu ones without months of planning, no maps, no itinerary but with your close-knit group of friends are the ones which are the most

memorable. The *Holiday* is all about fun and brings out the emotions of true friendship. I'm glad the MX Player audience will now get a chance to be a part of our little adventure. I don't think anyone has watched a bachelorette before where a girl goes with 3 of her best friends who happen to be boys. Now, since no one can go for a *Holiday* for a while, we'll take them with us on our *Holiday!*"

"This is great news! *The Holiday* is a breath taking, fast paced, crazy roller coaster ride with four of the craziest friends and promises to give everyone friendship goals. This one is best watched as a virtual binge watch party with your best pals", adds Priyank Sharma.

With Mehak's bachelorette as the perfect excuse for a holiday, bags were packed and a plane straight to Mauritius was boarded. This holiday promises to be everything dreams are made of.

KRISHNA ABLE TO GROW HAIR BACK

Television actors have currently got some much needed time to rest and spend quality time with their families. Similarly, Krishna Bharadwaj, who has entertained everyone with his exceptional performance as Pandit Ramakrishna in Sony SAB's show



Tenali Rama, too is utilising this time-off to watch his favourite films, catch up on sleep and more importantly grow his hair back.

Krishna Bharadwaj, who plays Rama, is glad he has got time to grow his hair back now that he isn't shooting often.

Krishna says: "I am here in Mumbai and did not go back to my home in Jharkhand as I wanted to take utmost precautions and keep others safe. Here, I have got time to catch up on my sleep that I have lost in these three years. These days, I have been eating, sleeping and binge-watching on some world cinema as I am a big fan of world cinema. I also cooked my favourite, *gatte Ki sabji* recently. What I am liking the most is that I am finally able to grow my hair now. I have always had to shave my head, every day, for the role of Rama in *Tenali Rama* and now that we are not shooting for a while, I am able to grow my hair back."

Krishna Bharadwaj also said: "While it is a critical time for everyone, I am trying to help the daily wage workers across the country. I am associated with an organization where we are collecting groceries and

money from people who are willing to help and are delivering these essential items to people in the slum areas, staying under the government guidelines and taking every safety measure seriously."

Talking about how he is keeping himself positive, Krishna says: "I am glad I have got some time to explore my spiritual side again as I have been meditating a lot, which I couldn't do earlier due to hectic shoot schedules. This helps stay calm and keeps the mind healthy. If we look at the positive side of this situation, then I would say Mother Nature has got time to heal itself. So, my message to everyone is that let's take this time to work upon ourselves, do everything that we wanted to do all these years and most importantly, spend time with our family because that is what matters the most."

SUMEDH'S SOCIAL MEDIA DETOX

From Big town actors to small-town actors, celebrities keep quitting social networks in some way or the other. Entertainment industry experts say that these breaks are good for famous people's mind and soul.



Rumour has it that *RadhaKrishn* fame, Sumedh Mudgalkar who recently decided to quit Instagram is channelising his energy into positive avenues during this lockdown focusing on some 'me time'.

Sources say: "Sumedh intends to find relaxation amongst qualitative reading and listening to new musical tunes."

During this phase where everyone is glued to their mobile devices, it is refreshing to see a young actor taking such a step to indulge and focus on some 'me time'.

BAAGHI 3 ON DISNEY+HOTSTAR VIP

Disney+ Hotstar VIP has added the highest grossing one-day earner of 2020 to its expansive movie library — *Baaghi 3*. The on-screen macho brother duo Tiger Shroff and Riteish Deshmukh are joined by Shraddha Kapoor, Ankita Lokhande and Jackie Shroff in pivotal roles with a special appearance by Bollywood diva Disha Patani. The action thriller has been directed by Ahmed Khan and is the third movie in the ever-popular franchise *Baaghi*. With elaborate action scenes and unbelievable stunts, the movie is a visual spectacle and a must-watch for all action fans. *Baaghi 3* is premiering on Disney+ Hotstar VIP from May 1, 2020 onwards.

'I am superwoman right now'

RISHINA KANDHARI, who plays Rani Vivek Srivastav in SET's *Ishaaron Ishaaron Mein*, tells SHALINI SAKSENA her favourite character and how a modeling career turned into acting

■ How did your acting career begin?

I believe I was destined to get into acting. My friend was auditioning for a commercial. I auditioned as well; this was when I was in college. An idea took root that this was something that I could do and enjoy. I did couple of ads that with served as good pocket money. I loved the freedom that came with having my own money. I had the liberty to spend it as I wished. I loved the whole experience of it. I wanted to explore the industry more professionally that's how I got into it. Over the years, I have done several commercials, TV shows and films. All this I got due to sheer hard work, talent and merit.

■ How did you come on board for Ishaaron Ishaaron Mein?

The show will always be special for me as all the actors in the show are senior and experienced. I always wanted to work with them and when I was called for the look test, I was really hoping that I get in. I thank God for that I was selected at one go.

■ What made you say yes to Rani Vivek Srivastav?

Rani's character is very discreet. It has layers to it. The role is not easy to play. While she is fearless, she is a little scared for her family. She is usually happy but gets upset at the slightest of things to people whom she loves. She is a brat yet she is the docile girl of the Srivastav family.

■ The show is about specially-abled — their dreams and aspirations. Do you think people find a connect with such a subject?

It is a very different kind of a subject that the makers have tried to bring on screen. There have been makers who have dealt with the subject for films but never on the small screen. For TV, it is one of a kind show. There are many out there who found a connect with the storyline since the series is about love, bonding and family. Also, there is great chemistry



among the co-stars off-screen that comes to play on-screen.

■ You have done so many shows. Is there a favourite role?

Yes, I loved playing Arpita Khanna, the cop in *Diya Aur Baati Hum*. It was a role that I enjoyed doing.

I was paired against Sandhya in the series. Another role that is close to my heart was the character of Shanti in *Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai*. In this show I played a Math teacher at Pragati Vidya Ka Mandir School; I was Naina's mentor.

■ You have done two-three

films only? Is Bollywood not on your cards?

I have not shunned Bollywood I am just looking forward to doing roles that are more in tune to what I want to do henceforth. I don't want to take up a role just for the heck of it. I am hope that I get the right role so that I can say yes to it.

■ How are you coping with the lockdown?

I've given my mother complete rest. I am handling all household chores of two houses — mine as well as my mother's. Many people know that my mom is my neighbour

as well. I don't want her to get stressed out doing all the work. One can say I am a superwoman — managing two homes.

■ There are lots of rumours doing rounds related to COVID-19? Your advice to people?

First, and for most important stop believing WhatsApp forward messages. Half of them are fake. Only trust newspapers and the news they put out. There are so many journalists who are out there working so that they can bring out the ground reality. We cannot let their efforts go waste.

All 11 districts of Delhi to remain in red zone: Jain

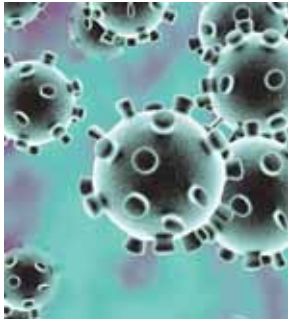
STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday said that all 11 districts in the national Capital will remain in red zone till May 17.

According to Jain, 49 people are in ICU and five are on ventilator. A "limited" lockdown which includes suspension of air, train and inter-state road travel will continue to remain in force for two more weeks from May 4 across the country, but some activities would be allowed after classifications of districts into red, orange and green zones based on COVID-19 risk profiling, the government had announced on Friday.

The national capital had recorded 3,738 cases of coronavirus and 61 fatalities. On Friday, 223 new cases were reported till Friday.

Jain said the 11 districts in



Delhi will be in the red zone till May 17. "A red zone is an area where there are more than 10 (coronavirus) cases. The relief measures announced by centre will be made available to people," he said.

Talking about the movement of migrant labourers from Delhi to their home states, he said the government is talking to other states. "We will provide the logistics and medical support that will be needed," he said.

Sisodia launches personality development classes for students

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In fifth session of Parenting in the time of Corona, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday launched 'English and Personality Development' programme for class 10th and 12th students studying in Delhi Government schools starting from Monday.

Reviewing the session, Sisodia said meeting is a review for our team at Delhi Government with the different stakeholders involved. "We have just introduced online classes, it is a huge transition from the regular classes, both for the teachers and the students. Some students have devices and access to the internet, while some do not. So I wanted to know if this plan is working and how are we working to get more students to join our classes," added Sisodia.

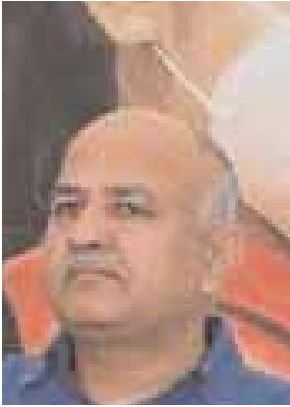
Launching the new initiative for the students of classes 10 and 12, awaiting the completion of board exam and results, the Delhi Government introduced "Every day English and Personality Development classes" for them to enhance their spoken english and soft

skills. This initiative will be open for students from Monday onwards.

It is being implemented in partnership with British Council and Macmillan Education, Shri Binay Bhushan said, "Spoken English and personality Development classes for students of classes 10 and 12 will not only give them an opportunity to make good use of current time but also acquire much needed new skills. The classes will go on in May and June and will help in adding to the confidence of the students."

Notably, almost 1,60,000 students of class 10 and 1,12,000 students of class 12 have appeared for their board exams are awaiting their results.

The Education Department has decided to launch spoken english and personality development classes (online) for them to make apt use of their free time at home. "We started special online classes for Maths for Class 9 students as it evokes a degree of fear among many students, in the same way, though not feared but English, particularly spoken one is a need of hour. No child should feel



inferior for not being to able to communicate in it. Hindi is our language, and the mode of communication and teaching is in Hindi only, but we cannot overlook the importance and relevance of English in today's days. To progress further at national and international level, our students should have good command over the language. And that is why we are starting the classes from the coming Monday," Sisodia said interacting Directorate of Education (DoE) officials.

Explaining the course design, the representatives of British Council and Macmillan

Education said, "The course is divided into two parts. First is Everyday English where students will be taught the functional usage of english. The second part is personality development where students will be taught about peer pressure and made to learn basic skills like facing interview. The students of class 10 and 12 will receive an SMS with a link everyday. The link will take them to the assigned webpage for that day and then the child will be able to navigate to activities of the day. The students would also be able to self assess from time to time."

"About 2,70,000 students (class 10 and 12 combined) will be getting the link and will be able to join the course. With this launch, we now have intervention for every child, across all classes, in Delhi Government schools," added Shailendra Sharma.

Reviewing the online math classes introduced by the Delhi Govt last week, in partnership with Khan Academy, Sharma said "All 4,80,000 students of class 9 (std 8 students who just got promoted to std 9 and those from 2019-20 batch) have

received SMS for the online math classes. 35,000 students logged in on the first day itself. So far 6 sessions have been shared (3 for each batch- current and previous), and 120,000 students attended it in the first week."

Sakshi, student of RPVV, Rohini, Sec 11 who is attending these classes regularly said, "My Maths was slightly weak, and everyone says that it's a tough subject in class 9. But my doubts have been cleared after taking lessons from Khan Academy. I understood Online videos and then the test series are also helpful" Dr. Sushma, Maths teacher- Delhi Govt. teacher said, "The content is well aligned with the NCERT and CBSE syllabus."

"It is important to understand that these online classes are not to be taken as parallel teaching. Our teachers should not think that they have to start from the scratch when the schools reopen and get under pressure. it is a part of the overall teaching, it should be complementing each other," said Sisodia added.

"We are teaching the children starting from basic concepts and covering the syllabus only, so we can take it onwards from there when the school reopens", said Dr Sushma.

At the respective school level, teachers of Delhi Government are providing last mile connectivity by informing and helping their students and guiding them to do the assignments. Deputy CM also spoke with some of them today.

Sisodia also spoke with parents of students receiving daily exercises via SMS and IVR and got their feedback on the same. "My kids are learning something new everyday. We are participating with them in the daily activity," said a contented parent, Bharat, Real Estate agent from Laxmi Nagar. "It is not just me, but even the grandfather of my kid is getting involved in making him do the daily exercise," said Rajni, a resident of Uttam Nagar.

"I feel online education and such collaboration is becoming a viable option and a much needed one in coming days. We also want to keep getting the feedback from the parents. The glimpse of new generation school of today is before us now," said Sisodia.

41 people from one building in Kapashera test +ve for Covid

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With 41 corona cases in one building, Delhi's Theke Wali Gali in Kapashera would not be de-contained soon.

According to the reports with Delhi government, 41 residing in single building in Delhi's Kapashera have tested positive for Covid-19.

The building is in Theke Wali Gali near the district collector's office in Kapashera and was sealed after one person contracted the infection, stated the Office of DM Delhi South-West.

A Government official said, "Keeping in mind the high density of population in this particular building, the district administration took the proactive decision of sealing and con-

ducting tests.

Of the total samples, the results of 67 people arrived on Saturday of which 41 people tested positive.

The authorities had sealed the area and collected samples of 175 people living in the area after the first case emerged.

The building is in Theke Wali Gali near the district collector's office and was sealed after one person contracted the infection, stated the Office of DM Delhi South-West.

A Government official said, "Keeping in mind the high density of population in this particular building, the district administration took the proactive decision of sealing and con-

ducting the building on April 19.

While the guidelines mandate sealing an area when minimum three cases have been reported and government implemented Operation Shield.

Samples were collected of all residents in the building and sent to the National Institute of Biologicals (NIB) in Noida.

"Out of total samples collected from the building, some reports have come on Saturday and 41 have tested positive for COVID-19," the official said.

Last month, a private secretary of southwest District Magistrate Rahul Singh had tested positive for COVID-19, prompting the DM to go into self-isolation.

LOCKDOWN VIOLATION 100 cases filed, 2,374 detained

STAFF REPORTER N NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Saturday registered over 100 cases and detained 2,374 people across the national Capital for violating government orders during the coronavirus lockdown.

According to the data shared by the police, 161 cases were registered under section 188 (for disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) till 5pm.

Police said that a total of 2,374 people have been detained under section 65 (persons bound to comply with reasonable directions of police



officers) and 155 vehicles have been impounded under section 66 of the Delhi Police Act.

"The police also registered 41 cases against people for stepping outside their residence without wearing masks. A total of 459 movement passes have been issued," police said.

Since March 24, over lakh people have been detained so far for violating order under section 65 of the Delhi Police Act.

However, on Saturday Delhi Police received over 700 calls on their 24x7 helpline number to resolve issues related to lockdown. Police said that total 35, 074 number of calls received by police till Saturday on their helpline 011-23469526.

"Police received 709 calls from Friday 2 pm to Saturday 2 pm. Out of 709, around 43 calls were related to outside Delhi, which have been referred to respective state helpline numbers. A total of four calls were received related to no food/no money, which have been forwarded to NGO for direct relief at their addresses," said police.

"While 373 calls were relat-

ed to movement passes and were advised to apply online on website of Delhi Police," said police.

"The food delivery network established in all 15 districts with involvement of nearly 400 NGOs/ RWAs/Good Samaritans facilitated by Delhi Police has led to provision of meals/food packets at more than 250 locations which enabled feeding of nearly 283253 persons and dry ration kits to 3756 persons," said the police.

The move comes following nationwide restrictions due to complete lockdown imposed across the country to contain Coronavirus.

Constable tested positive for Covid-19

STAFF REPORTER N NEW DELHI

Delhi Police constable tested positive for the novel coronavirus. Police said that the constable was posted at Jahangirpuri police station in northwest Delhi.

According to a senior police official, he used to live in the barrack at the police station. "The constable's report of being positive for Covid-19 came on Friday. He has been admitted in a hospital here," he said.

Total 10 police personnel from the Jahangirpuri police station have tested positive for COVID-19.

Two officers - a head constable and a constable - of Jahangirpuri have been recovered and joined their duty on Saturday afternoon, the officer said, adding that they received a round-of-applause when they came to the police station.

Earlier, three Delhi Police Crime Branch personnel tested positive for coronavirus.

After two policemen, who were on lockdown enforcement duty in northeast Delhi, tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, Special Commissioner of Police, operations, Muktesh Chander wrote a letter to Special CP, Armed Forces, Robin Hibu informing him about the development.

"They were residing at barrack number 5 of the Khajoori Khas police station. 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 had stated.

Police caution migrants against fake forms

STAFF REPORTER N NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Saturday cautioned migrant labourers against a fake form being circulated through the social media after several of them reached police stations in Shahdara district to deposit the filled document thinking it would streamline the process for their travel to their home States.

The police urged the migrants to not believe in rumours and said no such form has been issued.

On Wednesday, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said in an order issued to all States and union territories that buses shall be used to transport migrant workers, pilgrims, students and other people stranded due to the coron-

avirus lockdown.

According to a senior police official, the migrant labourers must have gotten confused and taken the fake form at face value.

"It came to our notice when several migrant labourers mostly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh reached police stations of Gandhi Nagar, Krishna Nagar and Geeta Colony to deposit filled forms. They started seeking details about transportation facility and urged us to inform them when the facility begins," he said.

Gandhi Nagar, Geeta Colony and Krishna Nagar police station falls under Shahdara district and most of the migrant workers living in these jurisdiction work in markets of Gandhi Nagar.



Siddharth Jain, the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Gandhi Nagar clarified in a video message that no such form has been issued

by the administration.

The police said strict legal action will be taken against those spreading rumours through social media.

Chairman of Delhi Minority Panel booked for sedition

STAFF REPORTER N NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Saturday registered a case of sedition against Chairman of Delhi Minority Commission Zafarul Islam Khan for a controversial social media post.

According to a senior police official of Special Cell, the First Information Report (FIR) was registered against Khan on April 30 under section 124 A (sedition) and 153 A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth) after police received a complaint by a resident of Vasant Kunj.

In the FIR, the complainant alleged that Khan's

In the FIR, the complainant alleged that Khan's post was "provocative", "deliberate" and seditious and intended to cause disharmony and create a rift in society

post was "provocative", "deliberate" and seditious and intended to cause disharmony and create a rift in the society, police said, adding that the case is being investigated by the cyber cell.

The remarks were posted

by Khan on Tuesday but deleted after sometime. However, later, Khan also sought an apology while the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) demanded his removal from the commission.

"I realise that my tweet was ill-timed and insensitive in view of our county facing a medical emergency and fighting an unseen enemy. I apologise to all whose sentiments were hurt," Khan said in a statement.

He further said that his tweet on April 28, thanking Kuwait for taking note of the persecution of Indian Muslims, in the context of the northeast Delhi violence, has pained some people which was never his intention.

Railways executes pending maintenance works of tracks

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To improve safety and operational efficiencies, back-end warriors of Indian Railways has executed long pending major maintenance works of bridges and tracks besides yard remodeling, renewal of scissors crossover during this lockdown.

The ministry said that these projects pending for several years in different zones across the country. "Around 500 modern heavy duty track maintenance machines along with track, signal and overhead equipment maintainers have worked regularly for 10749 machine days to complete overdue track maintenance of 12270 km plain track and 5263 numbers of turnouts," it said.

Ultrasonic flaw detection (USFD) of 30182 kms of track and 1,34,443 rail welds has been carried out with USFD machine. Indian Railways planned these works during lockdown period considering it 'Once in a lifetime opportunity' to wipe out these maintenance arrears and take up the execution of work without affecting the train service," it said in a statement.

Apart from ensuring supply chains all essential com-



modities running through parcel trains and freight trains, Indian Railways executed these long pending maintenance works during this lockdown period when passenger services were suspended due to COVID-19, it added.

Indian Railways focused on several long pending overdue maintenance works requiring traffic block of long durations. "These works were pending for several years and were confronting Railways with severe bottlenecks. Indian Railways planned these works during lockdown period considering it 'Once in a lifetime opportunity' to wipe out these maintenance arrears and take up the execution of work without affecting the train service," it said.

The Ministry further said that the health of the track has been monitored through periodic runs of 'Oscillation Monitoring System' (OMS) cumulating 1,92,488 kms of track at 5362 peak locations indicated by OMS test has been attended to ensure proper quality. "Ultrasonic flaw detection (USFD) of 30182 kms of track and 1,34,443 rail welds has been carried out with USFD machine. Critical summer precaution activities like de-stressing of long welded rail (LWR) which involved huge men power has been taken up with a new procedure for carrying out the work with ensuring social distancing norms 2,246 kms of de-stressing of LWR has been done," it said.

Hindu Rao hospital doctor tests coronavirus positive

New Delhi: A doctor of the NDMC-run Hindu Rao Hospital has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, officials said on Saturday.

Two nurses of the hospital have tested positive for the disease in the last one week. After the first nurse tested positive last Saturday, samples of 78

other staffers, including the doctor, were sent for testing. Reports of 11 staffers are awaited, they said.

The doctor has no symptoms and is under home isolation, an official of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) said.

The largest municipal hos-

pital run by the NDMC was closed on Saturday after the first nurse had tested positive.

Both the nurses had five common contacts, the official said. Services in emergency wards, including a flu clinic and three OPDs at the civic body-run hospital, were resumed from Monday.

PTI

Police receive over 700 calls since Friday for help during lockdown

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has received over 700 calls, including 373 related to movement passes, since Friday afternoon on its 24x7 helpline number, an official said on Saturday.

So far, police have received 35,074 calls on helpline number 011-23469526 since the lockdown was announced on March 24, he said. Between Friday 2 pm and Saturday 2 pm, they received a total of 709 calls, the official said, adding that 373 were related to movement passes.

Out of the 709 calls, 43 were from outside Delhi, which were referred to respective state helpline numbers. Four other calls received were related to no food/money, which were forwarded to NGOs for direct relief at their addresses.

PTI

Healthcare providers bear brunt of sealed Delhi-G'gram border

New Delhi: Healthcare providers working in Delhi and Gurgaon are having a harrowing time as they are unable to commute to work due to the sealing of the Delhi-Gurgaon border in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak. At a time when they are fighting the coronavirus battle, inconvenience to them means inconvenience to several patients.

Ritu Garg, Zonal Director, Fortis Memorial Research Institute says there is an urgent need to ensure medical assistance to patients on chemotherapy, dialysis and having other medical emergencies.

"The biggest challenge we

are currently facing is that a number of our health workers are settled outside Gurgaon. While we are trying to make some arrangements, it is very difficult for them to leave their families and move to Gurgaon in the present circumstances," she says.

"It would be a great help if a system is put into place for healthcare workers to be screened and allowed to move across the border after full validation by authorities," Garg adds.

Deepak Sharma, a resident of west Delhi, who works with a diagnostic lab in Gurgaon is another such worker who is bearing the brunt of the sealed border.

"It is a crucial time for laboratories, and we are working with full strength, but I cannot commute to my workplace now, so it is kind of leave from work. Also, there is no concept of work from home in this sector. I did not want to take leave during such time, but now I am forced to do it," he says.

Arjun Dang, CEO, Dangs Gurgaon border is leading to shortage of manpower, delay in medical processes that need to be done on time and also causing inconvenience to patients driving to Delhi from Gurgaon and vice versa.

He said one of their senior-most doctors who specialises in hematology has not

been able to come to Delhi from Gurgaon for the last three days.

"The hematology samples are mostly oncology samples and we are unable to process them. Also, a lot of my patients come to Delhi for the drive-through coronavirus testing. It gets difficult if they are stopped at multiple places while they are commuting," Dang adds.

Echoing Garg, Dang says a uniform system be put in place for healthcare workers who are travelling between Delhi and Gurgaon.

He says his organisation caters to many hospitals in the NCR and is unable to function due to the sealed border.

Ritika Sharma, who works as a nurse in a Delhi hospital and stays in Gurgaon, says she has been given time till Monday to arrange for some accommodation in Delhi till the time borders are sealed.

