



USUAL SUSPECTS

SWAPAN DASGUPTA

Democratic way of imposing lockdown

The past few days have witnessed influential — though not representative — voices arguing passionately for the lifting of the lockdown that began on March 25. From leading members of India Inc such as Rajiv Bajaj and Narayana Murthy to sundry English-language journalists who have milked dry the miserable plight of desperate migrant workers, there is a demand to put an end to the state-imposed restrictions and moving immediately to the new normal. The demand is most vociferous in the old Congress ecosystem and the insistence on moving to a post-lockdown world is laced with the conclusion that the entire exercise has failed — India has, after all, crossed China in the tally of people infected with coronavirus — and that the blame for the failure must rest squarely on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The PM is being blamed for forcing a lockdown without the necessary preparations, for not doling out more cash into the hands of the poor and vulnerable, for not getting migrant workers back to their homes earlier, for communalising the fight against Covid-19 and for not ramping up India's testing capacities earlier. One professional litigant has even approached the highest court demanding that the use of the Disaster Management Act be declared illegal and unconstitutional. There are many other complaints and they include heaping ridicule on the thali bajao and diya jalao spectacles. But the overall conclusion is obvious: Modi has failed.

As of now this accusation of failure hasn't been accompanied by a corresponding appreciation of the man who has tried to show that he is capable of conversing with celebrated non-resident economists, but that too will happen. In short, the disappointments of the 2019 general election verdict has found another expression.

The demand for lifting the lockdown is understandable.

In India, the attempt is to persuade people to act responsibly and then wave the lathi when this proves difficult. But in India there is no inclination to impose a lockdown with aid of guns

movement in the US. The ideological divide has been hazy.

What I have found interesting is that the demand of India's corporate and intellectual worthies have not been echoed by the Chief Ministers, including those who haven't lost any opportunity to pillory Modi for allegedly short-changing the States and being over-bearing with the implementation of the Disaster Management Act. As usual, Mamata Banerjee has been the most vocal but Congress Chief Ministers have also been critical, albeit with more parliamentary use of words.

Yet, it is significant that during last week's interaction of the Chief Ministers with the Prime Minister, there were no demands for the immediate lifting of the lockdown. On the contrary, most of the States seemed quite insistent that the lockdown be extended till the end of May. Of course, there are regional variations of the terms of the lockdown and the general belief is that there must be a gradual relaxation but no abrupt change of direction. The terms of the relaxation will naturally vary depending on the extent of the spread of the coronavirus. As of now, metro cities such as Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Delhi, not to mention places such as Ahmedabad and Surat, will have to be extremely careful. In West Bengal, particularly the Greater Kolkata region, there is a unique problem of containment zones multiplying but little or no attempt by the authorities to actually enforce restrictions.

What explains the reluctance of the Chief Ministers to join the chattering class in demanding an instant end to the lockdown? To put it bluntly, it is the fear that with normal life and the absence of physical distancing that normal life inevitably entails, the infection will spread at a galloping pace. As things stand, there is already concern over returning migrant workers bringing the infection with them and spreading it in villages that have been so far relatively insulated from the illness. In Odisha, a State where the containment strategies were remarkably successful, there was a setback when returning workers from West Bengal and Gujarat tested positive. Most State Governments are naturally concerned that this new challenge be handled before any form of normalcy can be contemplated. The West Bengal Government's slow response to getting back nearly 38 lakh migrant workers from different parts of India isn't necessarily born of indifference but a real fear of what impact the influx may have on the public health system which is already in a shambles.

Finally, what is also unsaid but quietly understood, is the challenge posed by the violation of lockdown and social distancing norms by minority communities in some parts of India, particularly Maharashtra, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar. Whether this is linked to the forthcoming festival or is an aspect of some assertiveness is a matter of debate.

However, there is little or no doubt that this unwillingness to follow norms has resulted in the infection spreading and, worse, social tensions in communities. Last week, for example, the rapid spread of the coronavirus in a minority dominated Mohalla in Chandenagore, West Bengal, led to tensions and culminated in vicious communal violence in the neighbouring town of Telinipara. The violence was ignored by the mainstream news media and internet connection in Hooghly district was suspended. But the suppression of news has turned out to be woefully counter-productive. The bush telegraph has taken over and coloured and distorted versions of what happened in Telinipara has further widened the communal divide.

The tendency to compare India with China is facile. In India, the attempt is to persuade people to act responsibly and then wave the lathi when this proves difficult. But in India there is no inclination to impose a lockdown with the aid of guns. Because we are a democracy, our task is all the more challenging. Someone will be held accountable for all shortcomings and this doesn't include those who feign righteous indignation in the media.

32 migrants on way home die on roads

In UP's Auraiya & Unnao, 27 were killed; while 5 others were killed in MP's Sagar



Police officials carry a body of a migrant who was killed after a trailer truck carrying labourers collided with a van at Mihauli in Auraiya district in wee hours of Saturday

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PNS ■ LUCKNOW

At least 32 migrant workers were killed in three separate road accidents on Saturday even as reports of these hapless

labourers dying of hunger, snakebites, and police beating poured in from different parts of the country.

In two separate incidents in UP — first in Auraiya and sec-

ond in Unnao — 27 persons were killed while five others were killed in Sagar in Madhya Pradesh. At the same time, a migrant worker from Ganjam district in Odisha was beaten to

Bold reforms: 75% FDI in Def, pvt investment in coal

Privatisation of 6 more airports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday opened up the coal sector for private investment and allowed 74 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in defence sector through automatic route from the present 49 per cent.

The Centre also announced privatisation of six more airports and opening up of more air space as part of the Government's push to revive the economy in the wake of coronavirus crisis. The Government also unveiled several other structural reforms and policy simplifications.

In her fourth tranche of the economic package, she said commercial mining will be done on revenue sharing mechanism instead of the regime of fixed rupee/tonne. She said the difference between captive and non-captive mines will be



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addresses the fourth part of her Press conference in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

done away with and a ₹50,000-crore plan for evacuation of the mined fuel will be put in place.

Nearly 50 coal blocks will be offered for bidding, she said. This is being done to reduce import of substitutable coal and increase self-reliance in coal production. Also, the Government will invest ₹50,000 crore for building evacuation infrastructure. Coal gasification and liquefaction will be incentivised through

rebate in revenue sharing, she said adding coal bed methane (CBM) production would also be encouraged.

"Many sectors need policy simplification, to make it simpler for people to understand what sector can give, participate in activities and bring transparency. Once we decongest sectors, we can boost the sector, for growth and jobs," Sitharaman said.

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10% rise in 3 days in corona cases

Total over 90K, 2,871 deaths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day before the end of third phase of nationwide lockdown, with 4,759 new cases reported by the States on Saturday, the number of coronavirus cases in India rose by over 10 per cent over the past three days to reach 90,615 with 2,871 deaths so far. There is a massive surge of coronavirus cases in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

With 1,057 cases, Gujarat saw its biggest single day spike, followed by Maharashtra with 1,606 cases in the last 24 hours. Delhi is fourth in the list with 433 new cases and a total of 9,333 cases and 129 deaths. Madhya Pradesh

reported 195 new cases taking its total to 4,790 with 239 deaths.

At the rate of compounded daily growth in the past 12 days, the number of cases could cross 1,000,000 by next Tuesday.

Gujarat witnessed a record number of 1,057 cases in a single day taking the total number to 10,989 cases. Total 20 deaths reported in the last 24 hours. Ahmedabad reported 973 new cases and 14 deaths in the 24 hours, taking the total tally to 8,144 cases followed by Surat with 34 new cases taking the total number to 1,049 cases. With 19 new cases, Vadodra reported 639 cases. Gandhi Nagar reported 163 cases so far while Bhavnagar reported 107 cases. In Ahmedabad, at least 700 "super spreaders" were found coronavirus positive in

Trump donates ventilators to friend India, PM thanks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking for a strong India-US Friendship, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday thanked US President Donald Trump for his decision to donate ventilators to "friend" India.

"I am proud to announce that the United States will donate ventilators to our friends in India," Trump tweet-

ed on Friday.

"Thank you @POTUS @realDonaldTrump. This pandemic is being fought collectively by all of us. In such times, it's always important for nations to work together and do as much as possible to make our world healthier and free from Covid-19. More power to India-US friendship," Modi tweeted.

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a massive screening of vegetable sellers and shopkeepers conducted in a week.

Maharashtra has reported 1,606 coronavirus cases in 24 hours, taking the total past the 30,706-mark, adding 67 people who died because of the disease in a day. Mumbai's aggregate reached 18,555, with 884 positive cases being reported on Saturday.

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Covid-19			
TOTAL CASES: 90,615			
DEATHS: 2,871			
RECOVERED: 34,220			
STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	30,706	1,135	7,088
Gujarat	10,989	625	4,308
Tamil Nadu	10,585	74	3,538
Delhi	9,333	129	3,926
Rajasthan	4,960	126	2,944
Madhya Pradesh	4,595	239	2,283
Uttar Pradesh	4,258	104	2,441
West Bengal	2,576	232	892
Andhra Pradesh	2,355	49	1,353
Punjab	1,946	32	1,257

death by police in Surat for allegedly violating social distancing norms. The deceased has been identified as Satya Swain.

In the first road accident in Uttar Pradesh, 25 migrants were killed and 36 others injured when a trailer rammed into a stationary DCM truck in the Auraiya-Kanpur Dehat stretch of National Highway 2 in Auraiya early on Saturday morning. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered the suspension of two station house officers (SHOs) of Auraiya and sought clarifications from the district police chiefs of Mathura and Agra and two senior supervisory officers.

The CM announced ₹2 lakh each as compensation to the families of the deceased and ₹50,000 to the injured. He also directed the Divisional Commissioner and IG Kanpur to visit the site and submit a

detailed report on the cause of the accident.

As per reports, a trailer laden with limestone and ferrying migrant workers rammed into a stationary mini-truck outside a dhaba at Chiruhali Miholi village in Sadar police station area around 3.30 am on Saturday. Both vehicles ferry-

ing around 70 workers over-

turned and slipped into a road-

side ditch.

On being informed, the police along with locals extricated the victims and rushed them to Auraiya district hospital, where 25 were pronounced dead upon arrival.

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Snakebite in quarantine centres, one dies in Gonda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

They quarantined themselves against coronavirus but had not accounted for deadly snakes. Two persons, one each from Gonda in Uttar Pradesh and Balangir in Odisha were bitten by snakes at the quarantine centres. While the victim in Gonda succumbed to the snakebite, the other one at Balangir has survived and is out of danger.

The incident at Gonda occurred at 11 pm on Thursday when a boy Mahendra Kumar (16) was bitten by a snake on his hand at a quarantine centre located at a middle school.

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PM Cares Fund gets only ₹9K cr donation

J GOPIKRISHNAN ■ NEW DELHI

After 50 days of its inception, the PM Cares Fund created for accepting donations for the Covid-19 relief and rehabilitations has received below ₹9,000 crore.

The special fund was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 28 and money started pouring in the initial week. By the second week of April 3, around ₹6,500 crore were received as donations. According to highly placed officials, the initial enthusiasm has fizzled out and now the donation is limited to an average ₹40 crore per day in the account opened in SBI.

According to officials who monitor the PM Cares Fund, the total donations received crossed ₹8,800 crore by Friday (May 15). Citing the "thrifty nature" of the Indians, they point out that Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) got below ₹2,200 crore for the past five years till 2019 March.

The overall corpus in PMNRF, which was set up in 1948, is currently below ₹4,000 crore. This might have been the reason for Prime Minister Modi to create a separate fund to tackle corona crisis.

The Centre recently allot-

ted ₹3,100 crore from the PM Cares Fund for purchasing ventilators, welfare of migrant labourers and vaccine research.

"Out of ₹3,100 crore, a sum of approximately ₹2,000 crore will be earmarked for the purchase of ventilators, ₹1,000 crore will be used for care of migrant labourers and ₹100 crores will be given to support vaccine development," PMO said in a statement on May 13, a day after Modi announced the ₹20 lakh crore package for self reliant India.

Film star Akshay Kumar was one of the first to donate ₹25 crore soon after Modi announced the new Fund on March 28. Many corporates, including Ratan Tata, Mukesh Ambani, Azim Premji, Anil Agarwal announce sizeable donation to the Fund. It is learned that many corporates made provisions for separate fund for their research and production related to the health care activities in relation to Covid-19 apart from making donation to PM Cares Fund.

The PM Cares fund triggered a big controversy with Opposition parties like Congress and Left questioning the need for it and seeking transparency in its operation.

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CAPSULE

HRD POSTPONES EXAMS' SCHEDULE ANNOUNCEMENT

New Delhi: The HRD Ministry on Saturday postponed announcement of the exam schedule for pending Class X, XII board exams, saying the CBSE is still considering certain technical aspects before finalising the datesheet.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi interacts with migrant labourers who were walking on the Sukhdev Vihar flyover in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

‘Acting was never a plan’

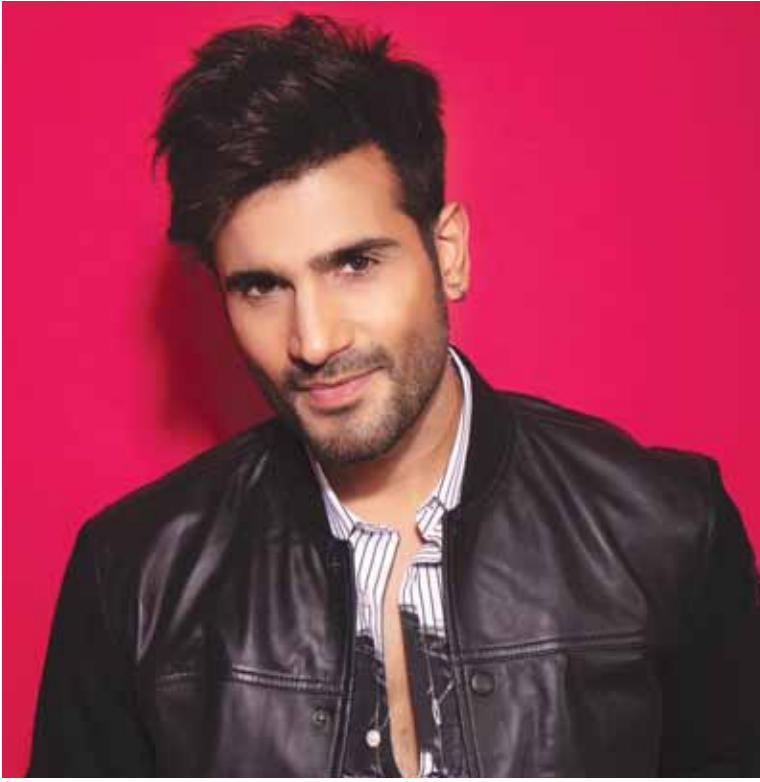
KARAN TACKER who was last seen in Ek Hazaaron Mein Meri Behna Hai makes a comeback with Special OPS on Hotstar Specials. He speaks with **MUSBA HASHMI** about what attracted him to play Farooq Ali and how a major financial crisis in 2008 made him take up acting

■ What attracted you to play Farooq Ali in Hotstar Special's Special OPS?

It is a combination of all — the script, the character and ofcourse the director, Neeraj Pandey. The team gave me the narration before my second round of auditions with them and since I was hooked upon the character. The character that Farooq is and the journey that it has I was instantly drawn towards it. Also, Neeraj sir has written and directed it, so it was an easy choice. I didn't have to think about it twice. Infact, I was feeling fortunate enough to be sitting in his office and discussing the project forward. **■ Since you were making a comeback with this web series, was there extra pressure on you to choose the right project?**

The pressure was not in choosing the project. It was when I stopped doing daily soaps, that's when I took the real pressure and realised that okay I am at the peak of my TV career at the moment and I have to take a step back. That's when the pressure was. You know that you are currently working and offers are flooding in then there's money and to leave all that behind and taking the risk to make the next big step was a real pressure. I never thought that I have to pick a certain kind of project because I have left TV. The reason why I stopped doing daily soaps was because I wanted to work on better content and with better makers. It is very difficult for a TV actor to break into Bollywood scenario where you are directed by famous directors. And it is difficult to make people forget that you are from TV because in our industry there is a major stigma related to talent from TV. It was not as if I was not getting projects but I was on a lookout for what I wanted.

■ What took you so long to venture out



into the digital space?

I ventured into this very early. I hosted a web series called *Remix* for Amazon Prime. It won multiple international awards for Best Fiction Digital Show. But like I said, with the kind of makers that I wanted to work with and the kind of stories that I wanted to tell, take took a while to crack. Because your first project paves the way for the rest of the career. This is the hope that I have. So I was constantly on a lookout to get the right script where I could showcase

my craft. And this project allowed me that. There's so much to play with the character.

■ Was acting always on cards?

Not really. I was a business student. I helped my father in his business all through my childhood. Acting didn't naturally come to me but it happened by the way. But the fact of the matter is when it happened, I fell in love with it. And I knew that this is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

■ How did the transition happen?

It happened ironically. It was not at all planned. It was in around 2008 when the world was hit by recession and we suffered a huge financial loss. To overcome that, I did whatever was in my stride, to uplift my family. It was a tough time. I tried my hands at different things, I even applied at an airline and got through. That time, street casting was on a high and I was always fascinated by it. If I had never suffered that financial crisis back then, I would never thought that I would become an actor.

■ One good and bad thing about the industry.

There are so many good things. It is a craft that I love and that's why I never feel that I am working. I always enjoy doing it. One thing that is tough to deal with is the general uncertainty of your career. After every project, you are holding up a resume for the next job. This requires a great emotional balance to make it to the next project.

A funny thing that I would like to add here is when the *Special OPS* teaser was launched, I was receiving lot of messages from people that how they love it and ironically at the same time I was waiting to audition for my next job. This is another good thing about the industry that even while you are celebrating something, it keeps you grounded by putting a question mark on your next project.

■ What is keeping you busy during this quarantine period?

I am a morning person and exercise is the first thing that I do. For me working out is important so I sweat it out for one hour and have breakfast. Rest of the time passes by in doing *ghar ke kaam, jhaadu karna aur pocha marna*. I go for walks in the evening and I think everyone is following similar routine.

Plan Your Stay At Home Week



Disney India brings in added entertainment, happiness and joy in lives of kids and their families; introducing them to new stories in addition to their existing favourites across all the channels.

In keeping with the current scenario, where kids are looking for a friend who engages and interacts with them in a manner that they understand, Disney Channel is launching a campaign — #Homebuddy with a thought that they can spend plenty of time with their favourite characters. And Hungama, in line with the channel philosophy, will encourage kids to have lots of fun with #Gharpe machao as they stay safe at home.

The kids' channels will entertain them with a range of series filled with adventure, comedy and take them for a fun-filled ride. The network recently launched the *Adventures of Mira, Royal Detective* which has been loved by kids and families across. The summer bonanza across Disney Channel and Hungama TV includes local and home-grown series like *Bapu*, a pure and positive story of a wise old leader from Bharat Nagar who is sure to win the hearts of kids and families along with an all-animal

story of a lion and his joyful circus troupe friends in Guddu. The new offerings will also have a story of a soft toy — *Gadget Guru Ganesha*, who with his innovative gadgets will charm his way into the lives of young audiences across the country.

The specially curated programming also brings to life — *The Hagemaru Show* which narrates the tale of the mischievous Hagemaru and his high spirited parents as they find ground breaking & hilarious methods to save money. Along with the new shows, kids can join in the escapades of Ankush and his best friend — Bajrangi in fresh episodes of *Selfie with Bajrangi* and also take a joyride with their favourite — *Doreamon* in a whole new season and a movie festival. There will also be new episodes of *Chacha Chaudhary* and *Miraculous*.

After receiving a phenomenal response on comedy movies like *Letters to Juliet*, *American Pie* and many others Lionsgate Play is keen on adding new assets to the comedy bucket. Globally known for critically and commercially acclaimed movies, Lionsgate Play, the latest streaming service from Lionsgate, hosted the digital premier of Amanda Crew starrer, sex comedy movie titled *Sex Drive* in India on May 15, 2020 across there partnered telecom platforms — Vodafone Play, Airtel Xstream, Idea Movies and TV. *Sex Drive* is a 2008 American road sex comedy film about a high school graduate who goes on a road trip to meet a girl who he has only been chatting with online. It is based on the young adult novel All the Way by American author Andy Behrens. The film is directed by Sean Anders, and stars Josh Zuckerman, Amanda Crew, Clark Duke, Seth Green, and James Marsden.

ICYTALES

BLUEBERRY ICE CREAM

Ingredients

Vanilla Ice Cream: 50 ml,
Blueberry Crush: 7 gram
Blueberry Fruit Filling: 10 gram

Method:

■ Mix all ingredients together and keep in refrigerator for four-five hours and when well set, scoop out and serve well garnished.



GULKAND ICE CREAM

Ingredients:

Vanilla Ice Cream: 55 ml
Gulkand: 15 gram
Roohafza: 5 ml.

Method:

■ Mix all ingredients together and keep in refrigerator for 5-6 hours and when well set, scoop out and serve well garnished.

By Chef Arvind, The Ashok, New Delhi



TELLYTALE

‘I LEARNT TO BE PATIENT’



Staying at home has been a great learning lesson for some people. Sony SAB's artist Aasiya Kazi who plays Sharda in *Tenali Rama* says: "This period of staying at home has taught me to be patient. I never thought our lives would come to a standstill and we would be restricted to staying indoors. Having said that, this break has helped me reboot my mind and has given me a great opportunity to spend time with my family. This is also a lesson for us that how we take our freedom and the well-being of our nature for granted. This phase has enabled me to reflect upon how we need to take care of our Mother Nature going forward. I also eagerly look forward to going back to shoot for *Tenali Rama* and meet my co-stars and friends."

MANISHA TURNS ARTIST

Manisha Rawat who is essaying the role of Maa Saraswati in the show *Jag Jaanani Maa Vaishno Devi — Kahani Mata Rani Ki* decided to explore her painting skills during this lockdown. Turns out this immensely talented actor is an amazing artist too. She



believes in trying times like this adding colour to your life might just brighten up your day.

When spoken to the multi-talented actor about her painting skills she said: "Painting has been my hobby ever since I was a kid. But now, due to hectic shoot schedules I don't really get the time to paint regularly. I used to paint only during special occasions to present a gift to my close and loved ones in order to make them feel special with a gift that has a personal touch to it. Although on a brighter side, this lockdown has helped relive my childhood days and I have revisited my love for painting."

Manisha further added: "Painting makes me feel calm and brings in a lot of positivity in me. It helps me be in a different world. I would suggest everyone to do something that they always wanted to do and couldn't because of time constraints. This is a real good opportunity to explore your rusty childhood skills and hobbies and work on it; not only will that you remain positive during this phase, it will also make you happy."

COVID-19 has brought out the talents of many artists and hopefully Manisha Rawat gives more surprises to us and explores her inner talent and shares it with her fans

DILAWAR RANA IS BACK

Successful, in control, adored by women and looked up to by peers... the stereotypical man knows no fear. But what



happens when the situation involves a haunted house and an even spookier childhood memory attached to it? *Tab shaayad Mard ko dard nahi hoga par mard ko darr toh zaroor lagega*.

After *Official Chukygiri* and *Official CEQgiri*, Dilawar Rana aka D-Sir essayed by the digital sensation Sumeet Vyas is back in An Arré Original and MX Exclusive *Official Bhootiyaagiri* in association with Biryani By Kilo and Adda52. In its third edition, this dramedy traces the out-of-the-ordinary life of Dilawar Rana who is offered a deal to stay out of jail, but a condition is thrust upon him: he must run a dodgy hotel owned by his family and make it profitable. The catch? The hotel is haunted and Dilawar must go beyond mere mortals and emerge triumphant when pitted against a bhoot!

The series also features Eisha Chopra, Pranay Manchanda, Mohan Kapoor, Sujata Segal, Udita Bhalla, Naveen Prabhakar, Ajay Kapoor and is directed by Vishwajoy Mukherjee.