Siddhartha Bhattacharya, Secretary-General, Nathealth-Healthcare Federation of India, says the government should remove curbs on movement of doctors, medical personnel and other associate service providers, and allow them to commute to and from the Delhi-Gurgaon border.

Nathealth-Healthcare Federation of India is an apex industry association of healthcare providers.

PTI

Lokpal member AK Tripathi dies nearly a month after testing +ve

New Delhi: Lokpal member Justice (retired) Ajay Kumar Tripathi, who tested positive for Covid-19, died after suffering a cardiac arrest at the AIIMS Trauma Centre here on Saturday, official sources said. Tripathi (62) breathed his last around 9 PM. A former chief justice of the Chhattisgarh High Court, he had been in the AIIMS Trauma Centre, which has been converted into a dedicated Covid-19 hospital, since the first week of April. "He was very sick. He was in the ICU and on ventilator for last three days," one of the sources said. Tripathi is one of the four judicial members of the anti-corruption ombudsman, Lokpal. **PTI**

Firm up plan to employ 15-20 lakh people: Yogi to officials

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday asked officials to firm up a plan to provide employment to nearly 20 lakh people in the State after studying the Centre's advisory on lockdown and the permitted economic activities amid it. He also asked them to compile all details including names, addresses, mobile numbers and work competencies of labourers returning to the State to facilitate their employment. "A work plan should be made to provide employment to 15-20 lakh people. During Covid-19 pandemic, the State Government has paid salaries to 16 lakh State Government employees and 12 lakh retired employees," he said, while chairing a meeting of senior State Government officials at his residence.

Adityanath also directed officials to study the Centre's advisory pertaining to the lockdown, and, restart economic activities accordingly. "Even during the lockdown, it is necessary to search possibilities. Industrial activities should be conducted while following all anti-infection measures," he said. The chief minister observed that sugar mills have been allowed to operate and no case of Covid-19 infection has been reported from that sector. Similarly, no such case has been reported from brick kilns, he pointed out. "In the same way, all industries should operate. A detailed work plan should be prepared to give a new dimension to investment in the state," Adityanath said in a statement, issued by the UP government. He also directed that health

check up of labourers who came back to UP should be mandatorily conducted. "The respective state governments should be informed that they should prepare a list of labourers from UP staying there, conduct their health check up, and facilitate their departure. Health check-ups of labourers who come back to UP should be mandatorily conducted. Infra-red thermometer should be made available so that the health check-up of labourers can be done," he said. The health workers should screen the labourers coming back to the state, and those who are healthy should be sent to home quarantine for 14 days, he said. "Those who are not well, should be given treatment. An officer-in-charge for these activities should be nominated in every district," he added. **PTI**

COVID IMPACT

A dramatic improvement in public perception of police

New Delhi: Traditionally considered in public perception as a corrupt, inefficient and high-handed institution, the Indian police have become phenomenally popular and trustworthy for Indians across the board during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing disruption and sense of fear it has triggered in India has led to a dramatic improvement in the public perception of the police as an institution, according to the latest results of IANS/CVoter tracking survey conducted across the country. This could come as a surprise to many commentators who consider the police force to be the most disliked, mistrusted and denigrated institution in the country. This dramatic improvement in trust in the police is visible across all geographies, income and education levels as well as caste and ethnic

identities. At an all-India level, the latest tracking survey revealed that among 18 odd institutions that were tracked, the biggest positive jump in image has been registered by the Indian police. While in 2018, only about 29.9 per cent of the respondents had expressed a "lot of trust" in the police, during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, this figure has shot up to an overwhelming 70 per cent Indians expressing the same feeling. Correspondingly, the number of Indians who displayed a lack of trust in the police has fallen dramatically in the same time period. In 2018, 28.4 per cent of the respondents said that they have "no trust at all" in the police as an institution. By 2020, with Covid-19 playing havoc, just 8.1 per cent of Indians said that they had "no trust at all" in the police. The nett trust factor for the police zoomed up from a

measly 1.5 per cent to a massive 61.8 per cent at the national level. Compelling human-interest stories and their narration in mainstream as well as social media have perhaps added to this changing perception of the police. A few examples will illustrate this point. Tammana in Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh was expecting a child and was worried. Her husband Anil was at work hundreds of kilometres away in Noida. Thanks to the lockdown, Anil could not travel to Bareilly. A desperate Tamanna made a video and tagged the SSP of Bareilly who forwarded it to his colleagues in Noida. An Additional DCP at Noida, Ranvijay Singh, took it up as a personal challenge and ensured that Anil reached Bareilly without any hiccups despite the travel ban. A healthy young boy was delivered and the grateful parents named him

Mohammed Ranvijay. A video went viral showing a visibly emotional lonely senior citizen breaking down looking at a Chandigarh Police team surprising him with a cake to celebrate his birthday. Another viral video was of hilarious reactions of lockdown violators spoofed by Chennai Police into locking them in an ambulance with a fake Covid-19 patient as a punishment. The Delhi Police's drive with Uday Foundation to distribute ration among the homeless has been among the countless positive stories circulated on social media. The outreach programme of the police took another level when none less than Superintendent of Police of faraway Umaria in Madhya Pradesh called on all senior citizens living alone in his area and personally ensured uninterrupted supply of essentials delivered to their doorsteps. **IANS**

Special train carrying around 1,200 students stranded in Kota reaches Jharkhand

Ranchi: A special train from Rajasthan's Kota, carrying around 1,200 students belonging to Jharkhand, reached the Hatia railway station in Ranchi on Saturday, a senior railway official said. The train entered the platform at 7.05 pm, Divisional Railway Manager of Ranchi Neeraj Ambast said. These students were stranded in Kota due to the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus. Earlier this week, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) allowed the states to ferry migrant labourers, students and tourists back home in buses or special trains. Ranchi Deputy Commissioner Rai Mahimapat Ray, Senior Superintendent of Police Anish Gupta and other officials were present at the station to receive the students. The officials welcomed them with flowers, food packets and water. Over 300 students from Ranchi were among those who returned by the train. "It is a happy moment," a girl said as she struggled to hold back tears. Shreya, a student from

Ramgarh, got emotional after getting off the train. "I am very happy. I was confident that our (state) government will bring us back," she said. Shreya said when other students started leaving Kota and she was stranded amid the uncertainty, it was a "devastating feeling". "But our teachers were very supportive, she said. A woman, who returned from Kota with her son, broke down after getting off the train, but said it was tears of joy after returning home. The students headed towards the buses waiting outside the station, which will take them to their respective districts or neighbourhoods in Ranchi. "I thank our Chief Minister Hemant Soren...We will achieve for what we went away from the state," said another student. Sujan Kumar, a student, said he got frustrated and depressed in Kota as tension was mounting. "Now I feel glad," he said. "When I boarded the train around 10 am in Kota, I heaved a sigh of relief as I will be back home. There was no problem during the journey," said another student. **PTI**

SALVE ON JADHAV CASE

Need to decide whether to go back again to ICJ

New Delhi: Senior advocate Harish Salve, speaking on the Kulbhushan Jadhav matter, said that a point has come in the case where India would have to decide whether to go to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for further consequential directions. Responding to a query on the current status of the Jadhav matter, as it has been a while since the ICJ verdict and also nothing has been heard so far, Salve said that India has been in touch with Pakistan through various channels. "I think we have reached a point where we may have to decide whether to go to ICJ for further consequential directions. Because Pakistan has not

moved ahead," said Salve. He was speaking at the Adhivakta Parishad's Dattopant Thengadi Lecture Series on the Kulbhushan Jadhav case and his experience at the ICJ. The lecture was live-streamed. Pakistan had alleged that Jadhav was a senior Indian intelligence officer who entered the country illegally to carry out acts of sabotage at the time of his arrest. He has been sentenced to death by a Pakistan military court on terrorism charges. Salve insisted that Pakistan has a serious problem on its hands, as other than the confession, it has nothing. Detailing on Pakistan's non-

cooperation, Salve said that till date, Pakistan has refused to share the FIR, the chargesheet and also the judgment of the military court. Also, the confession does not disclose any particular offence, he added. He also cited the limitations in fighting the case at the ICJ. Salve said the dispute had to be brought under the Vienna Convention, as it should fall under the ICJ's treaty jurisdiction. Salve said that breach of basic human rights by Pakistan was not available as a ground for a dispute between India and Pakistan. "That is the limitation we were stuck with," added Salve. **IANS**

Pak expresses inability to convert Kapoor Haveli into museum for want of funds

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Bollywood actor Rishi Kapoor's ancestral home, dubbed as the 'Kapoor Haveli', here cannot be converted into a museum as promised by the Pakistan Government due to financial constraints, sources said on Saturday. In 2018, the Pakistan Government decided to convert the 'Kapoor Haveli' in Qissa Khwani Bazar in Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province into a museum, heeding to a request by Rishi Kapoor who died this week at a hospital in Mumbai. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi had assured Rishi Kapoor that the Pakistan Government will convert the actor's house into a

museum. The sources in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Heritage Department told PTI that the department prepared a comprehensive plan under which the haveli's front would be preserved and its inner portion will be repaired and renovated. However, the plan did not go ahead due to lack of financial resources, they said. Federal Minister Shaheryar Afridi had promised to give the status of museum to the 'Kapoor Haveli' soon after the present Government of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party came into power in July 2018. However, the announcement to this effect could not be materialised despite a lapse of around two years.

Punjab to test all those returning from other States

Chandigarh: The Punjab Government on Saturday decided to test all those returning from outside, saying it can't rely on the medical examination conducted by other states in the wake of a surge in the infection count. It also decided to ramp up coronavirus testing, with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh directing to increase the capacity to 6,000 tests a day by mid-May. The states' coronavirus tally rose substantially in the past a few days due to a large number of Sikh pilgrims evacuated from Maharashtra's Nanded testing positive for the virus. So far, 292 pilgrims have been found infected with the virus, a Government statement said. **PTI**

Migrant workers carry virus home

From Page 1 Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was strongly opposed to the idea of taking back the migrant workers at this stage, but had to succumb after the Ministry of Home paved the way for their return. On Saturday, five Shramik Special trains carrying almost 5,000-6,000 migrants left Kerala to Jharkhand and Bihar. Out of the five trains, two each are for Bihar and Jharkhand and one for Odisha. Three special trains, carrying 1,200 migrant workers each left Saturday night for Uttar Pradesh and Odisha from Gujarat's Ahmedabad and Surat stations, while two trains will leave from Ahmedabad to Agra, another will depart from Surat to Behrampur in Odisha. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday urged Railway Minister Piyush Goyal to run at least 28 trains to bring back 1.17 lakh labourers from the State stranded in 21 States and four Union Territories.

According to Railways, the first Shramik Special train to Bihar, carrying 1,187 migrant labourers, reached the Danapur railway station in Patna from Rajasthan's Jaipur on Saturday afternoon after a 16-hour journey. Meanwhile, the first "Shramik Special" train carrying 839 migrant workers would be arriving at Lucknow railway station from Nashik in Maharashtra on Sunday. UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked officials to firm up a plan to provide employment to nearly 20 lakh people in the State. He also asked them to compile all details including names, addresses, mobile numbers and work competencies of labourers returning to the State to facilitate their employment. On the other hand, the Indian Railways will charge for tickets for operating special trains for stranded migrant workers. The fare includes the price of regular sleeper class tickets plus superfast charges of Rs 30 and an additional charge of Rs 20. "This includes meals and drinking water for long-distance trains. State Governments will coordinate and can pay on passengers' behalf, the Railways clarified.

Interestingly, State Governments and railways are neither announcing the schedule of the trains in public nor giving too much of advance notice to the migrants. In a related development, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik discussed transportation of Odisha labourers residing in Karnataka. The two Chief Ministers were joined by Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan via video conference mode and discussed the current status of migrant labourers. Meanwhile, Yediyurappa and Deputy Chief Minister Lakshman Savadi discussed the modalities of allowing migrants travelling by State owned buses to their respective districts in the State. It was decided that single fare tariff for migrants travelling by Karnataka Roadways buses in the State be allowed after following social distance. The other fare is to be borne by the labour department. Haryana Chief Minister Manoharlal Khattar has asked migrant workers in the State to leave and start working in industrial units that have been allowed to resume operations amid lockdown.

140 CRPF men test..

From Page 1 The advisory also directed the formations to place four to five Personal Protection Equipment kits in the vehicles carrying personnel detailed for duties. If the personnel entered hotspots for duty, they must wear PPE kits and on return, the used PPE kits must be destroyed as per guidelines. Paramilitary personnel with serious health ailments visiting Composite Hospitals here must come with a corona negative test report as they are being entitled to empanelled private hospitals for treatment. "Any patient being sent to Delhi for treatment at empanelled hotspot must be sent with negative corona report without which patient will not be accepted," reads the advisory. The Central Reserve Police Force is also mulling over a proposal to increase the number of beds for quarantine facilities across the country. The CRPF has so far set up quarantine facilities for admitting 1,800 patients/suspects. Meanwhile, a paramilitary personnel who visited the Composite Hospital of the Force here today has been tested positive for corona virus. Detailed contact tracing with this patient is being carried out to take precautionary measures. The entire Welfare Branch of the CRPF has already home quarantined including 49 personnel for 14 days and a Deputy Inspector General of the branch after being traced to have been contact with a Havildar

with Covid-19 symptoms like headache, throat infections and fever. The BSF has reported a total of 17 positive cases till now. In the BSF, seven personnel have been found Covid-19 positive in Delhi on Saturday. All of them were on duty with Delhi Police. Personnel from a company of 126 Battalion of BSF and 178 Battalion of BSF were deployed in Jama Masjid/Chandani Mahal area. All of them have been moved to Composite and Referral Hospital, Noida. Five more BSF personnel have been found positive from the BSF Hospital RK Puram ward. "Few critically ill patients are admitted here, who visit different super specialty hospitals from this ward. One such kidney patient, who visits an outside super specialty hospital for dialysis, have been found positive on April 29. He has been admitted to LNJP Hospital," an official said. Two other BSF personnel suffering from cancer, who visited a cancer specialty hospital, from the BSF hospital ward, were found positive on April 30. Both cancer patients are now admitted to Jai Prakash Narayan Trauma Centre. Other patients admitted in BSF hospital ward with above patients, their attendants, nursing staff have been quarantined and tested. Out of these, five more positive case have come today. Two BSF personnel were found positive in Tripura. One of them was admitted to local hospital at Dhalai district. Other person found positive is his attendant.

18 migrants cram into cement mixer to return...

From Page 1 He said the labourers had been trying to reach their native State Uttar Pradesh from Maharashtra, as they found no work due to the coronavirus lockdown. Yadav said the workers had boarded the truck on Friday. "They all were sent to a shelter for medical examination. A bus is also being arranged to send them to Uttar Pradesh," he said.

An FIR has been registered against the truck driver under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Yadav added. The Centre government recently allowed movement of stranded labourers, tourists and students from one state to another on permission of local authorities. The Maharashtra government on Friday and Saturday ran two special trains carrying migrant workers to Bhopal and Lucknow.

Punjab blames Maha as...

From Page 1 Outside Punjab, in a biggest-ever surge in coronavirus infections in a single day, Mumbai's Dharavi recorded as many as 89 Covid-19 positive cases on Saturday, taking the total infected cases in Asia's largest slum to 496. There have been as many 127 new infections in Dharavi during the last 48 hours. While as many as 38 persons tested positive for Covid-19 on Friday, the infected cases jumped to 89 in a single day on Saturday. Maharashtra added 790 new cases on Saturday after a day when it added 1,008 cases. The State has now a total of 12, 296 cases and 521 deaths. Gujarat added 33 new cases for total of 5,054 and 262 deaths while Tamil Nadu saw another day of big surge reporting 231 cases for a total of 2,757. Uttar Pradesh also reported big number at 157 for total of 2,487. Ahmedabad recorded the highest single-day fatality count with 20 deaths, and a spike of 250 new cases. The city's total number of deaths has reached 185. After the number of Covid-19 patients in Tamil Nadu touched the 2,757 mark,

a new crisis has unfolded in Chennai because of shortage of beds in Government-run hospitals to admit those tested positive for coronavirus. Out of the 2,757 tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday, Chennai registered 174 cases. A single street in Chennai's Triplicane area registered 42 Covid-19 diseases on Saturday and this has substantiated the apprehensions about community transmission in the capital city though the Government is yet to accept it. There are 1,384 active coronavirus cases in the State. The number of fatalities reached 29 with the passing away of one patient on Saturday. The increase in the number of coronavirus patients in the State came immediately after the Tamil Nadu Government's decision to relax the rules and regulations about the opening of shops and business establishments in the State. After remaining free from any positive cases for a month, Wayanad in Kerala reported a lone Covid-19 case on Saturday, following which the district was marked from the green to the orange zone, Chief

Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, even as he asserted that the State cannot afford to lower its guard. The other positive case in the State was from Kannur, which has the highest number of cases at present. Andhra Pradesh reported 62 new Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of positive cases in the state to 1,525. The toll stands at 33. Despite this steep rise in the number of cases, the country's recovery rate has jumped past the 26 per cent mark. In the past one week, about 1,500 new cases were reported each day on an average. Yet, the recovery rate of coronavirus patients has doubled in the past 14 days. According to the Health Ministry, a total of 9,950 people have been cured, and in the last 24 hours, 1,061 patients have recovered. "This takes our total recovery rate to 26.65 per cent. The total number of confirmed cases is now 37,336. Since Friday, an increase of 2,293 has been noted in the number of Covid-19 confirmed cases in India," read a Health Ministry statement on Saturday.

2nd stimulus package in...

From Page 1 He had detailed deliberation with Commerce and MSME Ministries among others on Thursday with focus on attracting both domestic and overseas investment and revival of small businesses in the country so that the recovery process is hastened. In view of continued state of lockdown with economic activities almost at standstill, a repeat dose of relief measures for the smaller business segment and a stimulus package for India Inc is on the anvil and may be announced shortly, sources said. Last month, the Government had announced an economic package of Rs 1.7 lakh crore under Prime Minister 'Garib Kalyan Yojna' for daily wage earners, farmers, women and senior citizens and pensioners in the organised and unorganised sectors aimed at helping the poor sections of the society when the country was under a 21-day lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from March 25. Under this first stimulus deprived sections were to receive additional 5kg of wheat or rice per person as also 'dal' of 5 kg per household for next three-months besides getting money in their bank accounts through DBT (Direct Bank transfer). A total of 80 crore people were covered under the first economic package. The Government had first imposed a 21-day nationwide lockdown beginning March 25 and later extended it till May 3 which is now again being extended for two weeks. Beginning May 4, the Government has decided to ease certain restrictions including opening of industries for green and orange districts which either have nil or low number of cases. The easing of restriction in specified districts is till May 17 with strict vigil by local administration.

Capital to open liquor shops, but all 11 dists in red zone till May 17

From Page 1 Jain said the 11 districts in Delhi will be in the red zone till May 17. "A red zone is an area where there are more than 10 (coronavirus) cases. The relief measures announced by centre will be made available to people," he told reporters. Talking about the movement of migrant labourers from Delhi to their home States, he said the Government is talking to other States. "We will provide the logistics and medical support that will be needed," he said. Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation, Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation, Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited and Delhi Consumer's Cooperative Wholesale Store have been given the rights to open liquor shops in public places, except in malls. The agencies have been asked to provide the details immediately and also give an undertaking stating that liquor shops being allowed to open will fulfil all conditions prescribed by the MHA, according to the Excise Department. There are around 450 liquor shops, except those in malls, in the national Capital. In the latest guidelines issued by the Home Ministry, sale of liquor, paan, tobacco will be allowed after ensuring minimum six-feet social distancing while no more than five people will be allowed inside a shop at a time.



These shops should not be located in markets and malls in urban areas. In rural areas, all shops are permitted to remain open without any distinction of essential and non-essential. However, consumption of liquor, paan, gutka, tobacco etc is not allowed in public places during the lockdown. On Saturday, the Centre decided to extend the ongoing lockdown by two weeks effective from May 4. In an order, the Union Home Ministry said the decision was taken after a comprehensive review of the Covid-19 situation.

Salutations to Covid warriors kick in PM discusses reforms in agriculture sector

Fighter jets to do fly-pasts, choppers to shower flower petals today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nationwide salutations to "corona warriors" by the armed forces commenced on Saturday with military bands playing in various districts and the Services helicopters showering petals at hospitals treating the coronavirus affected. The grand finale on Sunday will see fighter jets streaming across the skies in thrilling fly pasts and some aircraft and helicopters flying over hospitals in the national Capital and other parts of the country.

The armed forces will also pay respect to the police by placing wreath at the National Police Memorial here and helicopters showering flowers as a mark of gratitude.

This unique way of thanking to the frontline fighters of the pandemic was carried out a day after Chief of Defence Staff(CDS) General Bipin Rawat announced that the nation will witness such activities as a tribute to corona warriors including doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, police personnel and media



Agencies

on Sunday.

He had said IAF planes will fly past from Srinagar to Thiruvananthapuram and Dibrugarh to Kutch on Sunday to honour the corona fighters besides warships deployed on the coasts will be lit up in the evening. Moreover, the army bands will perform in almost all districts of the country.

In fact, the bands performed in some parts of the country including Srinagar, Kolkata and Gandhinagar towns on Saturday also, officials said here. Also, warships in Thiruvananthapuram lit up on Saturday and will do so on Sunday too. In fact, the Navy

and Coast Guard have planned to put up such a show at 25 places across the country.

Giving details about the IAF fly past, especially in the national capital on Sunday, they said the aerial salute is planned between 10-10.30 am. The Services helicopters will also shower petals on the National Police Memorial earlier in the day, officials said.

The fly past includes fighter aircraft formations, comprising of the Sukhoi-30 MKI, MiG-29 and Jaguar over Rajpath, and will orbit over Delhi and will be visible to the residents of Delhi from their roof tops.

In addition, C-130 transport

aircraft will follow a similar profile as fighters covering the entire Delhi and National Capital Region(NCR). The aircraft will be flying at an approximate height of 500-1000 meters keeping aerospace safety in mind especially in respect of bird activity.

Moreover, helicopters will drop petals on Police War Memorial followed by Delhi hospitals involved in providing relief to patients of COVID-19 between 10-10.30 am. The list of hospitals includes AllMS, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, GTB Hospital, Loknayak Hospital, Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, Safdarjung Hospital, Sri Ganga

Ram Hospital, Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, Max Saket, Rohini Hospital, Apollo Indraprastha Hospital and Army Hospital Research and Referral.

The events start on Sunday morning with wreath laying at the Police Memorial on behalf of all three Service Chiefs to show respect towards the sacrifice by our police and paramilitary forces.

Helicopters from IAF and Indian Navy will fly over hospitals treating Corona patients and shower petals as a tribute to the Corona warriors. Naval helicopters will shower petals on hospitals at Mumbai, Goa, Kochi and Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

In the evening hours, Naval ships at sea on the coasts of Mumbai, Porbandar, Karwar, Visakhapatnam, Chennai, Kochi and Port Blair will light up and fire flares in solidarity, Anand said. In addition to the Navy, Coast Guard ships will be seen at 24 places some of which are - Porbandar, Okha, Ratnagiri, Dahanu, Murud, Goa, New Mangalore, Kavarati, Karaikal, Chennai, Krishnapatnam, Nizampatanam, Puducherry, Kakinada, Paradip, Gopalpur, Sagar Island, Port Blair, Diglipur, Mayabundur, Hut bay and Campbell Bay. A total of 46 Coast Guard ships and around 10 helicopters will take part in the initiative.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the country looks to overcome the economic setback dealt by the coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday discussed ways to reform the agriculture sector with emphasis on agriculture marketing, access of farmers to institutional credit and freeing the sector of various restrictions with appropriate backing of laws.

Agriculture accounts for 15 per cent of India's gross domestic product and is a source of livelihood for more than half of the country's 1.3 billion population.