Talking about this season and playing Dilawar Rana, Sumeet Vyas said: "I've always enjoyed working with Arré on the *Official Chukygiri* and *CEQgiri* series. I believe this medium allows you to tell different stories and build unique characters

that allows us as actors to innovate and try new things. Dilawar Rana as a character has evolved with every season of this popular franchise. And this time - his sharp business acumen will put him through his greatest challenge yet, getting him to face the ghosts of his past — literally."

RATI PANDEY CREATES MAGICS

Petite and beautiful Rati Pandey is known to create magic on-screen. With a plethora of uniquely diverse yet powerful



roles under her belt, Rati has come a long way. From a bubbly, outspoken and vivacious college girl to a strict, disciplined and hardworking lady, she has given the audiences a taste of her versatility and is now recognised as one of the most talented actors in telly town.

Currently essaying the role of Goddess Parvati in Dangal TV's *Devi Adi Parashakti*, Rati has yet again charmed the audience by displaying her varied and exemplary acting skills. However, when she bagged the role of the Goddess, she was apprehensive about essaying the role, as Rati has always had a tomboy personality.

Speaking on this Rati says: "I have always wanted to try out different characters and looks. This is my first attempt in a mythological character and I was extremely nervous about it as I have always behaved like a tomboy in my real life. The character that I am portraying requires me to speak in pure Hindi which was a difficult task for me. This role was particularly challenging for me as I had to portray different roles such as Kaali Maa, Goddess Durga and at times Goddess Parvati. When I told my mom about my role, she too was apprehensive and asked me if I would be able to do justice to the role, because of my off-screen persona. However, while playing the character I got to learn a lot and gained immense knowledge. The ability to essay various role within the same show made me say yes to Devi. And I am glad for this decision of mine."

Imagination takes flight

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with **SHINY DOSHI** and **ANKIT ARORA** about how they came on board for Dangal TV's *Alif Laila*, the challenges that come with the role and what makes these folklores relevant even today

Flying carpets, magic lamps, fairies, kings and what not — who doesn't miss the gripping tales of 1001 Arabian Nights brimmed with morals and values. To give you a taste of the tales again, Dangal TV has brought *Alif Laila* on TV. With Shiny Doshi and Ankit Arora paired as the leads, the show makes for a must watch.

Doshi who plays Seher tells you that it is pure destiny that got her on board the project. "I was initially called to audition for another show on Dangal TV, but ended up bagging the lead in *Alif Laila*. I have done daily soaps and mythology-based shows, but this was something that excited me. Apart from playing Seher, every time I get into another story with the king, there are new characters that come in. This helps me try and explore different roles and characters bringing in the element of fun. In the first story I was playing Vargina, while in the second story I was playing Noor, and so on. This helps me to explore myself better. Every day, I get to learn something new on set," she says.

Doshi didn't have to put in too much of efforts for the role, however maintaining her weight was a challenges. "Playing the role wasn't that difficult. However, this is my first show wherein I am supposed to speak a lot of urdu words with proper pronunciation. While I am still learning to excel in it considering some words are too difficult to pronounce, my creative team on the set helps me with my diction. The challenge for me was to maintain my weight. The character's requirements are such that, I cannot afford to gain weight and therefore I did go on a diet to maintain my look," she tells you.

For actors, often their on-screen team becomes a offscreen family and so is the case with Doshi, who feels fortunate to work with such a loving team. "The environment on the sets is nice and comfortable. I am glad to be working with a loving and warm team. Everyone on the



Stills from Alif Laila

set is like a family. Every time when we step into a new story, we get the opportunity to work with different actors. Off screen we are a small *Alif Laila* family," she says.

She adds that she have grown up watching the show and that it is important for today's generation to be in sync with these classics. "*Alif Laila* has always been close to my heart. I feel, today's generation needs to watch such classic tales. Keeping the current generation in mind, we have tailor made our show with variations and twists. We want the youth to know about the classic old shows and enjoy

them," Doshi says.

Arora who plays Saharzaad says that there was no reason to turn down the project. And that he is getting to play a protagonist after a long time.

"I was at that stage of my career where after my first role which was 12 years ago, I played only negative characters.

I wanted to do something different and that is when I was offered *Alif Laila*. I had multiple reasons to accept the role. It is a versatile show and the fact that I was offered the lead positive character, there was no chance I would

deny it. I have grown up watching the show and therefore I was elated to be a part of it. Secondly, when you play numerous negative characters, you tend to get typecast. With this role, I wanted to break the monotony and took it as a challenge. Also, the fact that I have worked with Nikhil Sinha and his team in the past and that we share a great bond, I was confident about this role," he tells you.

He agrees with Doshi and is quick to point out that the warm atmosphere on the sets is what makes the experience all the more enriching. "We are like family. The warm loving atmosphere on the set not just with my co-actors but with the entire team is what makes its beautiful.

We share a good rapport. We sit together to rehearse the lines which helps us to deliver dialogues better on screen. Since we end up spending more than 12 hours a day on the set, it has become a second home," Arora says.

He tells you that since the show demands different characters, it becomes quite challenging. "The television industry is a different ball-game when you compare it with movies or theatre. The pace in doing a television show is very swift. It is even faster in a daily soap.

There are days when you get the script on the same day of shoot. So you have to think and improvise it on the spot. You have to be prepared for any and all kinds of situations. For instance, you could be shooting scene five of the 45th episode and after the break, you end up shooting for scene nine of the 48th episode.

In *Alif Laila*, it is quite challenging because I play different roles. We try our best to do rehearsals or have a conversation with the directors, producers, actors and creative team so that we are prepared and have a flow in mind which helps us to portray a particular character effectively," Arora, who is missing work during the lockdown, tells you.

Haryana opens border with Delhi for essential services

PARVESH SHARMA ■
GURUGRAM

Almost 15 days after sealing the border with the national capital, the Haryana Government has opened all borders with Delhi for essential services and people with e-passes on Friday to travel between Delhi and Haryana. This comes after the direction of Delhi High Court.

The sources claimed that the Haryana Government assured that those involved in essential services including doctors, nurses, Police Personnel, officials of courts and municipal bodies will be allowed between Delhi and Haryana on producing e-passes.

The Khattar-led Government also said that the movement of trucks carrying essential and non-essential goods between Delhi and Haryana and other neighbouring states shall also be allowed.

Amit Khatri, district magistrate of Gurugram said that he has been following a court order and accordingly given direction to law enforcement agencies for the same. "A proper arrangement has already been made at the border. A team of health department officials has been conducting a thermal screening of anyone entering Gurugram," Khatri said.

The Delhi-Gurugram border was sealed by the Haryana



police on May 1 and even doctors were not exempted. The Haryana Government imposed restrictions after spikes in the cases of Covid-19. Some of the green districts like Jhajjar came in the red zone. Sonapat, Faridabad and Gurugram also witnessed a steep surge in corona cases.

After the relaxation, vehicles were seen piling on the roads and crossing one by one after showing valid identity cards or permission passes at the barricades of Delhi-Gurugram expressway at Sirhaul toll plaza and other border areas.

Haryana police deployed at the borders have opened one lane from Delhi to Gurugram side and are thoroughly check-

ing commuters before allowing them to enter Gurugram.

The high court direction has given huge relief to police personnel, employees of Delhi Government, doctors, nurses, paramedics, vegetable and fruit vendors and other persons employed with essential services in Delhi.

In Gurugram, a number of vegetable sellers got infected after having visited Delhi's Azadpur vegetables and fruits wholesale market.

Apart from this, the Gurugram district administration has been using Gurugram Metropolitan City Bus LTD (GMCBL) buses to give safe passage to foreign returnees from Delhi's IGI airport to dedicated quarantine

centres in Gurugram.

"We have transported passengers arrived from Dubai, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh and Riyadh to IGI airport Delhi and these busses are being used to transport them to quarantine centres. The arriving passengers will have to be under quarantine for 21 days in dedicated centres before being discharged," said V.S. Kundu, the CEO of Gurugram metropolitan development authority (GMDA).

Also, 14 more Covid-19 cases have been detected in different areas of the Gurugram district on Saturday, taking the tally to 193. Of this, 89 are active cases and 104 have been cured and discharged from hospitals.

Containment zones increases to 35 in G'gram

PARVESH SHARMA ■
GURUGRAM

The district administration Gurugram increased the number of containment zones to 35 in two blocks (Gurugram-Sohna) of the city on Friday. The list has been prepared on the basis of Covid-19 cases received from the area.

A number of 34 zones fall under the Gurugram block which includes Jhadsa village Sector-39, Lane number one, lane number seven, lane number 6B and Yadav Medicos, Tyagiwada, Meghdoot apartment of Sector 10A, Om Nagar, Prem Nagar, Lotus Hospital Sector 12, village Sarhaul, Acharyapuri, Rajiv Nagar West, huge Mega Mart in Dundaheera village, the lane with the community centre, Aggarwal Sweets street and the police sta-

tion road, Three blocks of RD City Society - A, B, C, Chandan Vihar, Sai Kunj, Shankar Vihar, Ashok Vihar, Chhoturam Chowk, Nandi Dham, Dev Jewellery Shop have been placed in the containment zone.

Likewise, Godrej Ferrantier Society's towers, in Islampur village, Paramavati Gali, Shani Mandir and Mata Wali Gali and Yadram Gali, Gali No 4 of Kadipur Enclave, Gali No 23 of Surat Nagar Phase 2, Vegetable Market on Khandas Road Area, street number 2 of Shakti Nagar, street number 3 of Ashok Garden, Anand Vihar street number 2, Lal Nursing Home and Kharbanda Hospital, Flying Bird School, the area with RK Surgical at Ramlila Ground, street number 2 of Krishna Nagar, street number 7 of Jyoti Park and street number 9 of Baldev Nagar

Gali No 14, Krishna Colony Gali No 9 in the containment zone.

Similarly, L Block of DLF Phase 2, Chhoti Mata Mandir, Dr Rohila Clinic, Sunaro's Temple, Dr Azad Clinic, Asthal Temple and Devi's Anganwadi, Kamlesh Anganwadi, Basai Enclave Part One, Old Railway Gate and Lagas area with Bus Stand of Basai village, Block F with Santra Devi School, Gali Block D with Santosh AWC, Nat Colony, ITI Colony and Raipur Village of Sohna Block have been exempted from containment. Similarly, ward number 11 and ward number 14 of Pataudi have also been exempted from containment.

Devi Lal Colony Gali No. 9, Wala Area with Shree Shyam Public School in Khandas, Hermitage Housing Society GH Plot No. 2 in DLF Phase 3, Om Prakash Ki Gali in

Nathupur Village, Kherki Daula Village Kherki Daula Dhani, old age home in Bajgheda village, Hanuman temple street in Baliawas village, Temple street in Jamalpur, Chappar street and Hohani ki Dhani, Sheetla call Street number Ni 6, Street No. 7, lane number 8 and block D have been added in the containment zone.

Meanwhile, Ghehot Vihar, Javed Colony, Pahar Colony, Nat Colony, ITI Colony and Raipur Village of Sohna Block have been exempted from containment. Similarly, ward number 11 and ward number 14 of Pataudi have also been exempted from containment.

Sohna's 1 zone including Shikvund, Bhagatwara and Thakurwara have been kept under the containment zone. The areas along with them like village Lakhwas, Baluda,

Snake Nagli, Sohna Dhani Mohammadpur Gurjar and Pahari Area have been kept in the buffer zone.

Khatri, deputy commissioner, Gurugram, in a statement said that the new containment zones will be sealed by the Gurugram police which restricting the entry and exit points to the areas with barricades.

"As per the direction of the district magistrate, SDM of the blocks are in charge of these zones and duty magistrate also appointed to look after violations followed by necessary legal action. Houses, parks and public places will be also sanitized under the containment zones. The status of the containment zones will be reviewed after five days," said Dr Jaswant Singh Punia, chief medical officer (CMO), Gurugram.

15 inmates, staffer test +ve at Rohini jail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After a man lodged in National Capital Rohini jail was tested positive for Covid-19, the Delhi Prison authorities conducted coronavirus test of 19 inmates who shared barrack with that prisoner. Prison authorities said that out of 19, 15 inmates tested positive for the noval coronavirus.