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman were present in the meeting.

The prime minister has been stressing on boosting exports to aid economic growth. The meeting also discussed ways to make several government instruments for the sector including the Kisan Credit Cards, PM-KISAN and e-Nam even more effective and increase their contribution to farmer welfare.

Kisan Credit Cards offer short-term credit limits for crops and term loans to holders by participating banks including cooperatives. This initiative grants farmers access to formal banking networks. KCC credit cardholders are also eligible for personal accident insurance for death and permanent disability.

The Prime Minister directed to further strengthen the role of FPOs to bring vibrancy in agrarian economy, transparency in agriculture, trade and enable maximum benefits to the farmers. The government has maintained that the country's farm sector is functioning smoothly despite the Covid-19 lockdown and there will not be much impact on its growth in the current fiscal, unlike other sectors.

The pros and cons of biotechnological developments in crops or enhancement of productivity and reduction in input costs was also deliberated, an official statement said. "Overall emphasis was on revisiting the existing laws governing market for better price realization and freedom of choice to the farmers," said an agriculture ministry official.

The meeting also focused on making strategic interventions in the existing marketing eco-system and bringing appropriate reforms in the context of rapid agricultural development.

Discussion also emanated on the possibilities of a uniform statutory framework in the country to facilitate new ways for farming which will infuse capital and technology in the agrarian economy.

The challenges of the Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, 2016 and how to protect the interest of small and marginal farmers was discussed in detail. Ways to make the Essential Commodities Act compatible with present times so that large-scale private investment in post-production agriculture infrastructure is incentivised, and how it has a positive effect on commodity derivative markets, was also discussed.

Developing Brand India, creation of commodity specific boards/councils and promotion of agri-clusters or contract farming are some of the interventions that were deliberated to boost agriculture commodity export.

Govt's handling of migrant labourers inhumane: Cong

Nod to Central Vista plan 'criminal waste' of public money: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Saturday launched a fresh tirade against the Modi Government over its attitude on handling the migrants affected due to corona scare.

The party also questioned the go ahead to the Central Vista plan despite suggestions to shelve the costly project in view of the economic challenges presented by coronavirus outbreak and called it a "criminal waste" of public money.

Accusing the Government of not handling the issue of migrant labourers in a humane or compassionate manner, Congress chief spokesman Randeep Singh Surjewala urged the Prime Minister and the Centre to ferry the migrant labourers to their home in

sanitised trains for free, along with food. The party said Prime Minister Narendra Modi must come forward and address the countrymen to enlighten them on the way ahead in dealing with the coronavirus and the economic situation. Asking when the lockdown will finally end, Surjewala said the Prime Minister must also lay out the exit strategy from it and spell out the goalpost in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and economy.

"Will we see another lockdown? When will the lockdown finally end? The Prime Minister must come forward and address 130 crore Indians and enlighten them on the way ahead," Surjewala told reporters at a AICC press briefing through video-conferencing.

Senior Congress leader Anand Sharma urged Modi to halt the Central Vista project for now, along with the proposed mega central secretariats in 17 state capitals, calling it a "criminal waste" of public money in the times of coronavirus pandemic. "Urging PM to shelve the wasteful Central Vista project &

proposed mega Central secretariats at 17 State capitals. Spending over ₹25,000 crore on grand buildings at a time of unprecedented national crisis will be a criminal waste of public money," Sharma said.

The opposition parties have sought the scrapping of the project citing the economic burden placed by the coronavirus outbreak.

In the past few days, the project, however, received two key approvals, including from the environment ministry's expert appraisal committee and the Central Vista committee, taking it a step closer to reality.

Another senior Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi questioned the two clearances for the project when a second fiscal relief package to mitigate the hardships faced by several sectors of economy and individuals was yet to be announced.

"The lockdown has been extended for a second time and a new parliament building has been approved, but there is still no sign of a second financial package to support industries. Does the BJP Govt care at all?"

Plan economic package for revival of MSMEs: CPM to PM, Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) Politburo on Saturday urged President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to come out with a comprehensive economic package for the poor and the medium and small industries to survive the adverse Covid-19 impact.

In a detailed proposal, the Left party suggested that the Centre must immediately give ₹7,500 per month for three months for the non-income Tax paying families. The proposal also suggested for the revival of MGNREGS activities across the country to engage poor to find their income and packages for MSMEs, which are the major job providers in the country.

The CPI(M) also suggested for Supplementary Budget to add up new taxes and increases in the wealth tax. "The total sum required for such cash and food transfers for the respective periods is estimated to be about 3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, on the assumption of a 20 per



cent voluntary "dropout" by the rich from the list of beneficiaries. Raising taxes for this purpose has to be explored later, when a supplementary budget will become necessary. In that budget wealth tax will have to play a crucial role: it will both raise resources and also keep the rapidly increasing wealth inequality in check. Additionally, a tax on the super rich should also be imposed," said CPI(M).

"How long this distress will continue is not known; but to start with, the central government must make available to every non income tax pay-

ing household ₹7,500 per month for a period of three months, and to every individual 10 kg. of free grains per month for a period of six months. There are 77 million tonnes of food grains with the FCI at present against the buffer-cum-operational stock "norm" of 24 million tonnes; in addition, about 40 million tonnes of rabi harvest will be added to this amount.

"So, there are plenty of grains available for distribution, so much so that the government is planning to use rice stocks for producing ethanol. Giving food free to the distressed millions surely has priority over such use. In cases where the recipients have no cooking facility, cooked food can be given in lieu of grain. The nation wide network of mid-day meals scheme can be used for this purpose. Apart from cereals a certain amount of pulses, cooking oil and other necessities should also be provided free over this period," said the detailed proposal of CPI(M) to President and Prime Minister.

No privacy issue over using Aarogya Setu app: Javadekar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maintaining "there should be no concern over privacy-related issues", Union I&B Minister and senior BJP leader Prakash Javadekar on Saturday said that the Aarogya Setu app is one of the best scientific means to alert people if some Covid-19 infected person is nearby.

He was responding to AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi's remark on the possibility of private information being collected by the app.

Javadekar said the app is being preferred worldwide over other means of tracking and mapping the pandemic. "It alerts people if some Covid-19 infected person is near them. This is one of the best scientific means. There is no privacy-related issue here," he told ANI.

"There is no information actually. If you have a cough, a cold or tested positive, then only you have to fill up the



information. The app will continue to operate for the next one or two years. The lockdown will be over soon, but this app will be a permanent help till we win the war against this pandemic," he said.

Javadekar also said that India took various timely initiatives, including a country-wide lockdown, and its management of Covid-19 has been better than other countries.

"That is why it (lockdown) has been extended for two weeks. The various zones are well-defined. Following the social distancing norm of "do gaz ki doori" will be a new normal till the time a vaccine is developed for Covid-19," he said.

Earlier, attacking the Government, Owaisi had tweeted: "The Central govt is fighting COVID-19 with taali, thaali, bijli & a very shady app. Now Delhi's Sultans have issued a farmaan that people have no choice in the matter. They MUST share their private data with govt (& whoever the govt wants? (sic))"

The Government has made the coverage of containment zones through the Aarogya Setu app a must in its guidelines during lockdown 3.0. All Central government employees too have to mandatorily download the app.

17 BSF personnel test +ve in Delhi, Tripura

New Delhi: Seventeen personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF) in Delhi and Tripura have tested positive for coronavirus, a force spokesperson said on Saturday.

He said out of the total, seven troops who were deployed as part of an assistance deployment to Delhi Police in the Chandni Mahal and Jama Masjid areas over the past few weeks, have tested positive. They are part of the 126th and 178th battalion of the force. The troops have been admitted to an isolation facility of the CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces)

Referral hospital located in Greater Noida near here. Eight more personnel, admitted at a force hospital in RK Puram, also contracted the virus and their tests were confirmed over the last few days, the spokesperson said. These include two personnel who are suffering from cancer and their attendants. Two more personnel have contracted the disease in Tripura, he said. The BSF is primarily tasked with guarding Indian borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh apart from rendering a variety of duties in the internal security domain of the country. **PTI**

Setu app sophisticated surveillance system: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the Centre defended the contact-tracing app, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday raised doubts over the Aarogya Setu mobile application saying it is a "sophisticated surveillance system" outsourced to a private operator, raising serious data security and privacy concerns.

"The Arogya Setu app, is a sophisticated surveillance system, outsourced to a pvt operator, with no institutional oversight - raising serious data security & privacy concerns. Technology can help keep us safe; but fear must not be leveraged to track citizens

without their consent," Rahul said on Twitter.

According to the Centre, the mobile application helps users identify whether they are at risk of the Covid-19 infection. It also provides people with important information, including ways to avoid coronavirus and its symptoms.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said various experts have raised multiple issues of privacy regarding Aarogya Setu app.

"We are looking at the privacy issues, as also the compulsory deduction of amount and hopefully within next 24 hours we will come with a more comprehensive and a calibrated

response on the issue. But, these are areas of concern, we have noted," he said at AICC press conference.

"The Aarogya Setu app, is a sophisticated surveillance system, outsourced to a pvt operator, with no institutional oversight - raising serious data security & privacy concerns. Technology can help keep us safe; but fear must not be leveraged to track citizens without their consent," he said on Twitter.

The Central Government has made it compulsory for all its employees to download the app and urged private entities to also ask their employees to use it.

Rahul speaks 'new lie' daily, app has robust data security architecture: BJP

New Delhi: Hitting out at Rahul Gandhi for calling 'Aarogya Setu' app a sophisticated surveillance system, the BJP on Saturday said the Congress leader spoke a "new lie" daily and retorted that those who indulged in surveillance all their lives won't know how technology can be leveraged for good.

Senior party leader Ravi Shankar Prasad, who is also communications, electronics and information technology minister, rejected Gandhi's charge that the app has been outsourced to a private operator and asserted that it has a

robust data security architecture. "Mr Gandhi, really high time that you stop outsourcing your tweets to your cronies who do not understand India," he tweeted, adding that the app, which the government says is a tool in fighting the coronavirus, is being appreciated globally.

Attacking Gandhi, Prasad said, "Daily a new lie. Aarogya Setu is a powerful companion which protects people. It has a robust data security architecture. Those who indulged in surveillance all their lives, won't know how tech can be leveraged for good!" **PTI**

Govt issues guidelines on rational use of PPEs in non-Covid hosps

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the non-Covid Hospitals have been asked to be open for patients, the Union Health Ministry on Friday issued guidelines on the rational use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers in such treatment areas.

These guidelines are in continuation of guidelines issued previously on 'Rational use of Personal Protective Equipment,' and specifies on the type of personal protective equipment to be used in mild, moderate, low and high-risk areas.

The Personal protective equipment (PPE) is a combination of protective gears designed to safeguard the health of workers by minimising the exposure to a biological agent. Goggles, face-shield, mask, gloves, coverall/gowns (with or without



aprons), head cover and shoe cover are components of PPE.

The full complement of PPE includes N-95 mask, coveralls, goggles, nitrile examination gloves and shoe cover.

In addition to this, the ministry has also advised them to take standard precautions, not use PPEs as alternative to basic preventive public health and follow respiratory etiquette.

Besides this, the Ministry said that health functionaries working in moderate risk-environment, such as dental cham-

ber, check-up clinic, ICU, labour room, operation theatre, lab, should wear triple layer medical mask, face shield, sterile latex gloves and goggles.

Those working in the mild risk area of the hospital such as help desk, doctor chamber, pharmacy counter, ward room, blood bank, radio diagnosis have been advised to put on triple layer medical masks and latex examination gloves. Staff working in low risk areas should just wear masks.

Help desk/ registration counter, doctors' chamber used for clinical management of patients and pharmacy counters among others have been marked in the mild-risk category and the Ministry has recommended the use of triple layer medical mask and latex examination gloves, besides following social distancing guidelines and frequent

use of hand sanitiser over gloves.

Chambers of dental/ENT doctors/ophthalmology doctors and pre-anesthetic check-up clinics have been categorised as moderate-risk areas where the usage of N-95 mask, goggles, latex examination gloves has been advised.

All hospitals should identify a separate triage and holding area for patients with influenza-like illness so that Covid-19 suspect cases are triaged and managed away from the main outpatient department, as per the guidelines.

It has recommended the use of triple layer medical mask, face shield (wherever feasible), sterile latex gloves and goggles. Patients should also wear masks in labor rooms and latex examination gloves while handling a body in wards or ICU.

According to the guide-

lines, areas where emergency cases are attended come in the mild risk category and areas in the Emergency department where severely ill patients are being attended to while performing aerosol generating procedure have been marked in the high risk category.

The ministry has recommended usage of all the components of PPE in high risk areas.

Besides, laboratories which are used for sample collection and transportation and testing of routine (non-respiratory) samples come under mild-risk category, while labs where respiratory samples are collected and tested fall in moderate-risk category, according to the guidelines.

Radio-diagnosis and blood bank, etc. fall in the mild-risk category, while kitchen areas

have been marked in the low-risk category.

Ambulances transporting patients not on any assisted ventilation come under the low-risk category, while emergency vehicles carrying patients with severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) come under the high-risk category.

The guidelines stated that standard precautions should be followed at all times and PPEs are not alternative to basic preventive public health measures which must be followed regularly.

"Always follow the laid down protocol for disposing off PPEs as detailed in infection prevention and control guidelines available on the website of MoHFW. In addition, patients and their attendants are encouraged to put on face covers," the guidelines stated.

No inter or intra-dist buses in 'Orange Zones': MHA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry on Saturday clarified that buses are not allowed in Orange Zones. Bus transport is only allowed in Green Zones with 50 per cent passengers with social distancing norms. In Orange Zones, Taxis and Cab Services like Uber and Ola are allowed with two passengers and a driver.

"In the Orange Zones, in addition to the activities prohibited throughout the country, inter-district and intra-district plying of buses remains prohibited. Two other activities have been allowed with restrictions: Taxis and cab aggregators are permitted, with one driver and two passengers only. Inter-district movement of



individuals and vehicles is allowed, only for permitted activities, with maximum two passengers, besides the driver, in four wheeler vehicles," said MHA in a clarification. The MHA officials also said that all stand alone shops including liquor shops are permitted subject to State Government's clearance in Red Zones. But Barbershops, Saloons, Spas are not permitted in Red Zones.

Uri: 2 soldiers martyred in LoC firing

2 ultras killed in Pulwama

PNS ■ JAMMU

Two Army personnel sacrificed their lives in the cross LoC firing in Rampur sector of Uri in Baramulla district late Friday night while two terrorists were eliminated by the joint teams of security forces in Dangerpora area of Pulwama on Saturday.

Meanwhile, another anti-terrorist operation was launched by the security forces in Chanjnulla area of Handwara after receiving inputs about the presence of terrorists in the area.

In a separate incident, a grenade attack was attempted on a CRPF patrol party at Tahab Chowk in Pulwama late evening in which CRPF jawans escaped unhurt.

According to Col Rajesh Kalia, Ministry of Defence spokesman in Srinagar, two soldiers succumbed to their injuries late Friday night". A total number of three soldiers were injured in heavy exchange of cross LoC firing in Hajipeer sector of Uri on Friday afternoon.

The martyred soldiers were identified as Havildar Gokaran Singh and Naik Shankar Singh Mehra.

Sharing details of encounter in Pulwama, police spokesman said, "based on a credible input about the presence of terrorists in Hydergund Dangerpora area of district



Pulwama, a cordon and search operation was launched jointly by Pulwama Police, 55RR and 182Bn, 183Bn CRPF in the

the search party. The fire was retaliated leading to an encounter. In the ensuing encounter, 02 terrorists were killed. The identification of killed terrorists is being ascertained. The medico legal formalities of the killed terrorists are being done".

Incriminating material including arms and ammunition were also recovered from the site of encounter. Police has registered a case and initiated investigation in the matter, police spokesman added.

J&K: 27 new cases, total count at 666

PNS ■ JAMMU

The total number of positive cases in Srinagar crossed 100 mark as Kashmir valley reported 25 fresh cases of coronavirus while 2 cases were detected from Samba district of Jammu division on Saturday.

The total tally of positive cases in Jammu & Kashmir reached 666 cases. Out of these, 606 cases were reported from Kashmir and 60 from Jammu division. Meanwhile, no fresh case was reported from Jammu district for the 17th day in a row. The last positive case was detected in Jammu on April 15.

According to the media bulletin, 27 new positive cases of novel coronavirus (Covid-19), 02 from Jammu division and 25 from Kashmir division, were reported on Saturday thus taking the total number of

positive cases in Jammu and Kashmir to 666. Srinagar district alone reported 15 fresh cases of coronavirus on Saturday. Bandipora is another hot spot in Kashmir with 128 positive cases so far.

Out of 666 positive cases, 404 are Active Positive, 254 have recovered and 08 have died.

Moreover, 07 more Covid-19 patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals of Kashmir Division on Saturday.

To further contain the spread of coronavirus in the coming days, the Jammu and Kashmir Government has decided to conduct coronavirus test of all those stranded people returning home from different parts of the country.

The announcement in this regard was made by Chief

Secretary BVR Subramanyam during his visit to Lakhampur, the gateway of Jammu and Kashmir.

After reviewing the arrangements in the presence of senior officers of Kathua district, Chief Secretary told reporters on ground zero, "an estimated number of 30,000 to 40,000 people of J&K are stranded outside UT due to the lockdown.

He said, In Lakhampur, 3000 people can come at a time and 100 buses can ferry these people to their respective districts, but now onwards 100% corona testing is mandatory for all the incoming travelers". He said necessary directions regarding this have already been given to the Mission Director, NHM adding result of the blood test will be available within 24 hours.

TN corona +ve cases rise to 2,757

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Number of Covid-19 patients in Tamil Nadu touched the 2,757 mark by Saturday evening as a new crisis has unfolded in Chennai because of shortage of beds in Government-run hospitals to admit those tested positive for coronavirus.

Out of the 2,757 tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday, Chennai registered 174 cases. A single street in Chennai's Triplicane area registered 42 Covid-19 disease on Saturday and this has substantiated the apprehensions about community transmission in the capital city though the Government is yet to accept it.

There are 1,384 active coronavirus cases in the State. The number of fatalities reached 29 with the passing away of one patient on Saturday. The increase in the number of coronavirus patients in the State came immediately after the Tamil Nadu Government's decision to relax the rules and regulations about the opening of shops and business establishments in the State.

The State Cabinet met during Saturday and decided to relax certain conditions to kickstart the economy once the lockdown is lifted. The council of ministers

decided to implement the guidelines issued by the Union Home Ministry for the third leg of the nation-wide lockdown which begins from May 4. All regulations fixed and decided by the Centre would be in operation in the State depending on the categorization of the regions in question viz red, orange and green.

But what is of concern is the increase in the number of patients infected with the disease over the last four days. Dr Rajesh Kesavan, consultant surgeon and adjunct professor at SRM Institute of Science and Technology said the situation is grave in the State in general and Chennai in particular. "Most of the patients who come to me are apprehensive of the future. Workers who have been thrown out because of the lockdown are worried over the future while the entrepreneurs having their own mini, small and medium industrial units are broken because of financial crisis. They are worried about the loans to be repaid and are mental wrecks," said Dr Kesavan.

Dr T Jacob John, south India's leading virologist, attributed the indifference of the general public to the guidelines issued by the government as the reason for the sudden spurt in the number of coronavirus positive cases in

Chennai. "I am shocked over the scant disregard shown by the people towards the instruction issued by the authorities. People come out without wearing masks and this is one of the main reasons for the spread of the pandemic in Chennai," Dr John told The Pioneer.

He said the information about the seriousness of the disease is yet to reach the people. "I saw a man in the street who had no face mask. When I asked him why he was not wearing the mask he took out a dirty cloth from his pocket and covered his face. I wish he was much better without that kind of mask," said the virologist.

Suresh Krishnan, social activist and media personality, said the government of Tamil Nadu has failed in creating an awareness among the people about the seriousness of the pandemic. "Since morning, one can see hundreds of people roaming around either by two-wheelers or by cars. And the number of people coming out for shopping is mind boggling. They keep on buying things as if the stock is going to disappear from the shelves. There is no social distancing norms in heavily crowded residential areas," said Krishnan.

Not possible to say Kerala is free of community transmission threat: CM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala is yet to come out of the threat of community transmission caused by coronavirus, according to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. "It is not possible to claim that the State is free of the threat of community transmission. Situation is not normal in Kerala," said the Chief Minister.

He said the districts of Kannur and Kottayam continued to be red zones while the scenic Wayanadu district ended up in the orange zone by Saturday evening following the detection of coronavirus positive cases. Interestingly, Kannur is the home district of Vijayan and a stronghold of the CPI(M).

"Till date we have 499 confirmed coronavirus positive cases in the State. There are 21,894 persons who are under observation throughout the State. Out of this 410 persons have been admitted to hospitals while 21,494 are in their houses. There are 80 places designated as hotspots in Kerala," said the chief minister.

In the backdrop of the new set of guidelines announced by the Centre to be followed during the lockdown period which has been extended till May 17, the chief minister said Sundays should be observed as a closed day. "Offices and other establishments would not be allowed to function on Sundays. We are asking the citizens not to take out their vehicles on Sundays," said Vijayan.

The Chief Minister said it has been decided not to allow sale of liquor in the State till the lockdown is lifted. Inter-district travel remains suspended and public transport would not be allowed during the lockdown period.

Special trains with migrant workers leave for J'khand, Bihar from Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The movement of migrant labourers who got stuck up in Kerala due to coronavirus and the resultant pandemic got into full steam on Saturday as five Shramik Special Trains left Kerala on Saturday to Jharkhand and Bihar.

Out of the five trains, three are to Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar while the two trains from North Kerala are to Dhanbad and Danapur. These trains were put into service to help the migrant workers from these States who were working in Kerala.

The Shramik Special to Hatia in Jharkhand left Thiruvananthapuram Central by Saturday evening. The two Special Trains from Ernakulam Junction and Aluva to Bhubaneswar in Orissa and Patna respectively were getting ready for departure by late evening at the time of going to Press.

The train from Kozhikode to Dhanbad left at 3 pm while the service from Tirur in Malappuram district to Danapur (satellite town of Patna) is expected to leave late Saturday evening. Each Shramik Special could accommodate 1,142 travellers



in 24 coaches as social distancing norms had to be observed.

District Collectors, Superintendents of Police and subordinate staff were busy preparing the list of passengers who had applied for tickets in these trains.

Aluva station in Ernakulam district wore an entirely different look on Friday and Saturday as migrant workers formed a systematic queue outside the station building. "Though we were laid off by the plywood factories

where we were employed, the Kerala Government took care of us. We were looked after well by the district administration. The food was really good and they had even installed television screens for us to watch movies throughout the day," said Nazeer, a migrant labourer from Patna.

Most of them said they would come back to Kerala as soon as the State returns to normalcy and the companies are reopened for business.

Two deaths, 9 new cases raise K'taka tally to 598

Bengaluru: Two more Covid patients, an 82-year-old man from Bidar and a 63-year-old man from the city have succumbed to the virus, even as positive cases rose by nine to 598, an official said on Saturday.

"Positive case 590, 82-year-old male resident of Bidar admitted on Monday with a complaint of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) died on Tuesday found positive for Covid," said a health official.

The 82-year-old man is Karnatak's 24th Covid death. Bidar is 690 km north of Bengaluru in this southern state. Though Bidar has reported 15 positive cases, six are currently active and eight got discharged while the 82-year-old man is the first death.

Similarly, another man from the city, a 63-year-old

Covid patient with diabetes, hypertension, hypothyroidism and renal failure succumbed to the virus on Saturday.

Designated as positive case 557, the city man was also on dialysis, chemotherapy and suffered from multiple myeloma.

He was admitted in hospital with a complaint of breathlessness on Thursday and died on Saturday due to cardiac arrest, the official said.