According to Sandeep Goel, the Director General, prisons, the officials had conducted Covid-19 testing for 19 inmates of Rohini jail who were sharing barrack with one inmate Kuldeep who was tested positive in Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) hospital ear-

lier where he had gone for some other ailment.

"Their results have come and fifteen out of these 19 inmates have tested positive. Five staff had also been put to test out of which, one head warder also tested positive and rest are negative," said the DG.

"So far, all these persons, including those tested positive, are asymptomatic. The inmates who have tested positive have been separated from others. They have been kept in isolation quarantine barrack," said the DG.

"The head warder has been sent for the home quarantine. Some of other staff have also been sent to home quarantine. Regular medical screening of

all the inmates is already being done and it will continue. The sanitisation process is also being done and all necessary action as per medical protocol is being taken," the DG said.

Earlier, a 28-year-old inmate of Rohini jail had tested positive for the disease.

The prisoner had some intestinal problem and was admitted to Deen Dayal Upadhyay hospital on Sunday. His intestine surgery was conducted on Sunday. On Monday, doctors took the samples for Covid-19 and the result came positive on Wednesday.

He didn't have any coronavirus symptoms. That was the first positive case of coronavirus in a Delhi Prison.

Police liaise with BYJU'S to cater educational needs of their wards

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of Covid-19 outbreak, the Delhi Police has liaised with "BYJU'S - The Online Learning Application", to cater to the educational needs of the wards of its police personnel. Police said that more than 40,000 children of Delhi Police officials and personnel have benefitted from it.

According to Anil Mittal, the Additional Public Relation Officer (APRO), Delhi Police, in the prevailing circumstances the police personnel are somewhere unable to give due attention to their families, especially academic needs of their children and for Delhi Police the welfare of police personnel and their wards has always been a priority.

"Since online education is the sole alternative in prevailing state of affairs, Delhi Police has liaised with "BYJU'S - The Learning Application", which is



a renowned name in the field of online education, to cater to the educational needs of the wards of police personnel," said the APRO.

"The BYJU'S learning App has agreed to provide online access of its course material, video lectures & animation driven study services to all children of Delhi Police personnel studying in class 1st to 12th standard," said APRO.

"The process of registration is very simple. The individual just has to click on the link given below and a form will open. Thereafter, need to fill

the mandatory information like name, PIS number, Contact details, posting, Rank, Name of child, Class for which access is required, Board, mobile number to be registered, E-mail Id for joining the App and submit it," the APRO said.

"After completing the information within 1-2 days, online free access to the BYJU'S application will be provided on the registered mobile number. The online facility will benefit the wards of police personnel and stand them in good stead academically," APRO added.

Two more pvt hospitals now Covid dedicated

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Government on Saturday declared two more private hospitals in the city as Covid-19 dedicated, offering treatment on payment basis.

The Delhi Health Department in an order issued on Saturday said Batra Hospital and Research Centre, Tughlaqabad Industrial area; and Cygnus Orthocare Hospital, Safdarjung Enclave have been declared as Covid hospitals for admitting confirmed or suspected cases of Covid-19 on payment basis.

While Batra Hospital will be offering 50 isolation beds and is partially converted as Covid hospital; Cygnus Orthocare Hospital has been fully made Covid-dedicated offering 40 isolation beds.

The Health Department in the order said the hospitals are being converted "in view of shortage of isolation beds in private hospitals".

The order directed the

Medical Superintendent of these two Hospitals to make isolation beds facility for Covid-19 functional at their respective hospitals before May 18.

On April 30, the Delhi government made two hospitals — Maha Durga Charitable Trust Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram City Hospital - as Covid dedicated facilities offering paid services.

While Sir Ganga Ram City Hospital, with 120 isolation beds is made fully Covid dedicated, Maha Durga Charitable Trust Hospital, with 100 beds will be partially involved in the services.

"As desired by the Minister (Health), in view of shortage of isolation beds in private hospitals, following private hospitals are also declared as Covid Hospital for admitting confirmed, suspected cases of Covid on payment basis," the order signed by the Health Secretary said. **IANS**

Temporary shelter at Cong office to accommodate migrant workers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress has arranged a 50-bedded temporary shelter to accommodate migrant workers at the party office here. The party has also arranged various facilities like providing three times meals, clean and hygienic accommodation, face masks and sanitisers etc for them.

Delhi Congress president Chaudhary Anil Kumar said that workers are accommodated at party office by adhering to the lockdown guidelines like social distancing, maintaining cleanliness and hygiene etc.

Kumar visited the various entry and exit points of Delhi, where the party deployed Delhi border relief team of Congress Corona warriors to help and assist the thousands of migrant workers who are trudging back to their respective home States through



Delhi due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown across the country.

"The Congress' credo has always been service to the people, and during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown too, Congress rose above politics to serve the poor people, who have been the worst-affected by the lockdown as they are hun-

gry, without jobs and no other source of livelihood," he said.

Kumar said that the migrant workers have played a decisive role in the progress and development of the country, particularly Delhi and the party could not have looked dispassionately without doing anything when they were going through trying times.

Toll in city jumps to 129

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus death toll in Delhi rose to 129 on Saturday with fresh six deaths in past 24 hours, the Delhi Government said in its health bulletin. A total of 438 new cases have been reported during the same period taking the national capital's Covid -19 tally to 9,333.

There are now 5,278 active cases while 3,926 have recovered.

The Delhi Government



has also increased its rate of testing which now stands at 6,978 tests per million of population. Delhi had recorded its highest single-day spike in

Covid-19 on Thursday with 472 new cases.

Since May 10, Delhi has been recording more than 300 cases of Covid-19 per day. The daily count has crossed the 400 mark four times including on Saturday since May 10.

In another development, four more areas (serial numbers 22, 23, 24 and 25) have been removed from containment zones in the national capital. The total number of containment zones in the national capital now stands at 77.

Man killed at Shahdara bus terminal

Accused arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 32-year-old man for allegedly killing a person with a cricket bat who scolded him inside a bus terminal in Delhi's Shahdara area.

The accused has been identified as Nandlal, a native of Mau district in Uttar Pradesh. Police said that the accused was a vagabond and used to roam in the Shahdara area.

According to Amit Sharma, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Shahdara district, on Friday, police found a person around 40-year-old dead with head injury at DTC Bus Terminal Shahdara.

"On the statement of eye-witness, a case was registered where he stated that one Nandlal, who used to roam near the bus terminal, hit the deceased and fled away," said the DCP.

"The deceased was later identified as Shyampal, a resi-

On the statement of eye-witness, a case was registered where he stated that one Nandlal, who used to roam near the bus terminal, hit the deceased and fled away

Shahdara," said the DCP.

"Interrogation revealed that on Friday, the accused saw Shyampal cleaning his face, hands and feet inside the bus terminal. When he objected, Shyampal abused and scolded him," the DCP said.

"In a fit of rage the accused picked up a cricket bat lying nearby and hit the victim on his head and fled from the spot, police said, adding that he is married and has two sons but was not in contact with his wife or children for the last eight to nine years," the DCP added.

Over 1.4 mn migrants ferried to their home States till May 15: Rly



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Railways has ferried more than 1.4 million stranded people back to their home State in last 15 days by operating 1,074 "Shramik Special" trains across the country.

The Ministry said that during last three days more than two lakh people are being ferried per day.

"As on midnight of 15th May, a total of 1074 "Shramik Special" trains have been operationalised from various states across the country. More than 1.4 million stranded people have been transported back to their home state in last 15 days," it said in a statement.

It is to be noted that more than two lakh person are being trans-

As on midnight of 15th May, a total of 1074 "Shramik Special" trains have been operationalised from various States across the country

ported per day during last 3 days. In days to come it is expected to be scaled upto 3 lakh passengers per day.

These 1074 Shramik Special trains originated from various States like Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

"These trains were terminated in various states like Andhra

Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal," it further said.

In these trains, proper screening of passengers is ensured before boarding the train. During the journey, passengers are given free meals and water, it added.

Subsequent to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) order regarding movement of migrant workers, pilgrims, tourists, students and other persons stranded at different places by special trains, Indian Railways had decided to operate "Shramik Special" trains.

9 cases lodged against landlords for pressuring students for rent

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has registered nine cases against landlords for allegedly asking students to pay rent during the lockdown period. Police said that all the nine FIR were registered in Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar police station.

According to a police official, the cases were filed under section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) in last couple of days after the students complained that they don't have money and their landlords were forcing to pay rent.

Earlier, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had issued an order on March 29 which stops landlords from demanding rent from students, workers and migrant labourers for a month. Those landlords who force people to vacate their houses will face action, the MHA statement warned.

The order, issued under the Disaster Management Act, had said employers will pay their workers' wages on due dates without any deduction.

Mukherjee Nagar is known as a hub for coaching centres. Students from other States come here to prepare for civil services and other competitive exams.

BORDER ROW

Nepal's political analysts seek diplomatic solution

Kathmandu: Political analysts in Nepal on Saturday favoured a diplomatic solution to the Lipulekh and Kalapani border dispute with India even as they sharply reacted to Indian Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane's recent remarks on the issue.

The Lipulekh pass is a far western point near Kalapani, a disputed border area between Nepal and India. Both India and Nepal claim Kalapani as an integral part of their territory - India as part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district and Nepal as part of Dharchula district.

Gen Naravane on Friday said there were reasons to believe that Nepal objected to India's newly-inaugurated road linking Lipulekh Pass with Dharchula in Uttarakhand at the behest of "someone else", in an apparent reference to a possible role by China on the matter.

"It is easy to deflect attention and shift the blame to another country, whereas the truth is that the road crosses the Mahakali River and enters Nepal's territory," Nepal's for-

mer foreign secretary Madhuraman Acharya said.

Senior journalist Kanakmani Dikshit advised the Nepal government to use track I or II diplomacy to resolve the border issue with India.

"As Nepal-India relations spiral, there's a need for furious back-channel diplomacy, does not matter whether it is Track One, Two or Ten," he tweeted. "Amidst the certitude in New Delhi and chaos in Kathmandu, however, I wonder if anyone has time/wants to think of this."

"Nepalese people are suspecting China's complicit role in allowing India to open up the Lipulekh Pass bypassing Nepal," he claimed.

Political analyst Geja Sharma Wagley termed Gen Naravane's remarks as deplorable.

"The deplorable and undiplomatic remarks of Gen Naravane, who is the honorary General of the Nepal Army, reflect the very character & mindset of the Indian

Government, & India's haughty approach about ongoing border dispute!"

Addressing Parliament on Friday, Nepal's President Bidhya Bhandari reiterated that "Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani fall within Nepal's territory."

"Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipulekh belong to us and appropriate diplomatic measures will be adopted to resolve existing issues," she said, adding that a new political map will be issued incorporating all these territories.

The issue became viral in Nepalese social media, where most of the people drew the attention of the government to take urgent measures to protect the country's border and resolve the issue as soon as possible.

Nepal on Monday summoned the Indian Ambassador and handed over a diplomatic note to him to protest against the construction of the key road connecting the Lipulekh pass with Dharchula in Uttarakhand. **PTI**

Remote Meghalaya villages come up with community quarantine facilities for returnees

PTI ■ SHILLONG

Authorities of remote Meghalaya villages have set up community COVID-19 quarantine facilities for people returning from other states, officials said on Saturday.

The arrangement for community-level quarantine units has been made as many homes do not have the required space and include several family members, they said.

"District administrations are working closely with these communities at the village level to manage the COVID-19 situation. Many villages have set up community quarantine facilities," South West Khasi Hills District Deputy Commissioner Isawanda Laloo told PTI. "The community quarantine centres will be used to house the returnees," she said.

All basic amenities are being provided at the centres, most of which are abandoned schools or community halls, Laloo said.

In other districts, too, similar arrangements have been made at the village level and is closely monitored by the block development officers, a senior home department official said.

Meghalaya has one active COVID-19 case and the state had earlier reported one fatality due to the contagion. Eleven others have recovered from the respiratory infection.

CLASS 10, 12 STUDENTS

HRD postpones announcement of pending exams' schedule

New Delhi: The HRD Ministry on Saturday postponed announcement of the exam schedule for pending class 10 and 12 board exams, saying the CBSE is still considering certain technical aspects before finalising the datesheet.

The ministry had earlier announced that it would notify the schedule at 5 pm on Saturday.

"CBSE is taking into consideration some additional technical aspects before finalizing the datesheets of the board exams of classes 10th and 12th, due to which, the datesheets will now be released by Monday i.e. 18-05-2020. Inconvenience caused is sincerely regretted (sic)," Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' tweeted.

The ministry had last week announced that the pending class 10 and 12 CBSE exams, which were postponed due to the COVID-19-induced lockdown, would be conducted from July 1 to 15.

However, the schedule as well as the

modalities and guidelines have not been announced yet.

While class 12 exams will be conducted across the country, the class 10 exams are only pending in North East Delhi where they were affected due to the law and order situation.

Universities and schools across the country have been closed and exams postponed since March 16 when the Centre announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as one of the measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

Later, a nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24, which has now been extended till May 17.

The board was not able to conduct class 10 and 12 exams on eight examination days due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Further, due to the law and order situation in North East Delhi, the board was not able to conduct exams on four examination days, while a very small

number of students from and around this district were not able to appear in exams on six days.

The board had last month announced that it will only conduct pending exams in 29 subjects which are crucial for promotion and admission to higher educational institutions.

The modalities of assessment for the subjects for which exams are not being conducted will be announced soon by the board.

The schedule has been decided in order to ensure that the board exams are completed before competitive examinations such as engineering entrance JEE-Mains, which is scheduled from July 18-23, and medical entrance exam NEET, which is scheduled on July 26. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued guidelines to universities that the new academic session for freshers will begin from September while for the existing students from August. **PTI**

Uttarakhand: Virus cases on rise with migrants' return

Dehradun: The return of migrants has caused an abrupt rise in the number COVID-19 cases in Uttarakhand with 17 people testing positive for the disease since the process started 10 days ago.

All those who tested positive for the disease since the migrants began returning to the hill state are those returning from either Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana or Delhi, a health department official here said.

Over the last 10 days, 17 new positive cases have been reported in Uttarakhand, taking the total number of positive cases in the state to 82.

"All the new cases are of people who have returned to the state from outside," state health department spokesman J C Pandey said.

The increased threat of coronavirus caused by the influx of migrants from different parts of the country, including highly-infected zones, is posing a new challenge to the state government. "Ever since the migrants began to return to the state, COVID-19 cases have shot up. In the last 10 days, 17 new coronavirus positive cases

have surfaced," DG (law and order) Ashok Kumar said. "In view of the increased threat caused by the migrants returning from worst-hit states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, people need to be extra careful during the next fortnight and strictly follow the guidelines to protect themselves from the deadly disease," he said. According to an official data, 82,834 out of more than 2 lakh migrants, have returned from outside so far and the process is going to continue for the next 10-15 days. "People cannot afford to lower their guard as the real threat begins now with the influx of migrants from highly infected states to the rural areas. The influx is going to continue for at least a fortnight," Pandey said.

Asking people to be careful, he urged them to avoid going out unless very necessary and wear masks and maintain social distancing. Those returning from outside are being mandatorily quarantined for 14 days either at home or a facility, and have been warned of action under the Epidemic Act and Disaster Management Act if they violate quarantine rules and run away to mingle with locals, the DG Law and Order said. **PTI**

Beekeeping sector gets ₹500-cr aid



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the "World Bee Day" on May 20, ₹500 crore package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday for the development of beekeeping industry has come as big boon for the farmers, adivasis and unemployed youths in India.

The ₹500 crore package, announced with the prime objective of increasing farmers' and beekeepers' income, will also achieve multiple intermediate goals like increase in honey production, growing India's farm yield by over 35 percent through cross pollination and maintaining the ecological balance. The ultimate goal is realizing the dream of "Sweet Kranti" in India.

After taking over as the Minister of MSME in May 2019, Nitin Gadkari had desired to achieve the dream of "Sweet Kranti". Credit goes to Gadkari for the financial support that would ensure success of the mission.

With the financial boost, India will figure among the top three honey producing countries in the world soon. At present India, ranks eighth in terms of honey producing countries, China being the largest producer in the world.

KVIC Chairman, Vinai Kumar Saxena said the 'Honey Mission' is aimed at fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a "Sweet Kranti in the country". He said the growth of beekeeping industry will enhance the farm produce in the country and ultimately result into increase in the income of farmers and beekeepers. In just less than three years, the KVIC distributed over 1.33 lakh bee boxes across the length and breadth of the country - from Kashmir in North to Kanyakumari down South and from Sundarbans in East to the Western coast of Maharashtra.

7 booked for firing in air at reformed don's funeral

Bengaluru: Seven people have been booked for firing in the air at the funeral of reformed underworld don N Muthappa Rai, as a tribute to him, police said on Saturday.

A purported video of the incident has gone viral on the social media. Muthappa Rai (68) passed away at a hospital here on Friday after battling brain cancer for one year. His funeral was held at an estate in

Bidadi. Sub Inspector Shantaveappa said some police personnel posted there to ensure social distancing during the cremation heard the sound of firing, rushed to the spot and found empty cartridges. After an enquiry, the seven were booked under Sections 336 and 149 of the IPC related to endangering public lives due to negligent behaviour and unlawful assembly guilty of offence. **PTI**

Farmer kills self in Nagpur district

Nagpur: A farmer allegedly committed suicide by consuming poison in Saoner tehsil of Nagpur district on Saturday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Krishna alias Vilas Namdeo Tekade (50), a resident of Borgaon village.

According to police, Tekade consumed poison in the afternoon and was found unconscious

in an agricultural field at 2 pm.

Doctors declared him brought dead at hospital.

Tekade and his brother owned four acres of agricultural land and he also worked at a cement pipe manufacturing factory at Kalmeshwar, police said.

But he was jobless since lockdown. Further probe was on. **PTI**

10% rise in 3 days in corona cases

From Page 1

Just five districts - three of them in Maharashtra - have reported nearly 57 percent of all new cases in the last two days. Among those killed on Saturday, Mumbai, the worst-hit city in the country, reported 41 deaths. 696 people have died so far. No new death recorded in Dadar, Mahim and Dharavi while 53 new cases reported in Mumbai's Dharavi, taking the total number of cases in the area to 1198.

With 477 more people testing positive for coronavirus in the last 24 hours, Tamil Nadu's virus count reached 10,585. Of them, 93 were those who arrived from other countries and States. After three more virus-related deaths, the State's death toll reached 74. Chennai saw 332 new cases in the last 24 hours, followed by Tirunelveli which reported 44 new cases. With 438 new cases, Delhi recorded 9333 cases so far while six deaths reported in the last 24 hours.

With 195 fresh cases and three deaths recorded in Uttar Pradesh in the last 24 hours, taking total number of cases to 4140 and death toll to 95. There are 1718 active cases in the State. With 177 new cases Rajasthan reported 4924 cases so far.

In Bihar, 112 new cases reported, taking the total number of cases to 1145 in the State. This is the first time that Bihar has reported over 100 new cases in a single day. The cases in Bihar spiked after return of migrant workers from other States. The top five States together account for 78 percent of the active cases across India. India's case count has now roughly doubled in the last 12 days. This is a much slower rate compared to early April when cases were doubling every four days. Deaths have also seen

a slower rise compared to the trend in early April but have picked up pace over the past couple of weeks. India's death toll from coronavirus as of now is 2790, roughly double what it was 12 days ago.

Over the past seven days, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Delhi have seen the highest spike in cases among the top 10 States with most cases. These three States account 81 percent of all the new active cases in this period. Over the same period, fatalities have also surged the most in Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra which account for 55 percent of all coronavirus related deaths over the past seven days.

In Kerala, 11 new positive cases reported on Saturday, taking the number of active cases to 87. Of them four are from Thrissur, three from Kozhikode and two each from Palakkad and Malappuram districts. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan gave this information in a Facebook post on Saturday. "Of these, seven have come from abroad, and four from within the country," he added.

Two village panchayats in Kerala's Idukki district have been turned into containment zones and a mass contact-tracing exercise is on after a bakery-owner tested positive. A truck driver who returned from Chennai's Koyambedu market testing positive.

The death toll due to coronavirus in West Bengal climbed to 162 on Saturday as seven more patients succumbed to the disease in the last 24 hours. "Total 162 deaths have been reported so far in West Bengal due to Covid-19, with seven deaths in the last 24 hours. The total corona cases in the state have risen to 2,576 as 115 new cases were reported during the period," West Bengal Home Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay said. Thirty-six new coronavirus positive cases have emerged in Karnataka, taking the state's tally to 1,092.

32 migrants on way...

From Page 1

Of the 36 injured, 22 were being treated at the district hospital while four serious patients were referred to PGI hospital at Safai in Etawah.

Most of the deceased and injured were from Kushinagar (UP), Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal and were coming from Rajasthan via Delhi.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Archana Srivastava confirmed 24 deaths and injuries to 36 in the accident.

In another mishap on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway at Unnao, a migrant labourer and his wife were killed while their five-year-old son luckily survived after they were hit by a truck on Saturday morning. Ashok Chaudhary (55)

used to work in Jhanjar, Haryana. After exhausting his savings during the lockdown, he started for his native place Darbhanga (Bihar) in his tempo.

On Saturday morning, while he was refuelling his vehicle at Bhawani Khera in Bangarmau (Unnao), a speeding loader hit the tempo, killing Chaudhary and his wife Chhoti (30) while their son was injured. The injured was later shifted to a hospital and their kin were informed about the mishap.

Similarly, five migrant workers, who were going to Uttar Pradesh from Maharashtra, were killed and 19 others injured on Saturday when a truck carrying them

overturned in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district, police said.

Praveen Bhuria, Sagar's Additional Superintendent of Police, said the accident occurred around 10 am near Semra on National Highway-86 under Chhanbila police station limits.

The truck was carrying bundles of clothes and the migrants were sitting over them, he said. Further investigation is underway, he added.

Tens of thousands of people have been walking home from big cities after being laid off because of the lockdown to contain the spread of the coronavirus disease since late March.

Snakebite in quarantine...

From Page 1

Reports suggested other inmates of the quarantine centre repeatedly called the ambulance but to no avail. Subsequently, the victim was taken to the district hospital on motorcycle. However, he succumbed to the venomous bite. The local police denied that the school was designated as a quarantine centre and people were staying on their own.

Following this, 31 other inmates of the quarantine centre were sent to their homes, according to reports.

Likewise, a migrant labour was bitten by a snake at a quarantine centre at Sindhekela village of Balangir district of Odisha. The migrant labourer was bitten by the snake when he was asleep on the night of Thursday/Friday. He was admitted to Titlagarh sub-divisional hospital and his condition is reported to be out of danger.

Rahul meets migrants on move, pledges help

From Page 1

The meeting took place as they sat on the footpath on Mathura road in Delhi.

Mahesh Kumar, a migrant worker from Madhya Pradesh who along with 14 of his family members was sitting at the footpath, narrated his tale of woe to the former Congress chief.

"It was nice talking to him. At least someone heard us and our problems," he told reporters later. The Congress claimed that the police detained some of the labourers later in preventive custody, saying they have "directions from the top to do so".

There was no immediate reaction from the police to the Congress party's charge. Sources close to Rahul Gandhi said while adhering strictly to the law, at the request of Gandhi, volunteers from the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee have stepped up to help the group get back to their village.

Trump donates ventilators to friend India...

From Page 1

"I am proud to announce that the United States will donate ventilators to our friends in India. We stand with India and @narendramodi during this pandemic. We're also cooperating on vaccine development. Together we will beat the invisible enemy," Trump announced through Twitter on Friday night.

While speaking to reporters before boarding Marine One on his way to Camp David on Friday, Trump said, "We are sending a lot of ventilators to India. I spoke to Prime Minister Modi. We are sending quite a few ventilators to India. We have tremendous supply of ventilators."

PM Cares Fund...

From Page 1

They contended that there was no need for a separate PM Cares Fund while PMNRF is already there. Many political parties have demanded that revenue and expenditure of the PM Cares Fund should be made public.

Many officials feel that adverse campaign by the Opposition parties also hit the fund flow to PM Cares Fund. They also point out that there was a lack of awareness and campaign about the PM Cares Fund and its specific nature to "fight the Covid-19" pandemic.