The 63-year-old man is the state's 25th Covid death. In Karnataka, Bengaluru Urban reported the highest number of Covid cases in a single place at 141, out of which 66 are active and 69 discharged.

Bengaluru Urban also reported six Covid deaths, the highest number in the state, followed by Kalaburagi with five.

IANS

Three cops posted outside Maha CM's house test +ve

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In second incidence of its kind in less than one month, three police personnel posted outside Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's private residence "Matoshri" at Bandra (East) in north-west Mumbai have tested positive for coronavirus.

In a development that came to light after test reports came on Saturday, three police personnel – attached to the local arms unit of the Mumbai police – were diagnosed positive for Covid-19.

Informed police sources said that all the three infected police personnel have been hospitalised, while all those who have come in contact with them are being traced and quarantined.

The sources said that the police personnel who contracted the pandemic were in the outer ring of the chief minister's security.

"After we learnt that three of our personnel have tested positive for Covid-19, we have initiated the entire security set up outside the chief minister's private residence as a precautionary measure. Similarly, the civic health authorities are tracing all the contacts of three infected police personnel.

All those who have been exposed to the three police men are being quarantined," a senior police officer said. The three infected police personnel are among nearly 150 police personnel who have so far been tested positive for Covid-19 in various parts of the state.

As many as three police personnel have so far succumbed to the pandemic. All the three deaths – comprising two head constables and one constable – took place last week.

It may be recalled that a tea vendor of Thackeray's private residence "Matoshri" had tested positive for Coronavirus on April 6. On the following day, as many as 170 security personnel, including state reserve personnel, were quarantined at a building in the neighbourhood, as a precautionary measure. Following the incident, the top police had replaced the entire security personnel posted earlier outside the chief minister's private residence.

The tea vendor, who had tested positive pandemic, underwent treatment at the HBT Medical College and Dr RN Cooper Hospital at Juhu in north-west Mumbai.

Bihar confirms third death due to Covid-19

Patna: A 54-year-old Covid-19 patient died in East Champaran district, taking the total number of deaths due to coronavirus in Bihar to three, a health official said on Saturday.

The total number of positive cases in Bihar stands at 466.

Sanjay Kumar, Principal Health Secretary, said that the man was a cancer patient and was undergoing treatment. He returned from Mumbai on April 20. However, when his samples were tested he turned out to be coronavirus positive.

Later, he was admitted to Nalanda Medical College and Hospital in Patna, where he succumbed to the disease on Friday.

Earlier on March 21, the State's first Covid-19 patient, from Munger district, had died and his reports later confirmed he was suffering from the pandemic disease.

Another 35-year old Covid-19 patient died on April 17 in Patna.

IANS

At 1,525 cases, AP Covid effect most pronounced in 5 districts

Amaravati: While Andhra Pradesh continues to report Covid-19 cases, the good news is that the numbers are showing a slight dip over the past few days. On Saturday, the State nodal officer reported 62 new cases which were detected from the samples tested in the last 24 hours ending at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

On Friday too, the State reported 61 cases, which is in marked contrast to the high of 82 cases witnessed last Sunday.

Kurnool remains Andhra Pradesh's weak spot as the district reported 25 cases on Saturday. The district, with 436 cases, has the highest tally of coronavirus cases in the state. Krishna district also reported 12 cases while Nellore reported 6 cases. Anantapur, Kadapa, and Visakhapatnam districts reported 4 cases each, and East Godavari reported 3 cases while 2 cases were detected in Guntur district. Prakasam and West Godavari districts reported 1 case each. In all, 3 districts reported no fresh cases, of which Vizianagaram is the only district to remain unaffected till date.

Meanwhile, recovery rates in the State are on the rise. By Saturday morning, 38 persons were discharged, taking the overall tally of discharged people in

Meanwhile, recovery rates in the State are on the rise. By Saturday morning, 38 persons were discharged, taking the overall tally of discharged people in Andhra Pradesh to 441. Earlier, by Friday morning too, 82 persons were discharged

Andhra Pradesh to 441. Earlier, by Friday morning too, 82 persons were discharged.

The death toll in the State has remained 33 as no further casualty was reported. While the cumulative tally stands at 1525, presently, there are 1051 active Covid-19 cases in Andhra Pradesh. After almost 40 days since the first cases were detected in the state, the pandemic's presence has been most felt in the five districts of Kurnool (436), Guntur (308), Krishna (258), Nellore (90) and Kadapa (83).

Even as it has relaxed lockdown conditions to facilitate agricultural activities, the state government has intensified containment measures in red zones.

IANS

Tally crosses 500 mark in Agra with 9 new hotspots

IANS ■ AGRA

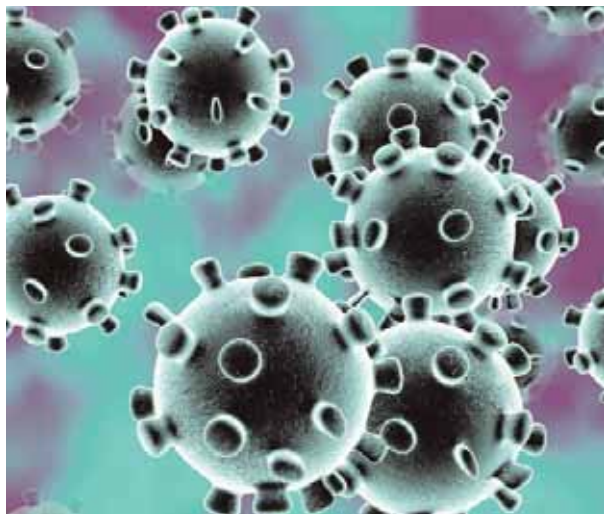
With 22 new Covid-19 cases, the number of positive cases has touched 501 in the Taj city, health officials said on Saturday. District authorities have declared nine new hotspots.

So far 7000 samples have been taken. While 15 succumbed to Covid-19, 126 people have fully recovered and sent home.

In the last three days, the number of cases touched an alarming 111.

In neighbouring Firozabad district, the number of cases has gone up to 122, while Mathura reported ten new cases. Agra, which is in the red zone, is now totally sealed. Patrolling on the highways has been intensified.

Meanwhile, responding to



complaints and appeal for medical support, the SN Medical College opened its emergency ward for non-Covid patients. District authorities

have asked the private doctors and nursing homes to provide medical services, after strictly following the protocol and guidelines.

Hyderabad man jumps to death over corona fear

Hyderabad: It's more than 2 months since Covid-19 cases surfaced in India, and despite constant dissemination of information about the virus, fears about the medical condition continue among lay persons, leading many to take extreme steps.

In fact, it's not just the fear of Covid-19 but the doubt of contracting the virus that is also driving people to suicide.

In the latest such incident, a man in Hyderabad jumped to death from his apartment building on Saturday merely on the suspicion that he may be exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms.

The tragic incident occurred in the Ramanthapur area, when the 60-year-old leaped off the third floor of his apartment building. He sustained severe head injuries and

died on the spot. Police shifted the body for autopsy and registered a case of death under suspicious circumstances.

According to Vasiraju Krishna Murthy's family, he was suffering from gastric problems and fatigue. Since he had doubts that he may be infected with Covid-19, he approached government-run hospital King Koti a few days ago but doctors told him that he was not having any such symptoms.

As he was not satisfied with the diagnosis, the family members agreed to take him to Gandhi Hospital, the state nodal centre for Covid-19, for screening. While getting ready to go to hospital on Saturday morning, the man jumped from the balcony of his apartment.

IANS

Dharavi records 89 new cases, total jumps to 496

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a biggest-ever surge in coronavirus infections in a single day, Mumbai's Dharavi recorded as many as 89 Covid-19 positive cases on Saturday, taking the total infected cases in Asia's largest slum to 496.

In a development that has caused considerable anxiety among the health officials in the metropolis, there have been as many 127 new infections in Dharavi during the last 48 hours. While as many as 38 persons tested positive for Covid-19 on Friday, the infected cases jumped to 89 in a single day on Saturday.

There have been as many as 18 deaths in this most densely populated slum ever since the first week of April when the first few positive cases and a couple deaths were reported.

IANS

The new infected cases have been reported from Muslim nagar, Dharavi Cross Road, SM Road, Indira Kureshi Nagar, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, Indira Nagar, Matunga Labour Camp, Mukund Nagar, Azad Nagar, Sant Rohidas Marg, Municipal chawl, Dharavi main road, Kala Killa, Saibaba chawl, Nehru Nagar, Kunchi Kurve Nagar, Kalpataru housing society, Social Nagar, Ambedkar chawl, Kamala Nagar, Kalyanwadi, PMGP colony, Shahu Nagar, Abu Bakar chawl and Gandhi Society.

The other areas from where new cases have been reported are: Siddhivinayak housing society, Jasmine mill road, samrudha darshan housing society, Gangadhar chawl, Shastri Nagar Agas Wadi, Shiv Shakti Nagar, Pivla Bunglow, Nawab nagar, 90 feet road, Subhash Nagar, dhor-

wada, Kumbharwada, Chamda bazaar, Tata HSG colony, transit camp, sanklpana chs, suhana nagar, Maharana pratap chs.

What has sent alarm bells in the city health circles is that infected cases have been reported from most parts of Dharavi, which is spread over 240 hectare area. Dharavi, which is home to 4 lakh people, is one of the Covid-19 hotspots in Mumbai.

Ever since first few cases of Covid-19 were reported in the early first week of April, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is closely monitoring the situation in Dharavi where the health authorities have clamped a total lockdown. Meanwhile, 19 new infected cases have been reported from neighbouring Mahim suburb, while Dadar recorded 13 new positive cases on Saturday.

Pandemic causing untold fear and suffering: UN secretary-general

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations secretary-general says the Covid-19 pandemic is causing “untold fear and suffering” for older people around the world who are dying at a higher rate, and especially for those over the age of 80 whose fatality rate is five times the global average.

Antonio Guterres said on Friday that beyond the health risks, “the pandemic is putting older people at greater risk of poverty,” with an especially devastating impact on the elderly in developing countries.

The UN Chief launched a 16-page policy briefing on the impact of Covid-19 on older people with several key messages, most importantly that “no person, young or old, is expendable” and “older people have the same rights to life and health as everyone else.”

Guterres also called for improved social support and “smarter efforts” to use digital technology to reach older people who may face great suffering because of isolation and restrictions on their movements.

VIRUS CASES SPIKE IN RUSSIA, PAK

Covid-19 has killed more than 2,40,000 globally

AP ■ BEIJING

Russia and Pakistan reported their biggest one-day jumps in new coronavirus infections as some other countries and US States where case numbers are stabilising allowed businesses and public activities to reopen.

China, where the pandemic began in December, reported a single new infection on Saturday, extending a steady decline in confirmed cases.

South Korea reported six new cases on Saturday, none of them in the hard-hit city of Daegu in the southeast. Both countries are easing anti-virus controls and reviving economic activity.

Russia reported 7,933 new cases on Friday, raising its total to 114,431. The true number is believed to be higher because not everyone is tested and Russian tests are reported to be only 70% to 80% accurate.

At least five Russian regions reported a surge of pneumonia cases. In Moscow, which accounts for half of all virus cases, all respiratory infections are likely to be caused by the coronavirus, according to the public health agency.

Pakistan announced 1,297 new cases, raising the total in the country of 220 million people to 18,114.

The increase coincides with increased testing. The Government said more than 9,000 were conducted in the previous 24 hours. Prime Minister Imran Khan has set a goal of 20,000 per day.

Also Friday, the first drug shown to help fight the disease received emergency approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In a study, remdesivir shortened patients' recovery time from 15 days to 11 on average and may have reduced deaths.

The virus has killed more than 2,30,000 people worldwide, including more than 64,000 in the United States and more than 20,000 each in Italy, Britain, France and Spain. Health experts warn a second wave of infections could hit unless testing is expanded dramatically.

Models released by the White House coronavirus task force on March 29 projected deaths of 100,000 to 2,40,000 Americans, assuming efforts such as social distancing and staying home as much as possible were in effect.

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	1,137,494	66,271
Spain	2,45,567	25,100
Italy	2,09,328	28,710
France	1,67,346	24,594
UK	1,82,260	28,131
Germany	1,64,380	6,736
Russia	1,24,054	1,222
Turkey	1,22,392	3,258



The task force director said the worst-case scenario was 1.5 million to 2.2 million US deaths without those measures.

As the crisis stabilises in some European countries and American states, governments are easing the shutdown of businesses that plunged the global economy into its deepest slump since the 1930s and wiped out millions of jobs.

France, Spain, Germany and other governments plan to allow factories, offices, other businesses, churches and some other public facilities to reopen gradually and under strict controls.

China has lifted blanket restrictions that kept 800 million people at home but kept in place extensive fever-checks and other monitoring.

On Friday, the former imperial palace in the Chinese capital, Beijing, reopened after a 2 1/2-month shutdown, but the number of daily visitors was limited to 5,000, down from the usual 80,000. Photos on social media showed palace visitors wearing masks and being escorted by police.

China has reported 82,875 confirmed virus cases and 4,633 deaths.

The country's ceremonial legislature is due to hold its annual session May 22, postponed from March.

Trump, who is running for reelection in the midst of a US economic slump that has wiped out more than 10 million jobs, is pressing state governors to lift anti-disease controls despite warnings by some health experts that might lead

to a spike in infections.

On Friday, more than a dozen US states including Texas and South Carolina allowed restaurants, stores and other businesses to reopen in the biggest one-day push yet to revive their economies.

Other governors including Andrew Cuomo of New York, the hardest-hit American state, and J B Pritzker of Illinois say they won't relax controls until conditions are safer.

Also Friday, a New York City nursing home reported 98 deaths of residents believed to have had the coronavirus. Mayor Bill De Blasio called the toll horrifying.

The governor of Washington, where the first US virus case was confirmed in January, extended a stay-at-home order through at least

UK REPORTS 621 DEATHS

London: The UK on Saturday announced 621 more deaths in the coronavirus outbreak, taking the overall cumulative toll to 28,131, just behind Europe's worst-hit country Italy. The Government said that 1,82,260 people had tested positive for Covid-19, up 4,806 on Friday. But hospital admissions had fallen, it added.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the country had “past the peak” of the virus, as he comes under mounting pressure to ease lockdown restrictions imposed in late March. A review is expected this Thursday and Johnson said the Government will outline a plan to lift social distancing measures that would keep transmissions rates down. **AFP**

May 31. The governor of Michigan said a similar order there is in effect through May 15 despite the state legislature's refusal to extend her emergency declaration.

Amid attack from Trump, WHO praises China for handling pandemic

Beijing: The World Health Organisation has praised China for its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, and said that other countries need to learn from Wuhan on how the epicentre of the virus was bringing the society back to normal, a day after US President Donald Trump likened the global health body to a public relations agency for Beijing.

Trump on Thursday said the WHO should be “ashamed” of itself, as he compared the UN's health organ to a public relations agency for China amidst the coronavirus pandemic after it originated in the central Chinese city of 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.

Many countries, including Germany, Britain and Australia, are blaming China for the spread of coronavirus, that has killed over 2,35,000 people globally, including 64,000 Americans, and has infected 3.3 million.

Noting that there are zero Covid-19 cases in Wuhan, Maria van Kerkhove, the technical lead for the WHO's Health Emergencies Programme at a virtual press briefing in Geneva, said, “that's very very welcome news to hear that there are no more severe cases, no more patients in Wuhan.”

“So congratulations on this achievement,” state-run Xinhua news agency quoted her as saying on Saturday.

“The world has learned from China and we need to continue to learn from Wuhan on how they are lifting those measures, how they are bringing society back to normal, or a new normal, in terms of how we're going to live with this virus going forward,” she said.

Health officials in Wuhan, where the coronavirus emerged in December last year, said all COVID-19 cases were cleared from hospitals on Sunday.

The Hubei province and its capital Wuhan have not reported coronavirus cases for 28 consecutive days since April 4, the local health commission said on Saturday. **PTI**



ONCE UPON A VIRUS: China mocks US Covid-19 response in short animation

Shanghai: China has published a short animation titled “Once Upon a Virus” mocking the US response to the new coronavirus using Lego-like figures to represent the two countries.

Washington and Beijing are locked in a war of words over the origins of the disease, which emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan and has grown into a global pandemic.

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he was confident the coronavirus may have originated in a Chinese virology lab, but declined to describe the evidence.

In the animation posted online by China's official Xinhua news agency, red curtains open to reveal a stage featuring Lego-like figures in the form of a terracotta warrior wearing a face mask and the Statue of Liberty.

“We discovered a new virus,” says the warrior.

“So what?” replies the Statue

of Liberty. “It's only a flu.”

As the warrior issues warnings about the virus and counts off the grim milestones in China's outbreak, the Statue of Liberty replies dismissively with echoes of Trump's press conferences in which he played down the severity of the illness.

“Are you listening to yourselves?” asks the warrior as the statue begins to turn red with fever and gets hooked up to an intravenous drip.

“We are always correct, even though we contradict ourselves,” the statue replies.

“That's what I love about you Americans, your consistency,” says the warrior.

The United States and other countries have accused China of misleading the world about the severity of the outbreak, and there are growing calls for an international inquiry into the origins of the virus. **Agency**

Trump hopes Covid deaths will be below 1,00,000

Washington: President Donald Trump says he's hoping that the total number of Covid-19 deaths in the United States will be below 1,00,000.

Even that, he acknowledged on Friday, is a “horrible number.” Trump's predictions of the expected US death toll have changed over time, and he repeatedly has used high estimates to make the case that his administration's actions, especially his decision to restrict travel from China, have saved lives.

His actions have been challenged by state, local and public health officials who have complained about shortages of testing supplies and safety gear for doctors and nurses.

On March 29, Dr Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force, revealed models projecting the deaths of 1,00,000 to 2,40,000 Americans, assuming social distancing efforts were ongoing. At the same time, she said epidemiology models initially had predicted a worst-case scenario of 1.5 million to 2.2 million US deaths without mitigation efforts such as social distancing, hand washing and staying home as much as possible. **AP**

China's missing 'Bat Woman' with secrets of Covid-19 origin denies defecting to West

PTI ■ BEIJING

A leading Chinese virologist from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), whose mysterious disappearance sparked speculation about the deadly novel coronavirus emanating from the laboratory, has denied reports of her defection to West with the secrets about the Covid-19.

Shi Zhengli, known as the “Bat Woman” for her passionate research about bats and the viruses associated with them, refuted rumours of her defection on her Chinese social media WeChat account, the

state-run media here reported on Saturday.

Denying “rumours” of “defecting to the West”, Shi on her WeChat account wrote, “Everything is alright for my family and me, dear friends!” She also posted nine photos of her recent life, the *Global Times* reported.

In the post, Shi, reported to be the Director of the WIV, said, “No matter how difficult, it (defecting) shall never happen. We've done nothing wrong. With strong belief in science, we will see the day when the clouds disperse and the sun shines.”

“Shi has been troubled by rumours for quite a long time. The recent rumour which has been circulating on overseas social media platforms said that ‘Shi Zhengli director at #Wuhan Institute of Virology has defected with a treasure trove of intelligence to the US embassy in Paris,’ the report said but gave no details of her whereabouts.

Her social media postings reported by the official media here comes in the immediate backdrop of increasing focus on the WIV with allegations by US President Donald Trump as well as suspicions raised by sev-

eral other world leaders that the Covid-19, which has caused massive death and devastation globally, may have originated from the lab.

There were also questions about her absence since December last year when the virus began spreading in Wuhan and then the rest of China and the world.

While some reports said, she was muzzled by the Chinese Government after she unlocked the genome sequence of the coronavirus on January 2, others said she may have been defected to the West.

The *Global Times* report

said it is not the first time that Shi responded to the rumours on her WeChat account.

On February 2, she said on her WeChat Moment that, “the 2019 novel coronavirus is a punishment by nature to humans' unsanitary lifestyles. I promise with my life that the virus has nothing to do with the lab,” in a response to an article by Indian scientists implying the novel coronavirus possibly originated from the WIV, the report said.

China is resisting mounting pressure from the US and the leaders of many countries for an inquiry into the origin of the

virus, which was initially stated to have emerged from a wet market in Wuhan selling live animals located close to WIV.

On April 29, state television CGTN reported that US scientists are working with their Chinese counterparts to investigate the origin of the coronavirus, a prime demand of Trump and several other countries.

The report said China Centre for Disease Control and Prevention is facilitating the cooperation between Dr Yan Lipkin, Director for Centre for Infection and Immunity of

Columbia University, and Prof Lu Jinhai of Sun-Yat-Sen University of Guangzhou to conduct the probe.

The two are working together to determine whether the virus emerged elsewhere in China before Wuhan in December last year, the report said. But since then there is no official announcement on the probe.

Brushing aside calls for an inquiry, China on Monday said such a probe has no precedence or legal basis besides investigations into such pandemics in the past had not provided any conclusive results.

Around the Globe

- Boris Johnson and fiancée Carrie Symonds on Saturday named their new-born baby boy Wilfred Lawrie Nicholas, after their grandfathers and the two doctors who saved the UK Prime Minister's life during his hospitalisation last month with Covid-19. Announcing the news on social media, Symonds, 32, said the baby was named after the UK Prime Minister's grandfather Wilfred and her grandfather Lawrie, with Nicholas a nod to the National Health Service (NHS) doctors — Dr Nick Price and Dr Nick Hart
- Commuters using public transport in Britain could be asked to take their temperature before leaving their homes as part of the measures likely to be brought in as the UK begins easing out of the lockdown imposed to curb the spread of Covid-19, according to reports. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has promised a “comprehensive plan” by next week on how he plans to “unlock” Britain when he reviews the social distancing measures by next Thursday, the legal deadline for the review
- Iran said on Saturday there was a “clear drop” in the number of new coronavirus infections as it reported 802 fresh cases, the lowest daily count since March 10. The new cases brought to 96,448 the number recorded in Iran since it announced its first cases in mid-February. “This shows a clear drop in the number of new infections compared to recent weeks, despite our active testing,” health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on state television
- Signs on Friday that several big meatpacking plants will soon reopen might appear to support President Donald Trump's assertion that he had “solved their problems” in keeping grocery stores' coolers stocked during the coronavirus crisis. But the reality isn't likely to be so easy. Though meatpackers have been moving to shift operations to make employees less vulnerable to coronavirus infection, they still have a workforce depleted by illness, with at least 4,900 employees nationwide infected.
- Nearly 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy — that is nearly half of the global workforce — stand in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has warned, adding that more than 436 million enterprises face high risks of serious disruption globally. In its latest update on global job losses, the ILO said that the drop in working hours in the current (second) quarter of 2020 is expected to be significantly worse than previously estimated
- Professor Sir Ralf Speth, the Chief Executive of Tata Motors' owned Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) and Professor Vikram Deshpande from the Cambridge University have been elected as new Fellows of the prestigious Royal Society in the UK which recently added more than 60 exceptional scientists to its fold
- The Government of Cyprus is encouraging the voluntary use of a locally developed cellphone application designed to locate people who may have come into contact with someone carrying the coronavirus. Country's Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy said GOVTRACER app, developed in partnership with a government-funded research centre

US tweets support for Taiwan, sparking opp from China

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The United States tweeted its support for Taiwan's participation in the United Nations Friday, provoking a sharp response from China expressing “strong indignation and firm opposition.”

The tweet from the US Mission to the United Nations said the 193-member global organization was founded to serve “all voices,” welcome “a diversity of views and perspectives” and promote human rights.

It said “Barring #Taiwan from setting foot on UN grounds is an affront not just to the proud Taiwanese people, but to UN principles.”

KIM REAPPEARS IN PUBLIC ending absence amid health rumours

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made his first public appearance in 20 days as he celebrated the completion of a fertiliser factory near Pyongyang, state media said Saturday, ending an absence that had triggered global rumours that he may be seriously ill.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency reported that Kim attended the ceremony Friday in Suncheon with other senior officials, including his sister Kim Yo Jong, who many analysts predict would take over if her brother is sud-

denly unable to rule.