In India, more than 5.4 crore people annually file Income Tax Returns and 44.57 crore have PAN Card. Considering these figures, the total collection of below ₹9,000 crore to the PM Cares Fund in past 50 days is not inspiring.

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Blueprint ready for tackling Covid in 30 worst-hit municipal areas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Saturday prepared a blueprint for the 30 high Covid-19 case load municipal areas contributing 80 per cent of the total cases of the country. It asked the States to maintain high vigilance and monitoring in areas of old cities, urban slums and other high-density pockets along with camps for migrant workers and trace cases to manage COVID-19 in urban areas.

These 30 municipal areas are from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Odisha which are reporting spurt in cases each passing days.

As per Government officials, the geographic area of the containment zones has to be defined based on factors such as mapping of cases & contacts, geographical dispersion of cases and contacts, area with well-demarcated perimeter and enforceability.

A decision in this regard was taken at a high-level review meeting held here under the chairmanship of Union Health Secretary Preeti

Sudan.

The officials of these 30 municipal areas were informed about the management of indicators such as the high doubling rate, high case fatality rate and high confirmation percentages seen in the containment zones.

The Health Secretary also emphasized that along with the containment and management of COVID-19 cases, the issue of continuing all essential non-COVID health services in the urban localities such as RMNCHA+N care, cancer treatment, TB surveillance, immunisation efforts and vector control measures in view of the ensuing monsoon need to be ensured.

The Health Ministry asked the municipal areas to focus on effective risk communication in order to build trust and confidence. The ministry asked the officials concerned to engage with community leaders and local opinion leaders who could accompany the local surveillance teams to encourage cooperation from the local communities.

"It was also highlighted that especially in the densely populated urban areas, more challenges need to be considered such as poor socio-economic

Shutting red light areas till vaccine is ready can stem corona growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India can add 17 days of additional delay to reaching the peak of novel coronavirus cases, and prevent 72 per cent of projected new cases by closing down its red light areas till a Covid-19 vaccine is developed, scientists have said.

According to the National Aids Control Organization (NACO), India has close to 6,37,500 sex workers, and over 5 lakh customers visit the red-light areas on a daily basis.

Based on modelling studies, the researchers including those from Yale School of Medicine in the US, said closing down these places of sex work may reduce projected Covid-19 death toll increase in India by 63 per cent post the easing of lockdown measures. They said Indians are at a

much lower risk of getting Covid-19 if red light areas are kept closed after the lockdown until an effective treatment or vaccine is developed.

They have recommended a continued closure of red-light areas beyond full nation-wide reopening.

They believe this can reduce the number of cases by 72 per cent in a period of 45-days, and delay the peak of Covid-19 cases by 17 days. This delay, according to the researchers, will provide the Government more time and opportunities to plan and execute measures to protect public health and economy, as India moves in Lockdown 4.0. There could be a 63 per cent reduction in the number of deaths in the first 60 days after the lockdown ends, if red-light areas are kept closed, the

report said.

Their research said that if the red-light areas start operating, the disease will spread extremely quickly and infect a very high percentage of sex workers and customers. The scientists said the high transmission rate is because social distancing is not possible in sexual interactions. Infected customers could spread the disease to lakhs of other citizens, the scientists warned. Hence they believe that these red light areas have a combination of factors that can create a major hotspot.

"Our study findings show that there is a strong effect of the red-light area closures, especially immediately following the lockdown," said study co-author, Jefferey Townsend, Professor of Biostatistics at the Yale School of Medicine.

This takes the total recovery rate to 35.09%.

The total number of confirmed cases is now 85,940," they said.

Nearly 6L non-Covid surgeries may be hit

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the Government's entire healthcare system is focused on management of Covid-19, non-coronavirus surgical care is now getting the least priority. As many as 5,80,000 planned surgeries here might be cancelled or delayed, according to a study conducted by CovidSurg Collaborative, a research network of over 5,000 surgeons from 120 countries.

The study, led by members based in the UK, Benin, Ghana, India, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, Rwanda, Spain, South Africa and the US, has been published in the British Journal of Surgery.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic elective surgeries have been cancelled to reduce the risk of patients being exposed to COVID-19 in hospital, and to support the wider hospital response, for example by converting operating the-

atres in to intensive care units," said Aneel Bhangu, from the University of Birmingham.

"The risks of exposing patients to perioperative SARS-CoV-2 infection by performing surgery during outbreaks are high, but must be weighed against the risks of protracted treatment delays," the study states.

"Governments should mitigate against this major burden on patients by developing recovery plans and implementing strategies to safely restore surgical activity"

The modelling study indicates that each additional week of disruption to hospital services will be associated with a further 2.4 million cancellations.

In a best-case scenario, benign surgeries may be worst hit with 80 per cent (5,05,864) procedures being cancelled or postponed, followed by cancer surgeries (60 per cent or 51,134 procedures) and orthopedics (30 per cent or 27,740 proce-

dures).

The study also estimated a backlog of 5,56,998 surgeries which would take 93 weeks to clear if surgical volume increased by 10 per cent.

The researcher used data from previous studies on elective surgery volumes, and then projected cancellation rates from a response survey with senior surgeons who either estimated best and worst case scenarios or reported the actual figures. Expert responses in India came from Cims Hospital, National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences, and Tata Memorial Centre.

"Although essential, cancellations place a heavy burden on patients and society. Patients' conditions may deteriorate, worsening their quality of life as they wait for rescheduled surgery. In some cases, for example cancer, delayed surgeries may lead to a number of unnecessary deaths," said Bhangu.

Paswan urges States to distribute foodgrains, pulses to 8 cr migrants in fortnight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As hundreds of migrants continue to travel long distances to get back to their homes in this COVID-19 crisis, Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Saturday appealed to State Governments to immediately lift food grains and pulses from the godowns and distribute them for free within a fortnight to 8 crore migrants who neither have a centre nor State's ration card.

According to the Food Ministry, about 142 lakh migrants will benefit in Uttar Pradesh and in Bihar (86.45 lakh), Maharashtra (70 lakh), West Bengal (60.1 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (54.64 lakh), Rajasthan (44.66 lakh), Karnataka (40.19 lakh), Gujarat (38.25 lakh), Tamil Nadu (35.73 lakh), Jharkhand (26.37 lakh), Andhra Pradesh (26.82 lakh) and Assam (25.15 lakh).

In the national Capital, about 7.27 lakh migrants will get free 5 kg food grains per person and 1 kg chana per family for May and June. "If the number of migrants exceeds the current estimation of 8 crore, the Centre is ready to provide additional grains for free supply but the identified person should be genuine

Centre should stop acting like a money lender: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said the Centre should stop acting like a "money lender" for its children by giving them credit instead of cash, and asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reconsider the COVID-19 economic stimulus package. Rahul said a 'storm' was brewing on the economic front that will cause damage and hurt many.

"The storm has not come yet, it is coming and will cause big economic damage and hurt many," he said. While Rahul also expressed his deepest condolences to the families of the migrant labourers killed in the road accidents, his sibling and general secretary in the party, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra sought permission from Uttar Pradesh

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to run 1,000 buses for the migrant workers wanting to return home given the fatalities in road accidents during the last couple of days. Priyanka said the All-India Congress Committee will bear the entire expenses.

The Congress had earlier offered to bear the expenses of train tickets of the migrants. Priyanka said the party wants to run 500 buses each from the Gazipur (Ghaziabad) and Noida borders for the migrants.

Rahul, who also met labourers on their way to their destinations, said it is heart breaking to see millions of our people walking on the highways with no food, no water.

He said he was trying to put pressure on the govern-

ment for generating demand by putting money into the accounts of the poor and vulnerable sections of society. The Congress leader asserted that if demand is not generated, the country will suffer a bigger loss economically than from the novel coronavirus. It is important to lift the lockdown intelligently without sacrificing the old and vulnerable population to the disease, he added.

Interacting with journalists of regional media via video conferencing, Rahul also warned of an impending economic crisis, and asked the Modi Government to at least temporarily, if not permanently, implement Congress-proposed NYAY, minimum income scheme, to give money directly to the marginalised section of society.

Stating that the biggest migration since independence is underway "triggerred by policies divorced from India's ground realities and ignoring the needs of our most vulnerable" brothers and sisters, he asserted "yet, till today, the government has not been able to tell us what it plans to do for this huge mass of people, whose livelihoods have been cut off, as a result of the nationwide lockdown".

He said the Government should not worry about what the foreign agencies are going to say, but should have faith in our small and medium businesses and in our people, farmers, workers who are walking on the streets and immediately give them money in their pockets, without a single thought.

Centre's agriculture package yet another great betrayal of peasantry: Kisan Sabha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CPI(M)'s All India Kisan Sabha on Saturday said the Centre's agriculture package was "yet another great betrayal of peasantry" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The Kisan Sabha said that the dilution in the Essential Commodities Act will lead to increase in the prices in the market and this will only benefit the middlemen and traders and not the farmers.

"The package did not heed the demands of peasantry for

immediate provision of ₹7,500/ month to peasant and agriculture workers households, comprehensive loan waiver to free the peasant households from indebtedness, assured procurement at MSP at C2+50 % for all crops and 200 days of work under MGNREGS with ₹300/daily wage as well as free ration and essentials till the lockdown is over. Nothing has been done to compensate the losses in income of peasantry and agricultural workers due to crop losses and loss of employment," said Kisan Sabha leaders Hannan Mollah and Ashok

Dhaware.

"Who will be benefitted out of these reforms is pretty clear, not the peasantry and rural workers. The agribusiness corporate houses and multinational corporations will take the advantage. The Agriculture Produce Market Committees will be sidelined and the powers of the state governments will be eroded. The peasantry at large will be at the mercy of the Agri Business Corporations since there will not be any arrangements for price support and price stabilisation for crops," said Kisan Sabha leaders.

CPM ex-politburo member K Varadarajan dies



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CPM's former Politburo member K Varadarajan passed away on Saturday. He died this afternoon at Karur, Tamilnadu, following a respiratory problem. He had gone to visit his son in Karur where he was caught in the lockdown. He was 73 years old, said CPI(M) Politburo in a statement.

Varadarajan, trained as civil engineer, was active in trade union and farmers' union activities in Tamil Nadu for the past 50 years. "He was elected to the Central Committee of the Party in 1998 and to the Central Secretariat in 2002. He was elected to the Polit Bureau at its 18th Congress in 2005. He functioned from the Party Centre in Delhi as a member of the Central Secretariat and as a Polit Bureau member from 2005 to 2015. Varadarajan was a very affable comrade, simple in nature and had frugal requirements," the CPI(M) statement maintained.

CRPF orders immediate withdrawal of orderlies from retired brass in wake of Covid-19

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF has ordered immediate withdrawal of scores of its personnel attached as "helping staff" (orderlies) to officers who have retired or been repatriated from the paramilitary due to apprehension that they may contract Covid-19 infection.

The move comes amid shortage of manpower owing to Covid-19 infection in the ranks and number of personnel being quarantined in the barracks or homes.

The shortage of manpower has further aggravated due to the ongoing lockdown, which has led to the extension of leave of a number of personnel amid the countrywide efforts to break the chain of coronavirus infection.

Due to the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, many personnel have tested positive for the viral infection and several others have been subjected to quarantine. A number of personnel are one leave and cannot rejoin duty due to the lockdown.

"Due to this, offices/units of Delhi/NCR are badly suffering from acute shortage of manpower. NS (Northern Sector of CRPF) has provided many helping staff to the officers retired/repatriated from CRPF. As the helping staff may become vulnerable to Covid-19 during the above period, competent authority has directed to withdraw all such personnel immediately in view of the Covid-19 pandemic the larger interest of the health and well



being of all concerned and to prevent the chain of spread," according to an order issued on Friday and reviewed by The Pioneer.

In keeping with the decision, the CRPF headquarters has directed all the offices in Delhi and the national capital region to furnish the details of all such personnel attached with the retired/repatriated CRPF officials who are essentially Indian Police Service (IPS) officers.

The information of such personnel has been sought to be furnished by 3 PM on Sunday in a certain format which will include the Force Number, rank and name of the staff attached as orderlies. The format will also detail the Unit of the attached personnel, the name of the retired officer with whom the personnel is attached, duration of attachment and authority for attachment, according to the document.