State media showed videos and photos of Kim wearing a black Mao suit and constantly smiling, walking around facilities, applauding, cutting a huge red ribbon with a scissor handed by his sister, and smoking inside and outside of buildings while talking with other officials.

Seemingly thousands of workers, many of them masked, stood in lines at the massive complex, roaring in celebration and releasing balloons into the air. A sign installed on a stage where Kim sat with other senior officials read: “Suncheon Phosphatic Fertilizer Factory; Completion

Ceremony; May 1, 2020.”

There were no clear signs that Kim was in discomfort. He was shown moving without a walking stick, like the one he used in 2014 when he was recovering from a presumed ankle surgery. However, he was also seen riding a green electric cart, which appeared similar to a vehicle he used in 2014.

It was Kim's first public appearance since April 11, when he presided over a ruling Workers' Party meeting to discuss the coronavirus and reappoint his sister as an alternate member of the powerful decision-making Political Bureau of the party's Central Committee.

That move confirmed her substantial role in the government.

Speculation about his health swirled after he missed the April 15 birthday celebration for his late grandfather Kim Il Sung, the country's most important holiday, for the first time since taking power in 2011.

The possibility of high-level instability raised troubling questions about the future of the secretive, nuclear-armed state that has been steadily building an arsenal meant to threaten the US. Mainland while diplomacy between Kim and President Donald Trump has stalled.

ISIS militants kill 10 in coordinated attack in Iraq

Baghdad: Islamic State militants killed at least 10 Iraqi militiamen in a coordinated assault overnight near the central city of Samarra, security officials said on Saturday, adding to concerns the extremist group that once controlled large areas of the country is staging a comeback.

The military and the Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella group of mostly Shiite militias allied with the government, confirmed the attack in separate statements. It was the deadliest of a series of attacks in recent weeks that come as authorities are grappling with a worsening economic crisis and trying to contain a coronavirus outbreak. **AP**

Iran rejects 'baseless' US comments on aid to Venezuela

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran on Saturday denounced recent US Allegations that it was providing covert aid to help Venezuela overcome gas shortages as “baseless” without directly addressing them.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last week said “multiple aircraft” belonging to Iran's Mahan Air had transferred “unknown support” to Venezuela's Government.

He called for a halt to the flights and for other countries to bar overflights by Mahan Air.

The *Associated Press* reported last month that Mahan Air was delivering key chemical components used for producing gasoline to help

revive an aging refinery in the South American country, which is in the grip of a severe economic crisis. Venezuela has been suffering from widespread gasoline shortages despite having the world's largest oil reserves.

Both Iran and Venezuela are under heavy US sanctions, and have had close relations for the last two decades.

Iran's Foreign Ministry tweeted that the “baseless comments were made in order to prepare the ground for mounting US pressure on the Venezuelan government.”

Another statement said the US intended to “obstruct the Venezuelan government's plan for reviving the country's refineries.”

Turn crisis into opportunity: Gadkari to entrepreneurs

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

In order to boost the morale of the entrepreneurs who have been suffering due to the lockdown, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has been talking to various stakeholders and telling them not to lose hope. Gadkari has been using social media and other means like video conferencing to reach out to people, entrepreneurs and industry leaders.

Gadkari is even reaching out to foreign students, seeking their suggestions on how to bring the battered economy back on track. He believes only dialogue can solve problems.

According to a top official of the MSME ministry, Gadkari makes a point in all meetings that there is a need to convert this crisis into an opportunity. “He tries to instil a sense of

Gadkari has spoken to representatives of Ficci, Assocham, CREDAI and leaders of other business organisations since the lockdown came into force on March 24

hope amidst all the gloom. It has positive impact on the stakeholders as it is coming from none other than a minister,” the official said.

He held a talk ‘Response to global pandemic, Roadmap for India’ with students of Indian origin living in 43 countries including Britain, Canada, Singapore and Australia recently. During the talk he appealed to them to play an active part in the fight against the coronavirus and said that the youth have the ability to take the country forward. He asked them to work on innovative ideas in this direction. He also

asked them to take advantage of the situation arising from the world’s disillusionment with China.

During a recent meet with representatives of Assocham on reviving the MSME sector, Gadkari said that the Japanese government has recommended a special package for its industry to pull out of China and invest elsewhere. Gadkari termed it a big opportunity for India to take advantage of the situation. “There is a need to forge new partnership to establish joint ventures in India to attract global firms. We need to meet the global demand apart from meeting domestic demand as many companies now want to get out of China.”

Gadkari also emphasised on the need to lessen the burden of big cities such as Gurugram, Delhi and Mumbai

as economic drivers. He said there is a need to create economic and industrial clusters outside the big cities to drive growth.

Gadkari said currently work on 22 expressways is going on at a fast pace. The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is one of them where there is an opportunity of investment in IT Parks, Logistics and industrial units.

Gadkari has spoken to representatives of Ficci, Assocham, CREDAI and leaders of other business organisations since the lockdown came into force on March 24.

According to ministry officials, Gadkari has reached out to at least 10,000 industry leaders during the lockdown period and has discussed its economic fallout and how to revive the economy post lockdown.

Gadkari calls upon industry to upgrade, widen import sources to attract investment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian industry need to undertake technological upgradation and import substitution to attract investments from global businesses that look to exit China due to the Covid-19 outbreak, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said on Saturday.

The minister has been exhorting the industry to capitalise on growing “hatred” against China amid coronavirus pandemic. Interacting with members of the Ficci Ladies Organization in a webi-

nar, the minister for MSME and Road Transport and Highways said recommendations for “another big package” have been shared with the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister, and said he was “hopeful of a declaration soon”.

Gadkari also expressed confidence that 25 lakh MSMEs will be restructured by the end of the year. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) extended the restructuring of debt schemes beyond the deadline of March 31, 2020, to December 31, 2020.

RBI Governor meets banks’ heads

Das reviews implementation of various measures

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday held a meeting with the heads of banks and reviewed the economic situation and implementation of various measures announced by it to reduce stress in the financial system amid the Covid-19 crisis.

The meeting, which happened in two separate sessions through video conference, saw participation of managing directors and CEOs of major public and private sector banks, the RBI said in a statement after the meeting.

In his opening remarks, the governor appreciated the efforts of banks in ensuring normal to near normal operations during the lockdown period. During the meeting, among other matters, review of the current economic situation and stability of the financial sector among other things were

discussed.

Credit flows to different sectors of the economy, including liquidity to non-banking financial companies, microfinance institutions, housing finance companies, mutual funds, etc and post lockdown credit flows including provision of working capital, with special focus on credit flows to MSMEs were also deliberated.

Implementation of three months moratorium on repayment of loan instalments announced by the RBI was also reviewed during the meeting.

The SC earlier this week

directed the RBI to ensure that its March 27 guidelines directing lending institutions to allow a three-month moratorium to all borrowers is implemented in letter and spirit.

Monitoring of overseas branches of banks in view of the slowdown in economies across the globe was discussed, it added. The Reserve Bank has announced several steps to ease the pressure being faced by borrowers, lenders and other entities including mutual funds and has promised to take more initiatives to deal with the developing situation.

Fearing shortage of drivers, transporters demand relief package, including support to drivers

New Delhi: Fearing shortage of drivers in the wake of migration of labourers, transporters’ body AIMTC on Saturday demanded an immediate relief package to drivers to avoid any disruption in supply chain.

All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) also demanded allowing opening of godowns and warehouses with support staff for ensuring sup-

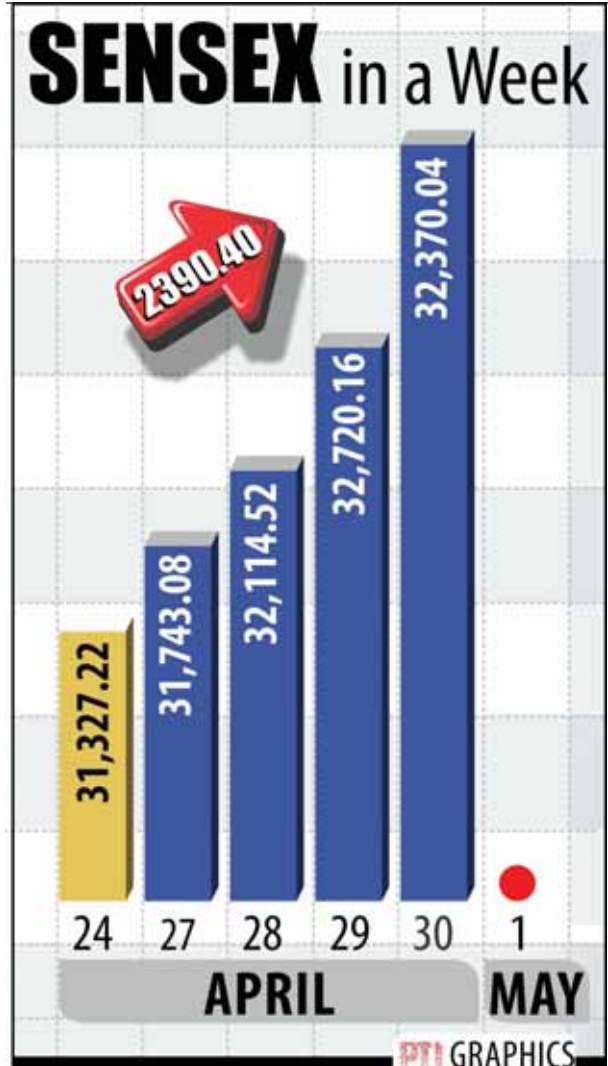
ply of goods. It said another problem faced by the transport sector is migration of drivers to their hometown and if financial support is not provided to them their return would be difficult.

“There is severe downturn in the transport sector due to persistent lockdown 1.0, 2.0 and now 3.0. 85 per cent of the population is of small operators and they are not able to sustain

the financial pressure and it is going to boomerang into another major crisis.

“The entire road transport fraternity of India is critical. The government must extend a helping hand to more than 20 crore people dependent on this sector to contain the huge social and economic holocaust out the present scenario,” it said.

PTI



Low oil prices helps Govt to end subsidy on cooking gas

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Lower global oil prices have not helped reduce auto fuel prices for consumers but it has saved the Government from paying subsidy on cooking gas cylinder into the accounts of household beneficiaries.

From May, government will not be paying subsidy into the accounts of domestic LPG customers in all metros under the direct benefit transfer scheme. While the subsidy will be limited to just ₹2-5 in other cities given increased cost of transportation and just about ₹20 per cylinder for 8 crore Ujjwala beneficiaries.

All consumers have to pay the market price of a 14.2 kg cylinder upfront. The Government transfers the subsidy directly into the account of eligible consumers. The subsidy

is the difference between market and subsidised price of cooking gas.

Global crude oil prices are on a free fall since middle of March bringing down crude prices from a level of \$35 a barrel to below \$20 for sometime and now to around \$25 barrel. Along with crude fall, product prices, including LPG prices, have also fallen drastically pushing oil companies to cut price of non-subsidised domestic LPG cylinder by a record Rs 162.50 to ₹581.50 a cylinder in Delhi from May 1.

“At current market price of cooking gas, government may not need to pay any subsidy to households. Only marginal reduction in its allotment to states, government could look at completely eliminating oil subsidy this year.

that could come handy for making additional spending for other Covid-19 related relief measures,” said an official of a country’s largest public sector oil refiner and retailer as king not to be named.

The budget had allotted ₹37,256.21 crore for LPG subsidy in 2020-21, 9 per cent more than ₹34,085.86 crore revised estimate for 2019-20. This requirement should come down drastically with no need to pay LPG for a large section of beneficiaries.

Apart from LPG, government’s oil subsidy bill also pays to keep kerosene price under check. With kerosene prices also low and government reducing its allotment to states, government could look at completely eliminating oil subsidy this year.

Sources said, not only

According to an analyst report, during July 2019-January 2020, the OMCs increased the price of subsidized LPG by ₹63 per cylinder, almost at an average of ₹10 per cylinder per month

depressed global oil market but oil companies have also been increasing the price of subsidised domestic LPG prices gradually by ₹4-5 per cylinder since late last year. That has also helped to bridge the gap between the market and subsidised price of the product.

According to an analyst report, during July 2019-January 2020, the OMCs increased the price of subsidised LPG by ₹63 per cylinder, almost at an average of ₹10 per cylinder per month.

While Government has reduced its subsidy bill in the current period of oil price crash, auto fuel consumers have not got any benefit so far. In fact, petrol and diesel prices at pumps have not changed for last 50 days when global oil prices have fallen more than 40 per cent.

Wall Street tumbles amid market sell-off

New York: US stocks finished Friday’s session noticeably lower amid a broad market sell-off. The Dow Jones Industrial Average shed 622.03 points, or 2.55 per cent, to 23,723.69. The S&P 500 fell 81.72 points, or 2.81 per cent, to 2,830.71. The Nasdaq Composite Index decreased 284.60 points, or 3.20 per cent, to 8,604.95, Xinhua reported.

All the 11 primary S&P 500 sectors dropped, with energy

Shares of other big tech names, including Facebook, Apple, Netflix and Google-parent Alphabet, were also under pressure

closing down 6 per cent, the worst-performing group.

Amazon shares slipped 7.6 per cent. The US e-commerce giant on Thursday posted a first-quarter profit that missed analysts’ expectations and pledged to spend entire second-quarter operating profit on coronavirus response.

Shares of other big tech names, including Facebook, Apple, Netflix and Google-parent Alphabet, were also under pressure. On the data front, US manufacturing Purchasing Managers’ Index registered 41.5 per cent in April, down sharply from the March reading of 49.1 per cent, the Institute for Supply Management reported on Friday. Any reading below 50 per cent indicates the manufacturing sector is generally contracting.

TVS Motor sells zero units in domestic market in April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

TVS Motor Company on Saturday said it did not sell any unit in the domestic market last month as all its plants remained closed due to the coronavirus lockdown.

Since March 23, the company’s plants have been closed in compliance with the government guidelines, TVS Motor Company said in a statement.

During April, the company had zero sales in the domestic market, it added.

However, following resumption of operations at Chennai Port, 8,134 units of two-wheelers, and 1,506 three-wheelers were shipped utilising the stocks from March 2020 while ensuring utmost safety, the company said.

The two-wheeler major said it is gearing up to restart operations as per state guidelines and is undertaking strong measures to safeguard the health of its employees.

“We are optimistic about the potential demand for personal mobility once things normalise,” it added.

Difficult to take medium, long-term views of the situation: SBI official

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The country’s largest lender, State Bank of India, on Saturday said it would be very difficult to assess medium or long-term impact on the banking sector at the moment in the wake of the ongoing nationwide lockdown as this will continue to evolve in the emerging situation.

The bank is looking at the short term now - the next two or three quarters, a senior SBI official said on condition of anonymity.

The impact of the lockdown over the next one to two years will be difficult to assess at the moment, he pointed out.

“In the next one to two years, we will have to navigate very carefully and SBI is sure of

E-tailers see uptick in non-essential searches amid lockdown relaxation

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce players on Saturday said they are gearing up for serving millions of Indians users from May 4 as there has been an uptick in searches mainly for apparel, household products and personal grooming items in the past 24 hours.

Although the Government has allowed the sale of only essential products in the red zone through e-commerce platforms, non-essential products are allowed in green and orange zones, starting May 4, subject to specific approval from the respective state governments.

The relaxation comes as a major relief for the e-commerce players. Flipkart said that as a marketplace e-commerce player, it is its responsibility to enable sellers and the MSME community to bounce back and facilitate economic activity.

“We are working with lakhs of sellers and MSMEs across India and helping them prepare their businesses and workforce to make products available for consumers in this time of need,” a company spokesperson told IANS.

“Our seller support team is providing constant online counsel and support to sellers on our platform to help them resume operations over the next couple of days complying with the government directives,” the company added.

The Centre on Friday announced the extension of the

nationwide lockdown for two more weeks from May 4, with certain relaxations to regions categorised as orange and green zones. Snapdeal said that traffic to its platform has been growing steadily since the MHA announcement easing lockdown restrictions, including on e-commerce.

“The users are thronging the platform looking to place orders for a wide variety of products for which they have been waiting for a long time. Apparel and household products topped the list for searches and orders placed,” said a company spokesperson.

Although there is no categorical statement regarding allowing of non-essential sales by e-commerce players, the MHA order mentioned that all activities are permitted in green zones except buses, metro rail services, educational institutions and other non-essential places which could lead to mass congregation of people, including, malls, and cinema halls.

An Amazon spokesperson said on Friday that it welcomes the government’s decision to allow e-commerce in Orange and Green Zones to serve people safely with products that they need and have not been able to access due to the lockdown.

“Millions of small and medium businesses and traders will now be able to jumpstart their businesses and livelihoods across their workforce,” said the company spokesperson.

New guidelines good start for the economy, says retailers body

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the new notification by the Centre as a “good start to get the economy moving”, the Retailers Association of India has said it now looks forward to it being adopted by various state governments.

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) said that it now

expects the respective state government to recognise shopping malls as safe space and allow them to open for customers in a regulated manner.

On Saturday, the government issued a new notification, easing some restrictions in the green and orange zones during the third phase of the lockdown beginning May 4.

“The new notification by

the MHA is a good start to getting the economy moving. We look forward to clarifications from the states and how they would like to adopt these new guidelines.

“We hope that the government does recognise the safe space that malls provide for shoppers and opens them up in a regulated manner,” RAI said in a statement.

Corona casualty: Honda’s domestic sales nil in April

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) on Saturday reported nil domestic sales in April, but managed to close the month with limited exports of 2,630 two-wheelers.

“Honda’s domestic sales in April’20 stood at nil as all 4 of its production facilities suspended operations from 22nd March till now in accordance with lockdown guidelines issued by the Government. Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown has resulted in massive economic upheaval.

While on one hand factories and businesses are shut, consumer sentiment is also marred with the fears of uncertainty over the current health crisis”.

There has also been a change in the top management of the company

On Friday, the Honda Motor Co. Japan announced new top management at HMSI to strategically steward the brand towards market leadership in the disruptive future.

Under the new management team, Atsushi Ogata has become the President, CEO and the Managing Director of the company.

UJVN LIMITED
H. O. "UJJAWAL", MAHARANI BAGH, GMS ROAD, DEHRADUN-248006
(Tele. : 0135-2763808, 2763508, Fax: 0135-2763507)
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, website: www.uttarakhandjalvidyut.com

Corrigendum No. 01
Due to unavoidable reasons the changes done in tender specifications No. **T-01/EE(Pathri)/2020-21** have been uploaded as our website **www.ujvn.com**.
All the terms and condition remain unchanged.
Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website.

Executive Engineer (M&G)
Pathri Power House

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CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.uttarakhandjalvidyut.com

"e" Tender Notice
The office of Executive Engineer (Maintenance), MB-II, Chinyalisaur (Uttarkashi) invites tender for the following work:-
1-NIT No-10/EE(M)/MB-II/20-21 : Procurement of SS Liner Plates of 76 MW Turbines at Dharasu Power House, MB-II Uttarkashi.
2- Approx value of supply : Rs 1628000.00 (Taxes extra)
3- Tender Cost : Rs. 1180.00
4- Earnest Money : Rs. 49000/-
5- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : 04.05.2020 at 16:00 Hrs.
6- Last Date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal : 26-05-2020 upto 16:00 Hrs.
7- Last Date/Time for receipt of Hard copy in the office : 29-05-2020 up to 15:00 Hrs.
8- Date of opening of bid on the website : 29-05-2020 at 15:00 Hrs.
9- Name & Address of the officer inviting the bid : EE (Maintenance), MB-II, Dharasu Power House, Dharasu.
10- Further details, subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be seen at e-procurement portal <http://ukttenders.gov.in>.
258/UJVNL/Advt/1 Dated 01.05.2020
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)
N.I.T. No.: 01/20-21 dated 01.05.2020. 1. Name of work : Hiring of 03 Ambulances (Tempo Traveler AC) round the clock on monthly kilometers basis for Three years under Medical Director/N.Rly Central Hospital, New Delhi. 2. Approx. Cost of Work : Rs. 87,48,468.00. 3. Earnest Money : (It should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway Only. Note:- FDR will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Board no. 2015/CEE/IT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016) Rs. 1,75,000.00. 4. Completion period of Work : 36 Months. 5. Cost of Tender on cash/bid post : (It should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway Only. Note:- FDR will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Board no. 2015/CEE/IT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016) Rs. 5900.00. 6. Date and Time for submission of tender and opening tender : Upto 15.00 hrs. on 26.05.2020 opening of tender at 15.00 hrs. On 26.05.2020. 7. Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender document can be seen and address of office from where the tender form can be purchased etc. : Above tender invited on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in. 128-W/269/OET/20-21/NRCH/NIT01 dated 01.05.2020 1028/2020

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WESTERN RAILWAY
VARIOUS ENGINEERING WORKS
Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer Construction Vadodara invites E-tender as per details given below:

Sr. No.	Executive	Tender Notice No & Date	WORK AND LOCATION	Approx. cost of work ₹	EMD ₹	Date of Opening
1	Dy.CEE/C/ BRC	TR-C-5-2020 dtd 28.04.20	Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25 KV AC OHE between Vasad – Kathana Section on Vadodara Division of Western Railway in connection with Electrification of Existing BG line.	17,71,38,787.34	10,35,700.00	29.05.2020 at 15.30 Hrs.
2	Dy.CEE/C/ BRC	TR-C-6-2020 dtd 28.04.20	Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 25 KV AC OHE between Anand – Khambhat with Boriyavi – Vadatl Section on Vadodara Division of Western Railway in connection with Electrification of Existing BG line.	18,43,51,891.11	10,71,800.00	28.05.2020 at 15.30 Hrs.

Please visit www.ireps.gov.in.

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NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice
Following E-tenders are invited by DRM (WA) NWR/Ajmer at 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. **Tender No. : 66/2020, Name of work : Complete Track Renewal Work between Madar-Daurai Bye Pass Line Section (From Km. 289.40 to 297.50 = Total 8.10 Kms.), Approximate Cost : Rs. 2,38,11,720.07, Earnest Money : Rs. 2,69,100.00, Tender Closing Date : 27.05.2020, Tender No. : 67/2020, Name of work : ADEN-RPZ sub Division : Deep Screening work and Providing Sleepers on joints in MVJ-MJ Section between KBK-CBG-LSG from Km. 55/8 to 88/8 = 33 Kms., Approximate Cost : Rs. 1,32,67,080.00, Earnest Money : Rs. 2,16,300.00, Tender Closing Date : 27.05.2020, Tender No. : 68/2020, Name of work : ADEN-RPZ sub Division : Supply of Ballast (Machine Crushed) in MVJ-MJ Section between KBK-CBG-LSG from Km. 55/8 to 88/8 = 33 Kms., Approximate Cost : Rs. 1,32,67,080.00, Earnest Money : Rs. 2,16,300.00, Tender Closing Date : 27.05.2020, Tender No. : 69/2020, Name of work : Ajmer Division - Transportation of P.Way Material under ADEN-Rana Pratap Nagar Sub Division., Approximate Cost : Rs. 54,52,470.00, Earnest Money : Rs. 1,09,100.00, Tender Closing Date : 27.05.2020, The detailed information of the above tender is available on website www.ireps.gov.in and Tender Notice Board of DRM Office, NWR/Ajmer. 438-SP/20**

Please join us on NWRRailways



From classrooms to healthcare consultation, from business meetings to court hearings, to even parties life has become virtually smart in corona times. Call it videotelephony or just a way to skirt social distancing online meetings on special platforms have come into vogue. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with industry stakeholders about how these platforms have made work and play, both accessible

For Avinash Singh, a 21-year-old college student, the day starts at 9:30 am by logging in to the computer and be all set for the day's classes from the comfort of his home. Interestingly, his Professor is in Delhi and the other classmates in their respective hometowns. But at a click of a mouse, all are together. Elsewhere in Delhi, an 85-year-old mother, is worried because one of her daughters is stuck in the US due to the lockdown. But can take heart that they can keep in touch and get to see each other as many times in a day despite being thousands of miles away. Welcome, to the world of the new normal.