The order has been circulated to the CRPF offices in Delhi and Greater including those of the Northern Sector

Recovery rate of corona cases up in paramilitary forces

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Recovery of Covid-19 positive cases in paramilitary forces has improved with the BSF recording recovery of 135 out of 345 infected persons and 51 patients out of a total of 285 testing negative in the CRPF. Likewise, the BSF has 208 active cases at present after recovery of 135 personnel and deaths of two personnel. The BSF has recorded a massive recovery to the tune of 40 per cent.

and Parliament Duty Group.

While the authorisation for helping staff is only for one month after retirement/repatriation of the top IPS officials, they continue to avail the facility at taxpayers' expense for years together.

States told to regularly update details of migrant labourers

A Unique ID is generated for each migrant, which can be used for all transactions, said the Home Secretary, issuing a series of guidelines on the working of the new Dashboard



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry on Saturday directed States to regularly update the details of migrant labour, stranded persons and those left to home States in the new portal developed by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on real time basis. Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla told the States to upload the details on real time basis at NDMA's newly developed online Dashboard, named as National Migrant Information System.

"States can upload batch file of individual data on the portal.....The mobile numbers of the persons can be used for the contact tracing and movement during Covid-19. A Unique ID is generated for each migrant, which can be used for all transactions," said the Home Secretary, issuing a series of guidelines on the working of the new Dashboard.

INLCU L57 ship commissioned into Navy at Port Blair



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The LCU MK-IV ship, is an amphibious vessel with a designated primary role of transporting and deploying Main Battle Tanks, Armoured Vehicles, troops and equipment from ship to shore

Lieutenant General PS Rajeshwar, Commander-in-Chief, Andaman and Nicobar Command, commissioned INLCU L57 into the Indian Navy at Port Blair on Friday. This ship is the seventh Landing Craft Utility (LCU) MK-IV class to be inducted into the Indian Navy. The ship has been indigenously designed and built by the public sector Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata. The commissioning of INLCU L57 is yet another manifestation of the country's indigenous design and ship building capability.

The LCU MK-IV ship, is an amphibious vessel with a designated primary role of transporting and deploying Main Battle Tanks, Armoured Vehicles, troops and equip-

ment from ship to shore. Based at the Andaman and Nicobar Command, these ships can be deployed for multirole activities like beaching operations, search and rescue, disaster relief operations, supply and replenishment and evacuation from distant islands, officials said here on Saturday.

Govt has taken several steps for real estate's survival: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday said the Government has taken several steps so that real estate sector survives the situation arising out of COVID-19. At a webinar with stakeholders celebrating 3rd Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) Day, Puri said the regulatory authorities need to play a crucial role to revive the sector so that it can thrive and contribute to the country's growth.

Providing details of the successful implementation of RERA, the Minister informed that 31 States/UTs have notified rules under RERA. While 30 States/UTs have set up Real Estate Regulatory Authority and 24 States/UTs have set up Real Estate Appellate Tribunal. "More than 52,000 Real Estate Projects and 40,517 Real Estate Agents have registered under RERA across the country. More than 46,000 complaints have been disposed-off by the Real Estate Regulatory Authorities across the country", he further added.

He said his Ministry has issued advisory to all states and UTs and their regulatory authorities for issuance of orders to automatically extend the completion date or revised extended completion date for all real estate projects registered under RERA for a period of 6 months, where completion date expires on or after March 25 this year.

Slightly low cases in TN, total at 10,585

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

People in Tamil Nadu could heave a sigh of relief on Saturday as the number of persons tested positive for coronavirus continued to be slightly lower than what was expected earlier in the day.

Dr C Vijaya Baskar, Tamil Nadu's Minister for Health told reporters that 477 persons tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday and this took the total number of covid-19 patients in the State to 10,585.

On May 11, the State saw 798 persons testing positive for coronavirus, the highest ever number of persons recorded in a single day. Since then the number of covid-19 afflicted persons saw a gradual but small decrease.

Though the total number of coronavirus afflicted persons breached the 10,000 mark on May 16, the minister said there has been a decrease in the speed with which the number of patients were increasing in the State.

Three more persons succumbed to the pandemic on Saturday making the death toll 74 in the State. Chennai saw 332 persons testing positive on Saturday. Since the TASMACH shops started functioning in all districts except Chennai and Thiruvallur following the Supreme Court clearance on Friday, health professional and policy makers are worried about the spread of the pandemic. All liquor outlets saw serpentine queues from early morning. Though the

Government had hiked the tax on the spirits by 10 to 40 per cent, it failed to dampen the spirit of the tipplers.

Security norms were thrown to the winds by people by discarding face masks and social distancing regulations while crowding in front of the liquor outlets. Some of them were seen wearing helmets to escape from the preying eyes of the video cameras of the news channels.

Dr Baskar said he was confident that the number of covid-19 patients in the State would come down over the next few weeks. "All we request to the people is to wear face masks, maintain social distancing and stay indoors in the containment areas," said the Minister.

Liquor sale resumes in State

J&K records highest 1-day cases at 108, total 1,121

Toll mounts to 12 in State

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Saturday recorded its highest ever tally of 108 positive cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of Coronavirus cases to 1,121.

Around one dozen pregnant women in Anantnag also tested positive while one more patient, admitted in Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura died due to Covid-19 on Saturday, taking the death toll to 12. So far Kashmir has reported 10 deaths and two patients have died in Jammu division.

Out of 20 districts of Jammu & Kashmir, six districts of Anantnag, Srinagar, Baramulla, Kulgam, Shopian and Bandipora have recorded over 71 per cent cases. The highest number of 162 cases have been reported from Anantnag followed by 156 cases from Srinagar district.

In Srinagar, a 70-year-old man from

Buchru, Chadoura (Budgam), found Covid positive after he died due to cardiac arrest and chest ailment at SKIMS. A total number of 29 patients were also discharged from different hospitals. Among them, an octogenarian also recovered fully and sent home from Chest Disease hospital, Jammu.

According to the media bulletin, "Out of 108 cases, Kashmir valley recorded 86 positive cases, while Jammu division reported 22 cases in the last 24 hours". Out of 1,121, 567 cases are active positive cases, 70 in Jammu division and 497 in Kashmir division while a total number of 542 cases have recovered so far.

According to official sources, out of 17 cases from Anantnag around one dozen pregnant women tested positive while Kulgam district alone recorded 47 cases in the last 24 hours. In Jammu division, 10 cases were reported from Kathua and 12 from Ramban district. Official sources said, all the patients were under administrative quarantine after screening at the Lakhanpur, gateway of Jammu & Kashmir.

11 more test +ve in Kerala, active cases now 87

Thiruvananthapuram: Eleven new cases of coronavirus were reported in Kerala, taking the number of active cases to 87.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan gave this information in a Facebook post on Saturday. "Of these, seven have come from abroad, and four from within the country," he added.

As on date, 497 persons have been cured and discharged in the state. He said 56,362 people were under observation in homes and 619 in various hospitals at present in Kerala.

With six more hot spots registered today, the number of such areas in Kerala has risen to 22. The Chief Minister said that so far 2,911 people have landed at four Kerala airports from abroad, 793 by three ships from Maldives, another 1,021 by trains and 50,320 by road.

State Health Minister K.K. Shailaja told the media that a 81-year-old on Saturday tested negative at state-run Medical College Hospital at Kannur after 42 days during which his condition had also worsened.

IANS

Fear of Covid resurgence takes backseat in Andhra



Amaravati: Fears of a covid resurgence in Andhra Pradesh took the backseat with just 48 new cases reported on Saturday morning. A day earlier, the State's tally had hit 102 cases, triggering worries of renewed upsurge in Covid-19 cases.

However, with the majority of the new cases, on Saturday, traced to people with a travel history to the Koyambedu market, in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh appears to be slowly gaining control over the situation.

The State nodal officer reported that 48 positive cases were detected out of the 9,628 samples tested in the 24 hours ending 10 a.m., on Saturday. While none of the positive cases were traced back to migrants returning to their homes in Andhra Pradesh, 31 of these cases were found to have travel history to the Koyambedu market in Tamil Nadu.

For the first time in many weeks, not even one district reported Covid-19 cases in double digits.

Three districts, Kurnool, Guntur, and Nellore, reported the highest single-day tally of 9 cases each. Chittoor, Krishna, and Visakhapatnam districts reported 8, 7, and 4 case respectively, while Kadapa, and West Godavari districts reported 1 case each. In all, of the state's 13 districts, 5 districts did not report a single case on Saturday.

IANS

TN farmers not happy by FM's announcement

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Ayyakkannu Ponnusamy, the farmer leader from Tiruchirappalli, who took New Delhi by storm two years ago by staging unique demonstrations and rallies to highlight the woes of farmers, would be back at Tiruchirappalli District Collector's office on Monday to hold another rally- this time against the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's tranche of announcements for farmers.

"We will stage the demonstration wearing only loin cloths to give vent to our disappointment and dejection over the indifference of the Central Government to the farmers' cause. The announcements made by the Finance Minister are not going to help any farmers in Tamil Nadu. The basic issues faced by us have not been addressed," Ayyakkannu told *The Pioneer* over phone from

Tiruchirappalli.

What upset Ayyakkannu and lakhs of farmers was the fact that whatever crops they cultivated, ranging from betel leaves, plantains, flowers, cucumber got damaged because there were no buyers. The coronavirus did us in. All farmers had borrowed heavily from Banks and invested in their lands. Since there were no buyers because of the pandemic, the entire crop got damaged and we are ruined. Please tell me what is there for us in the schemes announced by the Finance Minister?" asked Ayyakkannu.

Ayyakkannu is no ordinary farmer as he is a trained lawyer. "The Finance Minister claims that 63 lakh farmers got loan from Banks during 1st March to 30 April 2020. The Banks remained closed from March 25 to April 30 as part of the lockdown. How farmers got loan during this period?" he asked.

RV Giri, president, Confederation of Indian Farmers' Associations (CIFA), an umbrella organisation of all farmers' association in the country who is generally soft-spoken sounded upset while he summed up the announcements made by the Finance Minister. "The farming community has got two questions. What will come to my hand and what will be there in my pocket. We work only to make some earnings. The announcements sound attractive and enchanting but there is no use. Is the government planning to compensate for the losses incurred by us because of coronavirus?" asked Giri, a lead farmer in Tamil Nadu's Virudhachalam.

Ayyakkannu pointed out that the Government had written off corporate loans worth ₹69,000 crore. "What we have availed is peanuts compared to what was given to business barons. We will

not run away to far off countries seeking asylum. We will be here only and pay back to the last penny of the loans availed by us. Show some kind of compassion to us," said the maverick farmer leader.

Giri said that many farmers succumbed to the pandemic during the last two months. "Now I cannot guarantee that farmers would not commit suicide in months to come. The situation is favorable for them to resort to the extreme measure," said Giri.

Both Ayyakkannu and Giri pointed out that there were 90 crore farmers and farm workers in the country. "The economy will flourish only when they have little bit of cash in their hands. Mere announcements packed with catchy slogans would not bring results," said the leaders.

What they meant to tell was that the proof of the pudding was in the eating.

36 new cases, K'taka tally rises to 1,092

Bengaluru: Thirty-six new coronavirus positive cases have emerged in Karnataka, taking the State's case tally to 1,092, a health official said on Saturday.

"New cases were reported from 5 pm on Friday to 5 pm on Saturday," said the official. Among the 1,092 cases, 559 are active and isolated in designated hospitals across the state, whereas 496 patients were cured and discharged. A total of 36 patients have died of the disease.

Currently, 13 patients are in the ICUs. On Saturday, 16 patients were discharged, 14 in Bengaluru Urban and one each in Kalaburagi and Vijayapura.

In the past 24 hours, cases spiked in Bengaluru Urban, which has reported the highest coronavirus cases in the state, and Kalaburagi.

Of the new cases, Bengaluru Urban reported 14

cases, followed by Kalaburagi 8, Hassan 4, Shivamogga 3 and Mandya, Ballari, Vijayapura, Bagalkote, Davangere, Dharwad and Udipi 1 each.