Not even in our wildest dreams had we thought of such a life — when everything would come to a near standstill and would feel like we were living under a rock. But the lockdown has made this a reality. With social distancing becoming a must, work from home and taking online classes is the way forward and technology has shown that it can be a perfect tool in the present situation.

A case in point are video conferencing apps like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. From corporate events to business meetings to classes to live concerts and to dance workshops, everything is taking the digital route. With a variety of platforms to choose from, there is a raging competition.

Sameer Rajee, India Head, Zoom Video Communications, tells you that it is the easy-to-use setup that makes Zoom the number one platform for video conferencing. "There are a couple of aspects that makes us the user's choice. One, it has an easy to use interface. With the touch of a button or click of a mouse you are into a meeting. Two, the experience. When you join a meeting, whatever bandwidth you are on or even if you are struggling with poor connectivity, the platform tries to accommodate to the fluctuating network giving users a rich experience with no complaints of bad connectivity or finding difficulty in joining a meeting," Rajee says.

For those who still are unaware of the app, it is an enterprised platform, designed for communication and collaboration. "While we service large enterprises, we also service small and medium ones as well. While doing this we have our premium version, which any one can sign up for on the platform. This allows 40 minutes of video conferencing if there are more than two participants. For those who want to use it more, they have to subscribe to the various services and licenses. Each of one that would have its pricing plan. Then there is an enterprised plan, which has more features and functionality. The pricing for this varies from ₹1,499 to ₹1,999 per user per month," Rajee explains.

Though the platform has been here for over nine years but the surge in users came during the lockdown period. "We never anticipated such kind of surge. From 10 million users a day we went to a high of 300 million a day. This is a crazy number. Many companies may be looking forward to cover this journey in a couple of years but we did this in less than 12 weeks. This is a humongous achievement," he says.

However, lately a lot of queries were raised on the platform's security with the Government even banning it for official calls and meetings. Eric S Yuan, CEO of Zoom issued an apology for the privacy issues and assured the people that they are doing the best to protect users' privacy. Rajee too says, that the company is putting in best efforts to improve the security.

"We are and will always be a secure platform. What happened was unfortunate and was quite similar to like you are going out of your house, leaving it unlocked and then advertising it on social media that I am out of the house. When you are on a virtual platform you have to keep in mind safe

practices. Now, we have started educating people about that. Yes, the growth in users was unprecedented and there were some human errors from our side as well. But now we have taken appropriate security steps and have introduced a 90-day plan which we are working on and there is a significant progress in that. In this plan, we have introduced a robust security system, improving the security considerably," he tells you.

As it is an evolving product, Rajee adds, the company will keep on building the platform with new and updated features and functionality but the focus at present, is to only improve security.

The app is not just being used by corporate and educational institutes, but for personal connectivity as well.

"The life before Coronavirus hit the world was different. Our app was then used by organisations and enterprises for meetings and other work, but now things have changed. People have started using it for socialising as well. A couple of days back, somebody told me that her friend got married on our platform. She is going to remember the platform forever. Also, marriages over the app in New York are now considered to be legal. There was another instance, where a five-year-old was adopted via the platform. And the UK Parliament is holding their parliamentary meet on the platform for the first time. Who would have imagined that something like this could happen? We had never anticipated that someday our platform will be used to this extent and in such a manner. We are happy that we could help people," Rajee tells you.

These apps are also helping people beat the lockdown blues. It has become a way to connect in these tough times. "Since the lockdown, my friends in the US, Canada, France and elsewhere in India had been planning to connect. We decided to do a video call. It was an amazing experience — to simultaneously video chat with 10 friends. One of our friends is pregnant so we asked her to show her baby bump. It was nice to share a personal, special moment in such difficult times," says Aaradhana Ramesh, who have now become a regular user of the platform.

Amit Pandey, senior scriptwriter at Cosmos Maya, who write scripts for cartoon shows like *Selfie with Bajrangi*, *Tik Tak Tail* and *Eena Meena Deeka* which airs on Disney, Cartoon Network and OTT platforms like Amazon Prime, Hotstar and ZEE5 to name a few and is actively using video conferencing platforms for his script narration feels privileged to be living in the digital age.

"We are privileged that we are living in a digital age which has turned out to be a blessing during this COVID-19 crisis while following the work from home routine. Ever since the Coronavirus-led lockdown shut down schools forcing kids to stay at home, the consumption of cartoon shows has boomed like never before. This has, in turn, forced us to churn out more engaging stories keeping us as busy. Video conferencing tools have helped us keep our pace to fulfil our commitment to provide with the best stories for kids," he says.

He tells you that for a working professional like him, video conferencing platforms are like a God's gift. "For a scriptwriter like me who loves to add expressions to storytelling sessions, video conferencing apps are a Godsend. It becomes impossible to convey those feelings with a regular audio call. The facility has helped me a lot and has made my life easy during difficult times like this. These tools not only bridge the gap between a physical and a virtual narrating session, but they let me put my feelings across to all the stakeholders and churn out captivating stories for kids. Thanks to the video conferencing tools, I'm able to easily put my point across and finish sessions quickly. It leaves me with ample time to focus on other important parts of the project," Pandey tells you.



FROM 10 MILLION USERS A DAY WE WENT TO A HIGH OF 300 MILLION A DAY. THIS IS A CRAZY NUMBER. MANY COMPANIES MAY BE LOOKING FORWARD TO COVER THIS JOURNEY IN A COUPLE OF YEARS BUT WE DID THIS IN LESS THAN 12 WEEKS

—SAMEER RAJEE

INDIA HEAD, ZOOM VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS



WE UNDERSTAND THAT NOW MORE THAN EVER CONSUMERS ARE RELYING ON US TO ENSURE CONTINUITY. WE TAKE THIS RESPONSIBILITY VERY SERIOUSLY AND HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE TO MAKE SURE SERVICES STAY UP AND RUNNING

—SAMIK ROY

COUNTRY HEAD, MODERN WORKPLACE, MICROSOFT INDIA

Another platform that is equally making waves is Microsoft Teams, which marked its third anniversary on March 19, 2020. "We announced an array of product innovations across different aspects of the Teams experience — many with a tie to meetings. We continue to invest in experiences that will make it easier for teams to communicate and collaborate. The new capabilities reflect our commitment to two things: Building the very best online meeting experience for our customers and bringing technological solutions to traditionally underserved professionals, including frontline healthcare workers," Samik Roy, Country Head, Modern Workplace, Microsoft India tells you.

Some of the features that make the platform stand out are: Real-time noise suppression, which will minimise distracting background noise (keyboard typing, vacuum cleaner), allowing you to hear what's being said. Second, the raise hand feature, which will let anyone in a virtual meeting send a visual signal that they have something to say. Third, offline and low-bandwidth support, which will let you read chat messages and write responses-even without an Internet making it easier for you to move things forward no matter where you are. Fourth, custom backgrounds, which allow you to replace your background in Teams meetings with a fresh and bright home office. This feature builds upon background blur, which uses artificial intelligence to blur the environment behind you.

"In the future, we will also include the ability to upload your own custom images," Roy tells you.

At Microsoft, Roy says, privacy and security are never an afterthought. It is ingrained in the core design principles of every product. "We provide privacy and security controls for video conferences, safeguard customer privacy by design, protect user identity and account information, protect customer's data and defend it against cybersecurity threats and we meet more than 90 global regulatory and industry standards," he says.

In the face of COVID-19, there are countless stories from customers who are using this to connect and thrive in inspiring ways. "We understand that now more than ever consumers are relying on us to ensure continuity and by making Teams available to as many people as possible, we aim to support businesses, educational institutions and healthcare segments. We take this responsibility very seriously and have a plan in place to make sure services stay up and running," Roy says.

Unlike other apps, this is being widely used by teachers and students for online learning. A case in point is Divya, a 12-year-old trying not only to keep herself occupied but also helping other kids learn new trick or two in solving the Rubik's Cube with other kids by conducting online classes on Microsoft Teams. This Class VII student converts lessons into interactive sessions. Seeing her passion, a neighbor enlisted Divya to take summer vacation classes this year for other children in their apartment's clubhouse. The experiment was a success and more than 15 kids turned up for the initial class, which Divya divided into smaller classes for better focus. But just when her classes were getting intense, a country-wide lockdown was implemented.

Healthcare workers too are providing virtual consultation service powered by Microsoft Teams for its group hospitals. Using this, doctors are able to schedule, manage, and conduct virtual visits with patients, such as post-surgery follow-ups.

Another happening app that has seen a surge in usage by 30 times in the recent months is Google Meet. "More than three million users have been connecting on Meet every day and are spending more than three billion minutes together — more than 3,800 years of secure meetings in a single day. This is a new milestone for us and we are humbled by

this huge responsibility and trust our users have shown. Meet's day over day growth has surpassed 60 per cent in the last few weeks and the usage has surged 30 times to what it was in January 2020. We are committed to help them presently and beyond this pandemic by protecting their data and meeting their end needs," says Karan Bajwa, Managing Director, Google Cloud, India.

Some of the features that make this platform stand out is that it is accessible directly through chrome and other modern browsers without the requirement of additional plugins. One can also host a meeting directly through a browser without any limitations.

"Only meeting creators and calendar owners can mute or remove other participants. This ensures that instructors can't be removed or muted by student participants. Google Meet regularly undergoes independent verification of security, privacy and compliance controls. In order to protect highest-risk accounts, account hijacking and phishing. The users can enroll their account in the Advanced Protection Program (APP). Additionally, it adheres to IETF security standards for Datagram Transport Layer Security (DTLS) and Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP). The data is always encrypted by default with Google meeting room hardware," Bajwa tells you.

To grab more eyeballs, Google Meet have come up with new features that will definitely pose a threat on its competitors. It has made the premium video conferencing platform free for all users everywhere. "The feature will be accessible to everyone in the coming weeks. We have also updated the layout. The newly updated tiled layout will now support the screen space for 16 participants compared to four participants previously. Additionally, Meet now uses AI to enhance the participants' visibility to other under sub-optimal lighting conditions. This feature is currently rolled out to mobile users and will be available for web users too in future. In the upcoming weeks, Meet will also support background noise cancellation," Bajwa explains.

However, there are two sides of a coin. This increased usage of digital platforms may lead to an increase in cybercrime, thereby putting personal information at risk.

"During this COVID-19 pandemic there is an increased risk of cybercrimes considering there is a substantial rise in digital usage, especially video conferencing platforms. This has increased many avenues for hackers to use personal information or to infect your system with malware. This rise in usage of video conferencing platforms, increases the possibility of new avenues for cybercrimes. Hackers can not only attack the platform, but also join these sessions and cause damage to businesses with respect to confidentiality as well as privacy," Rajesh Kumar, Director Cybersecurity, Netrika Consulting India Pvt Ltd, says.

But there are certain good practices as well which can eliminate the risks of cyber threat. "Disable file sharing and accepting the files through these platforms. Keep the platform and application always patched. Set strong, difficult passwords for all meetings and sessions. Enable features like waiting room, lock meeting sessions, join before host. Limit screen sharing on purpose and disallow public recording," Kumar advises.

Apart from these safe practices, Kumar says, one should also follow the basis etiquette of using Internet. "Basic things which a person should keep in mind while using Internet are: Don't click on any suspected mails, it can be phishing mails and can contain malware. Avoid connecting your devices on public hotspots or open Wi-Fi. Ensure your endpoint devices uses latest anti-virus/anti-malware and is updated. Keep yourself aware of latest phishing campaigns and basic IT cyber etiquette," he tells you.

'Really hope there are not more leagues than Int'l cricket after pandemic'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's premier off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin doesn't want a post-COVID-19 world that is more conducive for organising T20 leagues at the expense of international cricket.

The fastest Indian to 350 Test wickets, the seasoned spinner said on Saturday he foresees another "purple patch" for him in the traditional format, provided his body holds. He also outrightly rejected the four-day proposal.

"I really do hope that this (pandemic) does not transpire into something where you have more leagues and not much of international cricket because the borders are closed," Ashwin said during a videocast with former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar on ESPNcricinfo.

With the COVID-19 pandemic yet to subside, Ashwin doesn't see cricket resuming anytime soon.

"I think we are still some distance away. In terms of the health of world cricket I think it is going to take longer than what people might assume.

"So, that's an imminent possibility, but I don't know what the further future has in store."

He calls himself a "hardened" T20 cricketer but it is the five-day format in which he has tasted maximum success. And he is far from being done in the game's long form.

"If my body is in great space, I think Test cricket I just have another streak of great purple patch I am looking at."

"I believe I am a hardened professional in T20 cricket, and good at what I do. Wherever I play I will be able to deliver, with the experience that I have got and the courage that I have."

He said the ICC's plans to trim Test cricket by a day doesn't excite him.

"The thought of four-day cricket doesn't really excite me. I am a spinner and if you take a day



Ravichandran Ashwin bowls during a test match

BCCI/Twitter

"I think we are still some distance away. In terms of the health of world cricket I think it is going to take longer than what people might assume. "So, that's an imminent possibility, but I don't know what the further future has in store."

out, I dont know if it's going to be healthy, you are taking out a very fascinating aspect of the game," Ashwin said.

Asked about Indian cricket, he said, "The current state of Indian cricket is as healthy as it can be. Hope we can pick it up from where we had left once sport resumes."

Ashwin also spoke about his love for operating with the new ball and explained the mechanics involved.

"I like a new ball because of the fizz that I get on it. One of my strengths is to be able to put revs on the hard ball as it responds better to the pitch.

"But I generally like to use the arm ball in first 2 or 3 overs because when you use the arm ball, it challenges both the edges of the batsman and forces him to go across the line which is rendered risky."

The spin ace who has often been seen with the new ball across formats, added, "The others that I use are the floaters that swing, the one that pitches in and goes out or the other one that lands on the seam and gets to go the other way. So these balls become very effective.

"With a new ball I use my middle finger more than the index finger but when I bowl with an older ball, I try and get over the top.

"Sometimes, I don't use index finger to go over the top, it is behind and I still put the revs and that's when the ball actually goes the other way."

He shared his views about the need to be versatile in the T20 format, where the bowlers have little margin for error, and about finger and wrist spinners.

"In a T20 cricket, you need to call yourself a bowler. At times you should be able to bowl a bouncer or a spinner.

"Wrist spin is successful not because it is challenging both edges of the bat but because of its unpredictable nature when bowling length. And this makes wrist spin extremely relevant."



M S Dhoni left, Rishabh Pant right poses for a photo

Twitter

Dhoni always there to help but doesn't offer complete solutions: Pant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Calling M S Dhoni his mentor, wicket-keeper batsman Rishabh Pant says the World Cup-winning skipper has his own way of helping the younger crop as he never provides a full solution to a problem, encouraging them to look for answers.

Pant, was heir apparent to Dhoni until K L Rahul emerged as a wicket-keeper batsman in the limited overs format, making the southpaw no more a certainty in the playing eleven.

"He (Dhoni) has been like a mentor to me, on and off the field. I can approach him freely with any problem I may be facing, and he will never give me the entire solution for it," Pant said in an Instagram live session with his IPL team Delhi Capitals.

"This is so that I don't become entirely dependent on him, he gives me hints only that helps me solve the issue myself. He's also one of my favourite batting partners, though it's not something that happens too often.

"If Mahi bhai is at the crease, you know things are sorted. He's got a plan in his head, and all you need to do is follow it!"

Dhoni, who has not played competitive cricket since July, was supposed to make a much awaited comeback with the IPL, which has now been postponed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh thinks Dhoni has already played his last game for the country.

You will play tomorrow, you have to take 5 wickets: Kumble to Kuldeep



Kuldeep Yadav celebrate after taking wicket

Kuldeep Yadav/Twitter

IAN■ NEW DELHI

He is an integral part of Indias limited-overs set-up, but spinner Kuldeep Yadav has revealed how then coach Anil Kumble had told him that he had to pick five wickets while informing the youngster that he would be making his debut against Australia in Dharamsala.

Speaking to Cricbuzz in their Youtube show Spicy Pitch, Kuldeep recalled the episode of Kumble informing him that he would be getting his Test cap next day while having lunch. "I get emotional when I remember my Test debut in Dharamsala. The most important thing for me at the time was how to perform. I remember a day before the match, Anil sir came to me and said 'you will play tomorrow, you have to take 5 wickets,' he said.

"So, I paused for a second, and then I was like, 'yes sir, I will pick up 5 wickets.' (Laxman) Sivaramakrishnan sir gave me my Test cap. He gave me some advice, I don't remember what, as I was completely blank at the time.

"I was feeling lot of pressure, I was really nervous. I felt that it was a big stage — how will I perform here. But then I bowled a couple of overs before lunch, and I felt relaxed. I decided to play it like it is a Ranji Trophy match. Test cricket has always been very close to my heart."

Kuldeep recently spoke about the influence of former skipper M.S. Dhoni in his career and said that the wicket-keeper even made up for his childhood coach as they both thought alike.

"I can't pick up just one as there are many (when asked about Dhoni's instructions from behind the stumps). He always used to tell me 'ball ko spin karana hai (you have to spin the ball) rather than bowling flat'. This used to remind me of my coach. This is the best thing that I heard from Dhoni and because of this I never felt like I was missing my coach," Kuldeep said in a video uploaded on a sports app.

Big egos not harmful if there is team culture, environment: Jayawardene

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sri Lankan batting great Mahela Jayawardene says there is "nothing harmful" in having players with big egos in a team as long as he is able to get the best out of them within an ideal environment.

Jayawardene has achieved considerable success in leadership roles in recent years, first as a captain and then coach, and said he has always backed his players to the hilt.

Helming the affairs in a team-game like cricket, Jayawardene was asked how does he deal with big egos.

"It's good to have that. It's nothing harmful. It's about identifying and making sure that they thrive. Everyone has got to this level because they are good, right? So you try and get them to prove that. That's all you need to do," Jayawardene was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

The 42-year-old is one of Sri Lanka's most successful captains.

Speaking further on handling players with big egos, he said, "It's about treating everyone professionally, and about treating everyone with respect. It is a team culture that you create.

"Once you create that culture, it's hard for an individual to go beyond that.

"The rest of the players will bring that person down to the group level. If you haven't created that team environment, then you can have a problem because there are no boundaries and people drift."

Under his guidance, Mumbai Indians have won two titles in the last



Englan team poses for a group photo

ECB/Twitter

Eng tour of SL rescheduled to Jan, claims SLC CEO

PTI ■ COLOMBO

England's Test tour of Sri Lanka, which could not be completed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been rescheduled to January next year, claims SLC CEO Ashley de Silva.

England had spent around 10 days in Sri Lanka in March and played a warm-up match before the tour was called-off due to the coronavirus outbreak. It was supposed to be a two-Test series as part of the World Test Championship.

"We are in the process of rescheduling the tours that have been postponed. England has been already rescheduled for the month of January next year but the dates have not been finalised," de Silva told Daily News.

"At the same time, we are also looking at exploring the possibility of rescheduling postponed tours and looking at the windows which are available and alternatives too.

"South Africa is one of the tours which we are looking at rescheduling. We are engaged in discussions with the member countries and see how it can be planned out."

However, England are scheduled to tour India in January for a five-Test series, so, it remains to be seen how the scheduling will work out.

All cricketing activity has come to a halt due to the pandemic, throwing the international calendar haywire.

India too were scheduled to tour Sri Lanka for a limited overs series after the IPL, which has been postponed indefinitely.

"There are also two other tours which are scheduled to take place, with India and Bangladesh due to tour Sri Lanka in June-July and July-August respectively.

"We will explore the possibility of playing those two tours in another week or two," de Silva added.

Labuschagne expecting packed schedule once cricket resumes

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian run-machine Marnus Labuschagne is gearing up for a packed schedule to make up for the time lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic once cricket resumes.

All cricket is on hold right now due to the pandemic sweeping through the globe with several tours and tournaments being either cancelled or postponed.

"There is going to be a lot of tours that will need to be made up," Labuschagne told Australian Associated Press.

"There's going to be a whole heap of cricket in a very short time frame. We'll be making up for missed time, that schedule is just going to be packed."

Australia's OD1 series against New Zealand was called off after the first match, while the T20 World Cup is facing an uncertain future.



Marnus Labuschagne Raises his bat AP

With several tours being rescheduled in an already congested calendar, Laubuschagne feels players will be expected to play a lot more than usual.

"It's going to be a bit different to what we're used to. We're going to have to be ready coming out of this break to play heaps and heaps of

cricket."

The 25-year-old, who rose to fame after coming in as Steve Smith's concussion substitute in the Ashes last year, is disappointed to see the English county season also suffer.

"It's very sad. I really enjoyed it last year. I loved Glamorgan, hence why I signed a two-year extension. It's disappointing to see them and England cricket in trouble," he said.

Several boards like Cricket Australia are facing a financial crisis and the youngster feels the entire cricket community should come together and do whatever is in their hands to get the sport going again.

"It's our responsibility, cricket on the whole, to make sure once this period is over that we get games on television and get the sport started again. We need to support each other," he added.

influences his thought process."

When asked if has ever felt in any of his leadership roles the absence of control over the dressing room, he responded in the negative.

"It hasn't happened. I'm very honest with whatever I do. We can have brutally honest conversations. Nothing is personal with me.

"You just need to cultivate that mutual respect. If the transparency is there and there are no agendas, the players understand that.

"I also back the players to the hilt, whether as a captain or a coach. I'm always on the players' side," he said.

Nicholls to donate WC final shirt

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand batsman Henry Nicholls has decided to donate the shirt he wore in the World Cup final last year to help the families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nicholls will be donating the jersey to Unicef New Zealand.

"NZ Cricketer @HenryNicholls27 Cricket bat and ballhas offered up one of his prized 2019 Cricket World Cup jerseys, signed by the whole team! One lucky donor who has supported our #FoodForKiwiFamilies appeal will receive it. You'e got to be in it, to win it so donate now!" Unicef tweeted.

"Since the start of lockdown, it's more than tripled the demand for food parcels throughout New Zealand," Nicholls told



Stuff.Co.Nz.

"That was something that really sparked my interest and from my point

of view, everything that happened at the World Cup last year, that's a pretty memorable experience. I

thought I could put that shirt up as a bit of an incentive for people to donate."

Unicef New Zealand is focusing humanitarian efforts on Kiwi children and families and has partnered with the Salvation Army and Countdown to provide urgent food and hygiene supplies across the country.

"For me I wanted to go away from the auction sort of thing, where the highest bidder wins it. I wanted to make it a bit more inclusive and anyone can donate five or 10 dollars and go into the draw to win it," said Nicholls, who top-scored for New Zealand in the final, hitting 55.

"It all adds up. A lot of families and everyone in New Zealand is really feeling the pinch. It's a small little thing and hopefully it can make a big difference."

Ind to step up battle for 2032 Oly after pandemic: Batra

AFP ■ NEW DELHI

India will step up its battle to win the 2032 Olympic Games and other international events when the global coronavirus pandemic eases, its top sports leader Narinder Batra told AFP.

Ten years after hosting the Commonwealth Games, the Indian Olympic Association president said his country had lessons to learn but would not be deterred.

"We are serious and definitely pitching for the 2026 Youth Olympic Games and the 2032 Olympics," he said on Friday.

India has already written expressions of interest to the International Olympic Committee but faces reported competition from Thailand, Russia and Colombia for the 2026 event.

Queensland in Australia, Shanghai and a potential joint bid between Seoul and Pyongyang are also being touted for the 2032 Olympics.

However, the pandemic has halted all debate. Batra, also head of the International Hockey Federation, said "documentation" has started for 2032 but work is now frozen. A final



decision may take until 2025.

"Now there is a team that visits the various venues and you keep talking to them and then they submit a report. It is a continuous process which I believe will see no activity until December," India's most influential sports leader said.

"This is not the time to talk with business houses or government about pitching for the Olympics. The first thing should be how we sort out this problem which has come into the world," Batra added, referring to the virus.

Delhi's hosting of the

Commonwealth Games was marked by construction delays, failing infrastructure and accusations of financial mismanagement.

More recently, Delhi was stripped of the 2021 world boxing championships, with the global body accusing organisers of failing to pay a hosting fee on time.

Batra said he knew nothing of the boxing dispute but insisted that the 2010 multi-sport event had made India think big and its growing economic clout means it has resources.

"I can say the biggest takeaway was that India is capable of hosting all big-ticket events whether it is Olympics or any other Games," said Batra.

But he added that New Delhi did not capitalise enough on the 2010 Games by encouraging more young athletes.

HOCKEY HOPES

"The Delhi event fell short on legacy values. The legacy that you produce more athletes and you develop them never happened here and that is why tournaments shifted out of Delhi," he said.

"The fact that such a big event happened here was not properly exploited."

India has a population of 1.3 billion people but while it excels at cricket, its team returned from the 2016 Rio Olympics with just two medals.

The coronavirus pandemic has only made it harder for athletes to train for the postponed Tokyo Olympics, put back until at least 2021.

But Batra is sticking to his prediction that India will get more than 10 medals whenever the next Games are held.

"About 80 Indian athletes have already qualified for the Olympics and are being monitored by directors and chief coaches," he said.

"So I maintain my earlier prediction of a double-figure medal tally and I don't think this situation will change anything."

Batra said he was counting on the men's hockey team -- which has won eight Olympic golds but not finished in the first four since 1980 -- to return to success.

"In this Olympics I am certainly looking to the men's team for a medal," he said.



Kumari gets 4-year ban for dope flunk

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Discus thrower Sandeep Kumari has been slapped with a four-year ban by Athletics Integrity Unit for flunking a dope test, nearly two years after her sample was deemed clean by the NDTL.

The National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) had failed to detect the banned substance -- a steroid -- which was present in her blood sample, collected by NADA officials during the National Inter-State Championships in June 2018 in Guwahati.

Kumari had won the Gold with a throw of 58.41m.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) then decided to test the sample of Kumari at its Montreal Laboratory in Canada and it returned positive for anabolic steroid Metenolone in November 2018.

Kumari's results from June 26, 2018 to November 21, 2018 will now be annulled.

Her four-year ban, announced by WADA on Friday night, will begin from June 26, 2018 -- the date of her sample collection.

Not only Kumari's but

samples of four other Indians, including 2017 Asian champion quarter-miler Nirmala Sheoran's had returned negative at NDTL but were found positive when tested in Montreal.

Jhuma Khatun, one of them, was also handed a four-year ban, last month.

WADA referred Kumari's results management to the AIU which notified her of the charges and provisionally suspended her in November 2018.

The Haryana athlete waived her right for the confirmatory 'B' sample test and accepted the adverse analytical finding (AAF).

In February 2019, Kumari participated in an interview with representatives of AIU by phone during which she confirmed that she admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRV).

In February 2020, the AIU issued a notice of charge to Kumari, asking her to either admit the ADRV or undergo a hearing before the Disciplinary Tribunal.

After missing three deadlines to respond, Kumari finally accepted the charge and did not request a hearing.



Reena Khokhar in action

Hockey India/Twitter

After injury and eye surgeries, Reena eyes on Oly selection

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A gym session gone awry has threatened to end her career but after two eye surgeries and months away from the game, midfielder Reena is looking at selection in Indian women's hockey team for the Tokyo Olympics.

Reena, who was a regular feature in the Indian squad since her debut in 2017, fought her way through the challenging times with strong will and a tremendous support system.

"I was using a stretch-band to do some simple flexibility exercise when the band snapped and hit my left eye. It happened so quickly that I had no time to react. At that time, little did I know that the next four months would be the worse phase of my life," recalled Reena.

She was part of the team that won the Silver medal at the 2018

SHE WAS PART OF THE TEAM THAT WON THE SILVER MEDAL AT THE 2018 ASIAN GAMES AND ALSO PLAYED THE FIH WOMEN'S WORLD CUP IN THE SAME YEAR. SHE WAS GOING ALONG NICELY UNTIL THE MISHAP IN 2019, WHICH CAST A DOUBT ON HER PARTICIPATION IN THE ALL-IMPORTANT OLYMPIC QUALIFIER

Asian Games and also played the FIH Women's World Cup in the same year. She was going along nicely until the mishap in 2019, which cast a doubt on her partici-

pation in the all-important Olympic Qualifier.

"Initially the doctor has said it will heal soon but even after a month when the pain was persistent, the doctor then advised surgery to rule out permanent damage to the retina. This news was devastating and all I could think of was whether I will ever play hockey again," said the 26-year-old Reena, who is from Chandigarh.

After a brief break, Reena returned to the national camp in July.

"I was advised two months bed rest and when I returned to the camp chief coach Sjoerd would talk to me regularly to pep me up. He would tell me about a player in Netherlands who played hockey with vision only in one eye.

"Positive stories like these and emotional support from my parents and some close friends outside of

hockey kept me motivated.

"When I held the stick again, after almost three months, I knew I would do anything to return to the team and I am thankful to the coaching staff who supported me with step-by-step return to full training and didn't put any kind of pressure," she said.

To the surprise of many, Reena was available for FIH Olympic Qualifiers selections, having made her comeback in the Test Event in Tokyo in August 2019.

She went through another corrective surgery in December, but the danger had passed by then.

"I got a break in the Indian team quite late. I was around 24 when I made my India debut and my junior India experience is less, so the next one year I will do everything I can do prove myself worthy of a place in the Olympic-bound India squad," she said.

Messi wants to be treated like just one more: Ayala

IAN S ■ BUENOS AIRES

Roberto Ayala is one footballer who has had the honour of playing with both Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi and the Argentina assistant coach believes that they are two footballing giants.

Speaking on '90 minutes' with Fox Sports, the former player spoke about the two names which have shone on the football stage like diamonds.

"I played with both of them, with Diego I was taking my first steps. They are two footballing giants, and when he retires, Messi will be remembered. I don't know if it'll be like Diego, it doesn't matter. They are different. Diego was pure art in all his mannerisms, Messi a Speedy González who carries the ball two centimetres from his foot," he said. Ayala also believes that Messi has the ability to help the national team and feels that the fact that Messi wants to be treated as one among the other players and not as a star makes him a delight to work with.

"I hope that he gives us his footballing level, that he makes us grow as a team. Having a team with him, not of him. He wants to be treated like this, like just one more. We told the players that he will not be treated differently by us. You all have to step up, do what you do for your clubs, and he will help you. You have to take advantage of that," he revealed.

Brazilian star Neymar had earlier revealed how Messi, one of the greatest footballers to have played the beautiful game, always had his back at Barcelona.

"Honestly, it's difficult, very difficult for me to talk about Messi, because it was very special for me at Barcelona, I say this to everybody," he told Rede Globo's Esporthe Espetacular. "At the moment when I needed the most support, the best player in the world arrived and gave me a hand. He said: 'Come here, I'm here to help you.'"



Brady sure PL can overcome restart challenges

AFP ■ LONDON

West Ham vice-chairman Karren Brady insists that every Premier League club wants to complete the season despite there being "a lot of obstacles" to restarting the campaign.

Clubs were presented with the league's "Project Restart" plans at a meeting on Friday and were told the remaining 92 matches of the 2019-2020 season must be played at neutral venues.

That is an extra sticking point to a litany of other logistical issues as there remains opposition on sporting integrity grounds about the idea of not finishing

the campaign on a home-and-away basis.

"At yesterday's meeting, every club said it wants the season to restart," said Brady in her column for the Sun newspaper.

"The only common theme from all the Prem clubs is that any compromises have to be fair and uphold the integrity of the game.

"Players and managers have to be key decision-makers on the protocols as there is a long way to go from where we are now to actually getting playing again.

"There are a lot of obstacles to overcome and no doubt many compromises to make."

Brighton chief executive Paul Barber said on Thursday that the idea of not playing matches home and away was a "further imperfection" on top of games being behind closed doors.

Before plans to return to playing can progress, the Premier League clubs must also address the thorny issues of testing and player welfare.

Players, coaches and backroom staff



Regional government allows Napoli to resume training

AFP ■ MILAN

Napoli were on Saturday given the green light to restart training next week by regional authorities as Serie A clubs eye a return to action from the coronavirus pandemic shutdown.

The Campania region, where Napoli are based, said in a statement that "the region's positive ruling has already been sent to the government", adding that it had asked for an OK as soon as possible "in order to enable training to restart on Monday".

Campania is the second region in Italy to allow its local Serie A club to recommence preparations, under strict health guidelines, at their training ground after Emilia-Romagna made a similar ruling on Friday for Bologna, Parma, SPAL and Sassuolo.

Lazio, which hosts the Rome-based club of the same name and city rivals Roma, Hellas Verona's home the Veneto and Sardinia, where Cagliari are based, are expected to follow suit.

The announcement comes despite a government decree which stops players from training at their locked-off sports centres where social distancing could be guaranteed, but allows them to run in public parks.

Italy is preparing to relax its lockdown on Monday as the Covid-19 numbers continue a positive trend. The virus has killed over 28,000 people in the country. Many regions have had a fraction of the number of deaths experienced by Lombardy and Piedmont in the north.

Bundesliga restart blow as three test positive at Cologne

"Cologne had the entire team and coaching staff, along with the backroom staff, tested on Thursday for COVID-19. Three people tested positive, all are symptom free,"

AFP ■ BERLIN

Three people have tested positive for coronavirus at Cologne and will be placed into a 14-day quarantine, the Bundesliga club said in a potential blow to hopes of restarting the German football season this month.

"Cologne had the entire team and coaching staff, along with the backroom staff, tested on Thursday for COVID-19. Three people tested positive, all are symptom free," the club said in a statement on its website.

"After an assessment of the cases by the responsible health authorities, the three people who tested positive



will go into a 14-day quarantine at home.

"Cologne will not confirm any names out of respect for the privacy of those affected."

The club said it would continue to train in preparation for the campaign to resume, with further tests to be carried out as part of the league's health and safety protocol.

"We now see in everyday life that our concept recognises and reduces risks at an early stage," said Tim Meyer, head of the German league's medical task force.

"We are convinced that with our concept, we can enable players to prac-

would reportedly be tested two or three times a week and could be forced to quarantine in hotels away from their families to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The Bundesliga's ambitious plans to return to playing matches this month were dealt a blow with the news on Friday that three people at Cologne have tested positive for coronavirus and been placed in a 14-day quarantine.

Manchester City striker Sergio Agüero admitted this week that players are "scared" at the prospect of being rushed back into action, while Brighton's Glenn Murray questioned whether it is right for football's return to drain

resources from public services such as ambulance crews and police.

The proposal of neutral venues by the Premier League is designed to reduce the number of medical, security and broadcast personnel needed at every match.

"It's clear that the location of the games when the league recommences will be subject to approval from both the Government and Sports Grounds Safety Authority," added Brady.

"They could argue neutral grounds better protect the welfare of all involved and reduce the burden on public services like police and ambulance."

ITTF extends suspension of activities till end of July

PTI ■ LAUSANNE

The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) on Saturday extended the suspension of its activities till end of July due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier this month, the ITTF was forced to cancel as many as nine tournaments including two World Tour events amid the ongoing health crisis.

"The current period of suspension of all ITTF events and activities has been extended up until the end of July 2020; the situation is being monitored closely for an eventual restart of ITTF events in August 2020," said the world body in a statement.

The ITTF had also set new dates for the World Team Championships, which were supposed to take place in Busan in March. They were rescheduled to September-October but the decision will be reviewed next month.

"A decision about the status of the Hana Bank 2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships will be made in June 2020.

"ITTF management have been asked to find ways to reduce operation costs overall, including the need for there to be some HR restructuring in order to manage 2020 financial realities," the statement added.

IRRFAN

QARIB QARIB PERFECT

2020 has come with pestilence, end of cultures and sudden unexpected deaths. Bollywood and the nation lost koi apna sa in Irrfan Khan and a perpetual heartthrob in Rishi Kapoor. One died young and the other not so old. SHALINI SAKSENA and MUSBA HASHMI write about the two beautiful journeys that ended within 24 hours



Amma has come to take me away, he told his wife and broke into tears. It has been four days since Irrfan Khan bid adieu to the world in Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital and Medical Research Institute, Mumbai but still the sole thought of Khan not being with us anymore gives goosebumps to many.

Khan's demise has shaken everybody to the core. A man with no or very less haters and critics, kept entertaining the audience even weeks before his demise with *Angeezi Medium*. It seems like Irrfan had sensed that he was slowly losing the battle with cancer, that's why he chose to tell the world with the trailer of the film that something was not right. *Mere shareer ke andar kuch anchahe mehmaan bethe hue hain, unsey vartalaap chal raha hai. Dekhtey hain ki oonth kis karwanth bethta hai, jaisa bhi hoga aap ko titila kar di jayegi*, was what he said in the last message to his fans through the trailer.

The film released on March 13, 2020 but with Coronavirus pandemic taking over, Delhi's cinema halls were shut leaving many people deprived of watching the versatile actor on the 70 mm screen. However, later the film saw the day's light on Hotstar.

Khan was and will be pure magic. With his poker face, sunken eyes, totally unscreen looks and yet a screen presence which would be cause for envy, Khan paved his way through the industry at the time when Bollywood was ruled by the heavy weight Khans and the Kapoors. Not only that, with no Godfather in the industry, the *Paan Singh Tomar* actor proved that it is sheer hardwork and talent that take you to heights.

There was something in Khan's eyes. They spoke a lot — of his journey from Sahabzade Irrfan Ali Khan of Tonk, Rajasthan to Irrfan Khan, the B-town star and of the efforts that it took him to reach where he is. But, with no complaints. Not to mention, the name and fame that he earned, but adding to that he reached a stage in life when people started feeling a connection with him. So much so that moments after his demise, tears won't stop flowing and everyone took to social media to tell how personal his death meant to them.

The aura of Khan was such that even Tom Hanks didn't shy away from praising the personality and agreed that he was the coolest guy. Hanks had said: "And as soon as I walked up to him I said, 'Irrfan Khan, I am going to steal from you everything I possibly can. I am going to start speaking very quietly in films. I am going to wear very nice suits. And I will draw out the last sound

of every sentence that I say.' And by doing that, I will be doing a very pale imitation of the coolest guy in the room."

Irrfan's wife Sutapa Sikdar, who stood by him till the very end, posted the duo's picture on Facebook with a caption stating that she has not lost but gained in every which way.

And when one is talking about Irrfan, there is no chance of missing the films that people duly associate with him. Who would have loved, a whimsical love story that managed to skip the cyber world and had curious consequences, *The Lunchbox*, after watching say the hardcore romantic *Raanjhana* or the action-comedy *Chennai Express*. But that did happen. *The Lunchbox* got its due, with film theory professors using that as an example for studying the subject. The audience's taste changed, content driven cinema came to the forefront with Irrfan riding on the bandwagon of powering small budget films, the you and me kind of cinema like *The Warrior*. But Bollywood was not the only station for Khan, as he went on travelling seas and carving a niche for himself in the British and American films.

"The last time I met him was in January or maybe earlier. We met in the common parking. I live on the seventh floor and he on the fifth of the same society. He looked fine, a little tired though. He was just leaving for the shoot for *Angeezi Medium*. We didn't chat for long just exchanged some pleasantries. He said that it was good to meet after such a long time. I asked him how he was doing and he said that all was good and was following doctor's advice and taking his meds. 'I am happy' he said. Then the lockdown happened. But my wife kept in touch with Sutapa *didi*. She told us that he was taking due precautions since his immunity was low and mainly kept to his room. I came to know that he was in the hospital a day before he passed away," Shreyas Talpade recalls.

It was back when the society in which the two live was under construction and Irrfan and Talpade met to discuss the issues related to the builder and the construction. "The meeting was so surreal. I knew the actor that he was — absolutely fabulous, so confident and brilliant. An actor who could convey so much with his eyes. There were times when I tried to copy him and be like him but then you meet him and he starts to discuss an aspect that is not acting, you realise that he like an innocent child, a child who has no idea about things other than the world of cinema. He was so animated when he talked about how we needed to get in touch with the builder to sort out things. He said: 'Shreyas isko dekh le yaar, yeh kaise hoga?' And I thought to



'INDUSTRY IS NOT OWNED BY ANYONE'

It has been years, since people have been talking about nepotism in the industry. Some came to the forefront and spoke out loud while others quietly agreed with them. However, there is always two sides of a coin. The other side is dominated by actors like Irrfan Khan, Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Pankaj Tripathi to name a few, who proved that the industry can never deny talent.

Aditya Kripalani, author and filmmaker says that the industry is all about business and works like any other organisation. "The industry is not owned by anyone, it is not a living force that is open or shut. It is about business like any other industry. They are open to people who can make a small budget film become the talk of the town. You devise a market plan so that people start talking about your film, it is as simple as that," he tells you.

He feels that there has been a little democratisation of cinema and filmmaking in the recent years, thanks to the OTT platforms like Netflix, but still there's a long way to go.

myself, this is Irrfan Khan, a much senior actor who had moved in before I had," Talpade recalls whose favourite Irrfan Khan movie would be *Hindi Medium*.

He recounts another incident which gives a glimpse of how much he loved doing what he did — be an actor. "There was a screening for *Hindi Medium* and we were invited. When we landed, we realised that he was not there. It was so funny. There were so many who had turned but the star was missing. We were told that he was shooting. It was so funny. But he came during the interval and apologised and said that the shoot for that film had got delayed. He wanted to know what our thoughts were. We all agreed it was fantastic. Work for him was of paramount importance. That's the way he was. There are very few actors of his calibre that when the camera is on, the actor matches the persona that the character he is playing," Talpade says.

He tells you that for non-industry actors like Irrfan, it is extremely difficult to get the right director, the right role, the right film and the right production house. "Then there is the whole scenario of the film releasing properly. For a newcomer, there are many issues. Besides the film releasing, it has to work as well," Talpade says and sites his film *Iqbal* as an example.

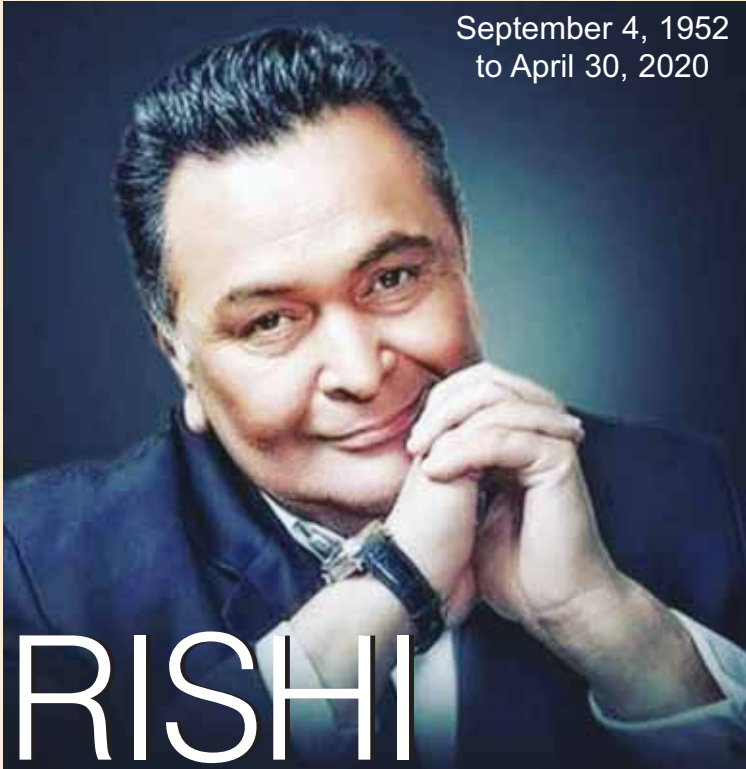
"I remember my film released with *No Entry* which was running to full house. People who had come to see that film didn't want to go back and ended up watching Iqbal and that is how the movie gained popularity — through word of mouth. A lot matters when it comes to a film. Having said this, what Irrfan *bhai* had was tremendous amount of confidence. That is what we should learn from him. He was so good at his craft, there was a charm to it. It was like — *Yeh scene to toh mein le jaaunga. Agar aap mein himmat hain toh isko mujhse chheen ke dikha do*. This was true for each frame he was in. The kind of presence he had, that factor is something each new actor must imbibe and learn," Talpade tells you.

The fact that the 53-year-old actor was able to move on-screen so effortlessly meant that he had perfected his art. "For Irrfan *bhai*, he just loved films. Like all he ever wanted to do was to be in front of the camera — Please keep the camera in front of me; give me a role *aur mein usko sona bana doonga*. When you are born with this kind of confidence, it is very difficult to stop such a person. This was definitely not the time for him to go away. He had so much more to give," Talpade says.

Actor Nitin Arora tells you that he is fan of Irrfan Khan. "*Mein unka murred hoon* after Amitabh Bachchan. I have seen all his film barring one. I loved him in *Paan Singh Tomar*. At that time, I had wanted to come to Mumbai and touch his feet. For somebody to play a 20-year-old recruit to a 55-year-old in the same film and playing each part with so much conviction was brilliant. He lost 30 kg in order to play the younger version of himself. He was outstanding in *Maqbool*. Every film that he has done is great," Arora says.

He, of course, has had the opportunity to work with Irrfan in a film that is has yet to see the light of day — *Pranam Walekum* — shot at a small place outside of Pune. "The movie is directed by Sanjay Mishra, his directorial debut. We shot the entire film and edited it and post that Tigmanshu sir (Dhulia) saw the film and he wanted a scene to be added to give context to it. We shot that scene. I am very fortunate that I got a chance to work with such a talented legend. And I am very upset as well. It is a huge loss to the entire film fraternity. He was one the most chilled out actors I have ever come across. The way he used to explain a scene, the way he used to portray a character in the most natural way, was phenomenal. I have learnt quite a lot from him. 'Acting *nahin karni*, Nitin. Be yourself' he told me," Arora tells you.

He recounts a talk that he had with Irrfan during the shoot. "He told me there was a time when he had decided to go back to Jaipur. Irrfan *bhai* told Tigmanshu sir whom he knew from NSD days that he was all set to go back since nothing was coming his way and the TV show he was doing had also ended. He was asked to stay and was promised a film. Tigmanshu sir told him and before you go, take your National Award with you. He shot the film in Chambal with great difficulty and one day dacoits came and took them away. He was not so popular and very few recognised him. I remember Irrfan *bhai* telling me how with great difficulty they shot the film with little money. Then, once the movie was completed, there were no buyers for five years. The film was *Paan Singh Tomar* and he did walk away with the National Film Award for Best Actor. Meanwhile, his other movies kept releasing and he had become a star," Arora says.



In Rishi Kapoor one lost a cute, bubbly boy, a becoming villain, a character actor who kept the screen alive in all his innings. Even when Kapoor was taking his last breath, he kept the doctors entertained and for two years battled leukemia by throwing life at the ailment with such force that longevity had a rethink. SHALINI SAKSENA and MUSBA HASHMI talk about the loss

Bollywood's forever heartthrob, who is loved by one and all, Rishi Kapoor's demise has left everyone in tears. From a cute, bubbly boy in *Bobby* to a notorious villain in *Agneepath*, the legend from the Kapoor Bollywood dynasty was famous for his jovial nature.

Even when Kapoor was taking his last breath in the Reliance Hospital, Mumbai reports said that he kept the doctors entertained till the end. The jovial nature isn't the only quality that distinguishes the iconic star from others but also his full-of-life attitude. A case in point is, even during his two-year-long battle with leukemia, the late actor's lively attitude and love for life kept everyone optimistic in the family.

Kapoor's obsession with films was never ending and so was his love. When asked in an interview about how he keeps himself relevant even after four-decade long career, the charismatic actor said that it was because of his passion towards his work.

Payal Ghosh, who has worked with Kapoor in *Patel Ki Punjabi Shaadi* says that he was one of the most humble and down to earth person she has ever seen in life. "When I was finalised for the film, the team told me not to speak too much in front of the senior actor. First day we all had introductions and on day two we were on the sets, shooting. That's when I found out that he was not the usual superstar. There was something extra — a lot of humbleness," she tells you.

Ghosh travels back in time and tells you that when he found out about the actor's love for ShahRukh Khan, he shared a lot of stories with her. "One day while we talking, I told Rishi sir that I deeply admire ShahRukh Khan and is a big fan of him. He was quick to tell me the stories related to King Khan. He told me how Gauri Khan didn't want ShahRukh to enter Bollywood and that she wanted to take him back to Delhi because she was possessive about him," she recalls.

Everyone knows how active was the legendary hero on social media and that he never held his voice back. Be it for slamming Godmen and Radhe Maa or raising his voice on the delay in Nirbhaya's case verdict. So was the hero on sets. "I remember during the shoot, Sanjay Chhel sir (director of *Patel Ki Punjabi Shaadi*) was just not in the right mood and he raised his voice slightly with Prem Chopra *ji*. Although it was not intentional but Rishi sir was quick to point it out immediately and he told Chhel sir: Sanjay you can't talk like this with him, he is a senior actor, say sorry. He respected each and everyone on the sets and I immensely appreciate this quality of him," Ghosh tells you.

Now when you are reading that, if the line 'Sanjay you can't...' doesn't echo in your mind in Rishi Kapoor's voice, then may be you are not one of the top fans.

Actor Nitin Arora recalls the last time he met Rishi Kapoor. "It was three years back at Adnan Sami's birthday. Back then he was absolutely fine. But I remember he was such a foodie and enjoy his drink. We were there the entire night. It was not a large gathering, just around 20 of us — there was Rakesh Roshan, Jeetuji (Jitendra) to name a few. The whole night he was cracking jokes, talking about food and *daru*. We laughed so much that night. He was such a bindas person and fun. He was king and a large-hearted man. There are very few people in Mumbai who would talk in Punjabi. For someone who is from Delhi to hear a conversation in Punjabi was amazing. There are very few people who talk in Punjabi in the industry. In singers we do have a Mika, Badshah and Hansraj but few actors who speak the language. It was great to have witnessed and been a part of that night," Arora tells you.

According to Arora the reason Rishi Kapoor became popular was the manner in which his first film *Bobby* was run and packaged. "My mother gives me a story that Bobby. That it was the first

film that she had seen with my late father during their courtship period. There were two things. First, the way he was launched, he was declared him king of romance. Even in the Amitabh Bachchan era of angry young man, Rishi Kapoor managed to carve a niche for himself. Second, He was such a good looking and charming man. When I met him, he was 64-65, yet so charming and good looking. He didn't belong to my era, but he was an amazing actor. His on-screen chemistry with every actress was so beautiful and fantastic to watch. Whether you watch *Damini* or *Chandni* or *Bol Radha Bol* or even *Prem Rog*, his dedication in each character was brilliant. This was so different from what other actors managed to do. Hence, he not only managed to sustain himself, he lived the life of king of romance," Arora says.

Siddharth Anand Kumar, VP Films and Television Saregama, India, recounts how he had had gone to Rishi Kapoor's Bandra bungalow. "It was a bungalow. Of course, I had seen many, coming from Delhi, but it was Mumbai and a bungalow was such a novelty. I had gone there with a producer for a project. Unfortunately, it didn't work out but I do remember how friendly he was. So little stary tantrums. Seems to be a very generous and well-brought up person. He was a straight talker. That was the impression

— PAYAL GHOSH

that I took away from that meeting. I was amazed. More so since I had grown up watching his films. It is always great to see a person whose movies one has watched. It has a different aura altogether," Anand tells you.

He says that an artiste never dies. For the fans, he is immortal. But it is extremely difficult and terrible for the family since he is much more than an actor, he is a father, a husband, a brother and a son. "It is terrible for the family. However, the memories will always be there. With greats like him he was left his stamp on the wall. His work will always be there for us. For fans we need to celebrate these people and need to be grateful that they are no longer in the grip of this terrible disease that we know so little about," Anand says.

He tells you that anybody who is able to adapt to changing times demonstrates the ability to move art and is a thinking person. "Process of art is creation of reaction. All great artists have managed to do so. It is amazing that a person is able to change from the effervescence, cute, bubbly hero to the villain in *Agneepath* or to the lovely role in *Kapoor & Sons*. Even what Rishi Kapoor did in *Love Aaj Kal*. *Mulk* is another great example. He literally gave voice to a community that is being profiled into a box. Then there is *Do Dooni Chaar* where he pulled off playing the middle-class man from Delhi remarkably. The job of an actor, writer, director or producer is to make the consumer feel something and he had that magical ability. When he smiled, you smiled. When he was angry, you were scared of him. He was able to transmit emotions to you. Speaks volumes of his ability and his art is immortal and it is a privilege for him as well. We never lose artists," Anand says.

the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE

Affordable housing to be hit

The pandemic will adversely affect the real estate sector. Some solutions that the government can look into

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Be alert to live mindfully

Consciously invoke your faculty of discriminate intelligence for due diligence, before taking any move

It's so much better to promote what you love than to bash what you hate
— Jessica Alba



While almost all the industries have been impacted because of this pandemic, the ones which have been hit harder than the others are the Airlines & Tourism, Hospitality, Automobile, and Power, says ABHISHEK KUMAR, as he studies



There are certain events which remain etched in one's memory for a lifetime, for its impact is not limited to a particular geography and neither is it restricted to a particular aspect of social living, but encompasses almost every aspect of human life. The outbreak of coronavirus which has now taken the form of a pandemic affecting more than 180 countries across the globe is one such event. Starting from a small cluster in the capital of China's Hubei province, it has now affected almost everyone in one way or the other and has brought the world to a screeching halt.

Now as the governments across the world have resorted to the only proven public health measure, that is, social distancing to contain the spread of the virus, the second thing which has most severely been impacted is the economy and its growth with public health bearing most of the brunt.

While it seems plausible on the part of the government and the policy maker to take such a stringent action, doing so has severed the flow of goods and people and disrupted the economic activities at almost every level — right from farming to mining to industries to services. And with this, the economic deceleration is spreading as fast as the coronavirus itself.

THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT

For any economic activity there has to be a supply side and a corresponding demand side and absence of either of the party stops the activity. With people staying at home, there has been a substantial dip in the supply side of the economic chain. First, because of a decrease in the labour participation on account of social distancing and lockdown, the productivity has declined as there are no workers running the factories and mills, no farmers tilling their land and no carriers to take goods from their source (factories and farms) to destination (consumers). This particular problem of lack of carriers has already resulted in wastage of many essential goods though the government is trying its best to keep the production of essential commodities and its supply chain intact.

Secondly, because of this slowdown in the economic activities the financial institutions are facing liquidity issues and a credit crunch is being felt everywhere. The banks are not looking anymore to increase their asset size and their focus has primarily shifted in keeping the balance sheet intact as many of them are still

recovering from the bad debt crisis. Also, the scars of the 2008-09 financial recession are vivid in their memories. To help in this regard and to see that there is no additional impact of coronavirus on India's lenders due to a potential slowdown, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced measures to pump more rupee liquidity into the banking system through its 'Long Term Repo Operations' and reduction of 25 basis point in its reverse repo rate. Additionally, the central bank has relaxed the asset classification norms which will help banks not to classify some of the (non-NPA) stressed borrowers as defaulters and has eased the liquidity coverage ratio for commercial banks from 100 percent to 80 percent (to be restored by April 1, 2021). All these measures will provide the much-needed liquidity and will keep the credit flowing.

While there is a clear visibility of restrictions on the supply side, the demand side too has started to contract, and this is further hampering the economy which might lead to a vicious cycle of further decrease in supply until the government intervenes and take necessary steps to keep the demand flowing. Usually, demand in any economy is driven primarily by private final consumption, private investments and government expenditure. According to the Economic Survey 2020, private final consumption contributed to around 60 percent of India's GDP. With people cutting down their consumption to their basic essential needs and foregoing their discretionary expenses, the private consumption has dampened. The private investments too have witnessed a slowdown primarily because of lower credit flow and secondly because of future uncertainty. Government expenditure, however, is expected to provide some relief and add to the GDP growth. The stimulus package of \$24 billion (₹1.7 lakh crore) in the form of *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna* to provide relief to people is likely to mitigate some impact and help the poor and daily wage earners sustain during these difficult times.

Another issue which is more relevant to the Indian economy is its huge informal sector which accounts for roughly 94 per cent of the total employment in the country and contributes about 45 per cent of the output. Further, this informal sector employs mostly contract workers or daily wage earners and migrant labourers who are from low-income households and they are the people who are the most impacted because of the lockdown.



THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) HAS COME UP WITH A REPORT AND HAS PROJECTED A GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) GROWTH OF 1.9 PER CENT FOR INDIA IN FY 2020-21. WITH THIS SUBDUED FORECAST, INDIA MIGHT WITNESS ITS WORST GROWTH RATE SINCE ITS ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION OF 1991

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has come up with a report and has projected a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 1.9 per cent for India in FY 2020-21. With this subdued forecast, India might witness its worst growth rate since its economic liberalization of 1991. Still, India is among the only two major economies expected to register a positive growth rate in FY 2020-21; the other being China, as the global growth rate in FY 2020-21 is expected to fall to negative 3 per cent.

IMPACT ON KEY SECTORS

While almost all the industries have been impacted because of this pandemic, the ones which have been hit hard are the Airlines and Tourism, Hospitality, Automobile, and Power. Aviation and Tourism is probably the worst affected sector as all the passenger traffic-inbound, outbound and domestic has been grounded during the lockdown. As per International Air Transport Association (IATA), airlines globally can lose in passenger revenue of up to \$113 billion due to this crisis. Further, the industry is already low on cash reserves, and cancellation, rescheduling and lower traffic may lead to job losses and pay cuts. According to IATA report, more than 20 lakh jobs are at risk in India's aviation space and dependent sectors because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The hospitality sector which includes hotels, restaurants and foods and beverages have also seen a substantial downfall in its footfalls. Occupancy across hotels in key cities have declined rapidly by a staggering 45 percentage points compared to last year which has never been seen before. Additionally, many restaurants which already run on a very thin margin will be forced to layoff its staffs or close its operations.

Automobile sector's slowdown is also clearly visible. With China accounting for more than 27 percent of imports of India's automotive part and closure of their factories, there has been a delay in the production and delivery of vehicles. Almost all the major manufactures witnessed a drop in its March sales which is the peak period of inventory clearance for the industry. Maruti Suzuki India's domestic passenger vehicle sales fell 47 per cent and Hyundai witnessed a drop of 40 per cent. Further, the requirement to comply with the BSIV emission norms which was to be implemented from April 1 have decreased the sales further as new BSIV vehicles were few and most of the companies are pushing the pro-

duction of new BSIV compliant vehicles to a later date.

Also, as most of the factories are closed during this lockdown and with fewer vehicles plying on the road, the consumption of electricity and petrol/diesel has come down substantially. While the electricity consumption contracted by 26.6 per cent for April 1-10 2020 over last year, consumption of petrol fell by 16.4 per cent and diesel by 24.2 per cent in March 2020 on a year-on-year basis.

The stock market too has reacted to this pandemic and BSE Sensex fell from the level of 41,000 in mid-February 2020 to 29,000 by the end of March 2020. A decrease of over 30 per cent in such a short period of time has resulted not only in the loss of investors wealth but also in their trust in the capital market.

THE WAY FORWARD

The COVID-19 became a pandemic primarily because it is novel and till date no proven cure for this disease has been found out. So, it's clear that once a cure or a vaccine, which will help people build immunity against the virus, is found, the need of social distancing will gradually phase out letting loose the neck of the global economy which it has presently gripped. Till such a cure is found, social distancing, full-scale testing and rigorous quarantine is the only solution to restrict the spread of the virus.

And while the medical practitioners are doing their best to control its spread and finding a possible cure, the government need to keep the economic activities to such a sustainable level from which it can be rebound easily once the pandemic is over. While a stimulus package was already announced in March, the extension of this lockdown for another three weeks would require another such package.

To ease the load of households and businesses struggling to make their regular payments, the central bank has advised all the lenders to provide a moratorium of three months on mortgage and other loan payment for residential and commercial borrowers. However, borrowers need to be educated of such measures so that they can benefit from it in case they are facing any liquidity issue.

Another focus point of the government should be to take care of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which may not have the adequate liquidity to survive the crisis.

Writing down our most personal, deepest thoughts and feelings is a courageous act. To enable it to flow, it is important to be non-judgmental of ourselves. You can choose to face your inner critic in the kind, resilient way that Mirabai faced the doubters around her. How the sentence is structured doesn't matter. Just let the words spill out.

The writer is an author. Her 10th book, The Blue Jade released recently



IMPERFECTIONS ARE NOT
INADEQUACIES; THEY ARE
REMINDERS THAT WE'RE
ALL IN THIS TOGETHER
— BRENE BROWN



**YOUR
WEEK
AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week your health will be at its best. You will experience harmony in your thinking and personality. You will be calm, friendly and support others. You give other people their space and are tolerant of their needs. You can create a safe and trusting environment for them and become their influence. This demonstrates a level of soft control and persuading others to your way of thinking. On the career front, long time challenges will be met. You will be focussed on what you need to do. In this process, you will regain self-confidence. On the personal front, you beam with happiness and enjoy the relationships. Your dreams have become reality and relationships will find a new meaning. Married couples will experience a stronger bond.

Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week you are filled with imagination and feel at ease on the physical level. The negativity of the past is diluting and your stamina and creativity are on high plane. You will work hard, with a lot of enthusiasm to fulfill your dreams. New hobbies and interests will draw your attention. Your common sense and practical approach will lead you to success. On the career front, work plans held up due to obstacles start opening up with fruitful results. This week you can afford to take the risk as you shall find takers for your plans. Your past investments will start showing dividends now. You are also able to do justice to your professional and personal responsibilities. Married couples will enjoy marital bliss. Couples staying separately are likely to settle their disputes amicably.

Lucky number 18
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Wednesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week you need to listen to your body with great care and compassion. Half of the problems can be sorted out with your attitude, therefore be positive. You may face health issues like back pain or low energy. Take good rest. Revisiting your spiritual rituals is on the cards. It might be helpful to give yourself the time and space to seek insight, that might prove healing. Career-wise, you seem to be disoriented and not satisfied with your current job. This is the right to switch the job. Prepare your resume, do research work to seek out the right opening and prepare yourself for the interview. You are very sensitive and emotional this week. Even a small matter could make you cry/feel low. Your mood swings, over-demanding nature could irritate your partner.

Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Friday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

Let go of all the past worries and live in the moment. Depression, isolation and insecurity — these are the three enemies that are likely to cause harm. Try to keep these three away from you. Your positive mindset will not only help in making you a successful person but also stay in great health. This week avoid red colour. On the career front, you are likely to discover a skill which was unknown to you all these while. With a new week, you are set on a new path, realising your potentials and weaknesses. Those who are looking to start their career may have to train yourself to specialise in one field. On the personal front, you tend to lose your temper at the slightest provocation and this will affect your relationships with your family and friends.

Lucky number 2
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

You will behave immaturely when it comes to your health and will soon suffer the consequences. This time you cannot afford to take pressure and anxiety. Relax and take advice from a health professional. Health is the first and the greatest wealth, therefore, take time out for yourself. Make a resolution that you will engage in some kind of physical exercise for at least 30 minutes. A good message for your career is indicated. Your partner and you have a perfect understanding of professional matters and work for the same motive. Balance and determination these are the two keys for your success. On the personal front, your critical and analytical nature is at a peak. There may conflict in your love life. Let your partner grow and have a chance to express themselves.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Mauve
Lucky day Monday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

There is a sparkling and refreshing factor about your personality that makes you distinct this week. Your courage and risk-taking ability will open up new vistas. You feel healthy and fearless. You have the enthusiasm to experience, discover and enjoy life. You believe in yourself and follow your heart. This is a time when you need to truly believe and have no room for fear. Career-wise, you will feel that there is personal growth in the profession. You feel the highest potential for your life, reaching a state of renewal and new beginnings, where each day is an adventure and each moment is lived to the fullest. Your emotional strength is the greatest tool to win all challenges in life. Support of near and dear ones are on the cards. Have blind faith in your relationship.

Lucky number 19
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Tuesday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week you are taking life easy and are not worried about anything. Be careful as your irregular diet and unhealthy eating habits could take a toll on your health. You may face health issues like weight gain, lethargy and low stamina. Don't compromise on health. Do regular exercise to be on a good track. This week work will pick-up speed. It will be important for you to keep your balance in every possible way. Seniors will have high expectations from you. Do not let this make you nervous. Your communication is your tool, use it for everyone's good. On the personal front, you are optimistic. Your networking with people is strong. You will enjoy fulfillment in relationships. With your partner's emotional support, you will feel protected.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week your health needs attention. Avoid any kind of physical and mental stress. The balance between body, mind and soul is required at this time. Some external negative forces are working against you. You may feel powerless as something comes to a crashing and sudden end, and you feel as if you are being attacked or backstabbed by someone else. On the career front, work is fine and you feel elated. New opportunities, new creative plans will be made, new projects open up in front of you. On the personal front, you may feel suffocated with no scope of self-expression in love. Those who are looking for love should have patience. This is not the right time. Those facing a rough time in married life should adopt the right attitude towards your marriage and partner.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Sunday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

You tend to think with your heart, rather than your mind. You may lack rationality but you are highly intuitive. You are nurturing and caring towards others. Women are likely to suffer hormonal, thyroid or menopause issues. In such a case, get yourself checked. Take medication before it aggravates. On the career front, your personal values system will bring you the ultimate fulfillment and happiness. An appraisal or a very lucrative offer in on the cards. Try to look for opportunities that make you feel satisfied and that are aligned with your values. You have to do what feels right to you. The week is good for your emotional happiness as well. The ultimate satisfaction of a long-term relationship is indicated.

Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22

You are not a very health-conscious person. For you, pleasures are in simple traditions and rituals. You need to listen to your body and know what you are feeding it. It is advised to take on-time action. You may get healing with some homemade remedies otherwise you could burn a big hole in the pocket. For the past few weeks, your focus was mainly on your financial security. On the career front, you will need to adapt to the existing set of beliefs that are already in place, instead of being innovative. Personally, this is the time to value the relationships and understand that every bond in life has its meaning. If required, take help from a psychotherapist or a spiritual mentor to whom you will turn for wisdom.

Lucky number 17
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Saturday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This is a good week. You have both mental and physical agility and are full of anticipation. Those suffering from an ailment, please know that you will recover very fast. Now you want to have fun with mental activities of all kinds, including learning, exploring, and researching. You are filled with fresh energy and feel like an avid learner and an excellent student. This will lead you to learn various skills. These will help you professionally as well. You could prove a smart salesperson for the company and with your skills, you have achieved some unexpected target for the company you are working with. Your appraisal is likely. The grass is green on your personal side too. Those already in a relationship, it's very possible that it will deepen and become better.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Be careful of wishful thinking or illusions in the choices you currently face. You are more of a dreamer who sees only beauty, outward attraction and excitement. Things will become worse if you continue to stay in your dreams and fantasies. Stay away from bad habits and bad company. This is the time to live in reality and away from any kind of temptations. Professionally, you are likely to take your business into a partnership where you will experience understanding, harmony and big motives between two people. The seed sown now will blossom into a tree of appreciation. On the personal front, you are rich by heart and with your pocket too. You are likely to indulge more, as you believe in quality over quantity and in enjoying a full and joyful life.

Lucky number 6
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Friday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Be alert to live mindfully

It is time to see how we can reinvent the mind to come out with its whole-some power, which, if unfolded in full, would know no limits. But before that, let us go through a case study, how important it is to address one's habit tendencies. The person under consideration was brought for counselling a couple of years back by his family, worried about his erratic behaviour. He was made aware of all his fault lines, and was also advised how to overcome them. But nothing got registered in his preconditioned mind. His unseemly conduct hit hard familial peace and harmony all these years. Let us now examine his astrological pointers. He was born when Virgo *lagna* was rising with headless *Ketu* there itself. Lord of the sign Mercury was placed adverse to Saturn. Virgo sign and its lord, if free from any malefic influence is marked with high intelligence, discriminatory abilities, and a practical sense. But when afflicted, native's conduct becomes questionable. Even though their awareness level be low, they pretend to be all-knowing, and present themselves as a perfectionist. They suffer from what we may call 'I am the only right person syndrome'. They remain under the impres-

sion that others can't understand their merit. If ever, others don't prove true to their expectations, they become overcritical, and belittle them with caustic remarks. They try to impose their will on others. Saturn's adverse aspect further grants him with a fixated one track mind. The finer coordinates of his chart too are no good. The *lagna* sub-lord Venus occupying the 9th house is opposite mischievous Neptune and also adverse to erratic *Rahu*. That makes him stuck to illusionary dream perceptions, distanced from ground realities, and not open to look beyond for a reality check. Venus occupies the *nakshatra* owned by debilitated Mars, the 8th lord identified with serious difficulties, and incidentally the 5th sub-lord. Whereas linkage of Venus with the 9th and 5th houses makes him a religious person, its opposition to Neptune made him a fanatic. He can't digest if family members ignore his religion bound advisories, when he becomes loud. For, debilitated Mars conjunct Sun and opposite Jupiter points to his inflated ego, bound by self-defined dos and don'ts, and which also makes him irritable, impulsive, rash, temperamental,



intolerant and impatient. Mind indicator Moon is posited in Sagittarius, which makes him tactless and undiplomatic. He doesn't think before he speaks and could embarrass anybody with his unpleasant and ill-timed remarks. Moon too, occupies the *nakshatra* owned by Venus, which further adds to his self-delusional tendencies. On top of that, Saturn's adverse aspect to the Sun brings in a sense of fear and insecurity. Over a period of time, he has lost his sense of civility, sanity, order and reasons and his thought process has become incoherent, calling for immediate medical intervention. So, he neither remains at peace by himself nor does he leave any scope for others. Had the person tried to purify his mind as suggested, he would have come out of his preconditioning, and his scope of vision would have expanded. It would have then dawned upon him that the world doesn't necessarily move to anybody's asking. Second, nobody could ever be born a perfect. Becoming aware thus, he would have worked upon his inter-personal relationship skill and developed a sense of accommodation. Also, he would have been alert enough to consciously invoke his faculty of discrim-

inate intelligence for due diligence, before taking any move. His personal and domestic life would have become relatively happier. He keeps talking about the need to sincerely follow religious practices in order that life, post death turns out good. What he doesn't realise that unless we learn to remain happy as of now, which sets the trends of future, life can't have a pleasant ending, on which birth trends, post death, are premised. Even otherwise, if you ever lose the sense of alert, you may have to pay a heavy price. Immediately after COVID-19 cropped up in China, Taiwan took preventive measures in January itself, and so they remained least affected. Other countries, including India, did not take the signal seriously for long. As a result, more than two hundred thousand people, majority of them in the developed world, have already met their end, and the number is mounting every day. The topic continues... The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Write to him at G-102, Bharat Nagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110 025 Tel: 91-11-49848475/9818037273 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com