All 14 male patients from Bengaluru Urban were secondary contacts of an earlier positive case. All Hassan, Shivamogga, Dharwad and Bagalkote cases had a history of travel to Mumbai in Maharashtra, India's biggest corona hot spot.

A 46-year-old man from Ballari has a travel history to Ahmedabad in Gujarat. A 40-year-old man from Mandya had travel history to Kolar and Bengaluru. A one-year-old girl from Udipi had travel history to Dubai.

Among the new cases, 23 were contacts of earlier cases. Of all the new cases, 24 are men and 12 women. Only seven of the 36 new cases are above 50 while 28 are below 40. IANS

48 new cases in Jaipur district jail

Total tally of the State capital mounts to 1,440

Jaipur: A total of 48 new persons have tested positive for Covid-19 from Jaipur District Jail on Saturday amongst the 55 new corona cases registered in the city taking the total tally of the State capital to 1,440, said additional chief secretary Rohit Kumar Singh, adding that the state now has 4,838 patients in total. Out of this 350 are migrants who came from different States to Rajasthan, he said.

Jalore, a green zone till the start of May, has registered the highest number of migrants till date at 63, Pali had 37 while Rajsamand and Dungarpur had 28 migrants testing positive till Saturday.

Sirohi, again green zone till a few days back, also had 24 new cases which are all migrants. Similarly, Jhunjhunu which became corona free a few days back, had 12 active cases out of which 10 are migrants.

Looking at the big number of migrants coming back to Rajasthan, state health minister said that each migrant will have to quarantine himself for 14 days.

Sounding a note of caution, he said, "The return of the migrants does present a challenge and the Government has therefore set quarantine as its priority." IANS

Cyclone Amphan threat looms over coastal States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday predicted that the depression in Bay of Bengal is likely to intensify rapidly into a cyclonic storm in the next 12 hours and further into a severe cyclonic storm in subsequent 24 hours. Heavy to extremely heavy rainfall, accompanied by high speed winds and tidal waves are expected. The IMD has also forecast "adverse weather" along and off Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal coasts and Andaman Sea for the next five-six days.

The National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) reviewed the preparedness for the impending cyclone, which is likely to hit Odisha and West Bengal coast, and directed immediate assistance to the two states.

A meeting of NCMC, headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, was held here to take stock of the preparation for the impending cyclone over the Bay of Bengal. Senior officials of the Ministries of Home, Defence, as well as those from IMD, NDMA and NDRF, attended the meeting.

According to the IMD, pursuant to that, cyclonic storm 'Amphan' is likely to move north-north-westwards initially till May 17 (Sunday) and then re-curve north-north-eastwards across northwest Bay of Bengal towards West Bengal coast during May 18-20. While Odisha has put 12 coastal districts on high alert, the IMD has also warned of heavy downpour along the coastal areas and in the isolated regions of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

There will be light to moderate rainfall in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Odisha and Gangetic West Bengal. The Odisha government has asked 12 district collectors in the coastal region to remain prepared for the impending situation.

"Sea condition will be rough over south and adjoining central Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea due to which fishermen have been warned to not venture into south and central ocean from May 15, 2020."

It added, "Those who are out at Sea over these regions are advised to return to coasts by today evening."

Maha: 67 deaths take fatality toll to 1,135

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra achieved another dubious feat on Saturday, as day's highest-ever tally of 67 people succumbed to Covid-19 and a staggering 1,606 other tested positive for coronavirus, taking the total number of deaths to 1,135 and infected cases to 30,706.

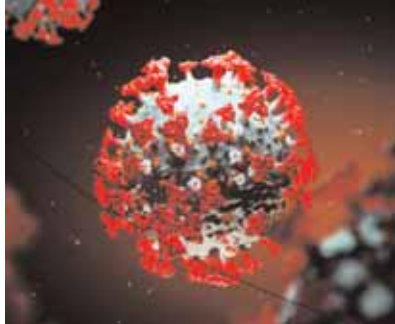
On a day the pandemic appeared to have peaked in the State, 67 persons - comprising 47 men and 20 women - died in various parts of the state.

Of the deaths, Mumbai accounted for a record 41 deaths, while there were seven deaths each in Pune and Thane, five in Aurangabad, three in Jalgaon, two in Mirambhayandar and one each in Nashik and Solapur cities.

With fresh 41 deaths and 884 infected, the total number of deaths in Mumbai rose to 696 and positive cases 18,555.

Of those dead, 38 of them aged over 60 years, 25 were from the age group 40 to 59 years and 4 were aged below 40 years. "Forty four out of 67 patients (66%) had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, " a state health bulletin said.

Out of 2,61,783 laboratory samples,



2,31,071 tested negative while 30,706 samples tested positive for coronavirus until Saturday.

There are 1,516 active containment zones in the state currently. Total 14,434 surveillance squads worked on Saturday across the state and surveillance of 60.93 lakh population was done.

As many as 7088 patients have been discharged till date after full recovery. Currently, 3,34,558 people are in home quarantine and 17,048 people are in institutional quarantine.

Meanwhile, two special Shramik Trains, one each for Kolkata and Patna, carrying thousands of stranded migrants

Mumbai to have 3,970-bed capacity for Covid facilities

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In what will be a big relief for the city health authorities, two major isolation and quarantine facilities with a collective bed capacity of 3,600 and a modular hospital with a bed capacity of 370 will become operational in various parts of Mumbai within next one week.

While one isolation and quarantine facility - called Corona Care Centre-2 (CCC-2) - having 1,000-bed capacity is being readied at the MMRDA ground Bandra (BKC) in north-central Mumbai, finishing touches are being given to second such facility with a capacity of 2,600 beds at Goregaon's NSE ground in north Mumbai. The modular hospital is coming up at Mahalaxmi Hospital.

"I visited the jumbo medical facility at NSE Goregaon earlier today with colleague @AslamShaikh_MLA ji, @DrMuffi, officials Kakani ji & @salilashutosh. This facility has almost 2,600 beds, oxygen for most beds and an ICU unit. This facility will be operational in 48 hours," Maharashtra Environment Minister Aditya Thackeray tweeted on Saturday.

The two isolation-quarantine facilities at BKC and NSE grounds will also have few oxygen and few mobile ICU



Maharashtra Environment Minister Aditya Thackeray inspecting the Covid-19 isolation and quarantine facility with 2,600 bed capacity at NSE ground at Goregaon in north Mumbai on Saturday

beds. "The CCC-2 facilities serve to admit mild symptomatic/ Asymptomatic positive patients. Now with up-gradation of few such facilities, we will be to keep moderate patients and allow decongestion of big hospitals, which can admit severe to moderate patients," a senior Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) official said.

Created on the two grounds, the two isolation and quarantine facilities have separate toilets and bat rooms with geyser for male and female patients and one fan each for a bed. The State Government is in the process of appointing doctors, nurses and medical workers to look after these



two facilities.

After visiting the under-construction modular hospital at Mahalaxmi Race in south-central Mumbai, Aditya had tweeted on Friday night: "This evening I also visited the mod-

ular hospital coming up at Mahalaxmi Racecourse. 370 beds in this unit, another unit of 600+ beds + ICU beds as well. Such jumbo facilities are coming up across the city".

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had visited the isolation and quarantine facilities (CCC-2) at NSE ground at Goregaon in north Mumbai earlier on Friday morning.

Subsequently the NCP chief Sharad Pawar also visited the isolation and quarantine facility at the BKC's

MMRDA ground.

On its part, the BMC has already expanded the Corona care center - 1 capacity to 22,941 beds. In CCC-1 centres suspect and contacts are admitted.

Don't want to talk to Xi right now: Trump

Washington: US President Donald Trump has said that he does not want to talk to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping right now, expressing his displeasure at Beijing's handling of the coronavirus outbreak which has spread across the world, killing over 300,000 people.

The US has expressed disappointment over China's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic which has claimed 87,530 lives in America. President Trump on Thursday threatened to 'cut off the whole relationship' with China.

The president has been pressing China to agree for an inquiry into the origin of the virus, including the allegation that it emerged from a lab in Wuhan.

"Just don't want to talk to him right now. We will see what happens over the next little while," Trump told reporters at the White House on Friday, when asked why he did not want to not speak to Xi.

China, as per the trade deal inked earlier this year, is buying a lot more of American goods than last year.

"They are spending a lot on the trade deal, but the trade deal I don't know somehow I lost a little flavour for it, you can understand," Trump said.

Earlier in the day, Trump said he did not want to talk about the trade deal.

"I don't want to talk about it. I can say China is buying a lot of our products. But the trade deal - the ink was barely dry - when this (coronavirus) came in from China. So, it's not like we're thrilled," he said.

"This should have never happened. This came from China. It should have been stopped in China before it got out to the world. 186 countries are affected. Each country that's affected is the same thing. Russia now is badly affected. France is badly affected. You look at each country and you can say 'affected' or you can say 'infected', either way you want

to put it," he said.

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany told reporters that President Trump was frustrated with China.

"I will leave it to the president as to when he resumes speaking with the Chinese leader. But look, China slow walked this. I've shared with you guys before on human-to-human transmission. It was really important that the world knew of that aspect of the disease, but that information was slow walked through to the WHO," she said.

The genetic sequencing, likewise, was not given until a professor in Shanghai did so on his own. The president has repeatedly noted that why are they letting flights out of China but not into China? These decisions put American lives at risk. Not just American lives, the lives around the globe, she said.

"We know that this disease came from China, and why that

information was not shared, some of the information I just suggested is really unacceptable. So he's frustrated at this point, and I'll leave it to him," McEnany said.

China has denied America's accusation of covering up the extent of its coronavirus outbreak and accused the US of attempting to divert the public attention by insinuating that the virus originated from a virology laboratory in Wuhan.

"China was the first country to report the Covid-19 to the World Health Organisation (WHO), (and) that doesn't mean the virus originated from Wuhan... There has never been any concealment, and we'll never allow any concealment," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said last month.

"A discerning person will understand at a glance that the purpose is to create confusion, divert public attention, and shirk their responsibility," he said.

Meanwhile, US Secretary

of State Mike Pompeo said the Trump administration will not tolerate efforts by the Chinese Communist Party to undermine the privacy of US citizens or the integrity of next-generation networks worldwide.

"(Chinese technology company) Huawei is an untrustworthy vendor and a tool of the Chinese Communist Party, beholden to its orders. The Department of Justice has indicted Huawei for stealing US technology and helping Iran evade sanctions, and the Department of Commerce has placed Huawei on the Entity List in 2019.

"The Department of State has engaged for more than a year to share what we know about Huawei and other untrustworthy vendors with allies and partners around the world," he said.

On Friday, the Department of Justice expanded rules to prevent Huawei from undermining US export controls, closing a loophole that has

allowed the company to exploit US technology and threaten national security.

"It also imposes US export control restrictions on countries that use US technology or software to design and produce semiconductors for Huawei. Companies wishing to sell certain items to Huawei produced with US technology must now obtain a license from the United States," Pompeo said.

The US will continue to restrict most American exports to Huawei and its affiliates on the Entity List for activities that threaten US national security and international stability, Pompeo said.

The novel coronavirus which originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan last year has claimed 307,666 lives and infected more than 4.5 million people globally, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

The US is the worst affected country with 87,530 deaths and over 1.4 million infections reported so far.

Brazil's Health Minister resigns after one month on the job

AP ■ SAO PAULO

Brazil's health minister resigned Friday after less than a month on the job in a sign of continuing upheaval over how the nation should battle the coronavirus pandemic, quitting a day after President Jair Bolsonaro stepped up pressure on him to expand use of the antimalarial drug chloroquine in treating patients.

Dr. Nelson Teich, an oncologist and health care consultant, took the job April 17 faced with the task of aligning the ministry's actions with the president's view that Brazil's economy must not be destroyed by restrictions to control spread of the virus.

Teich's predecessor, Luiz Henrique Mandetta, also had rejected the use of choloquine,

which also had been touted by U.S. President Donald Trump as a treatment.

Officials say more than 13,000 people have died in Brazil from COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, though some experts say the figure is significantly higher due to insufficient testing.

The peak of the crisis has yet to hit Latin America's largest nation, experts say.

Gen. Eduardo Pazuello, who had no health experience until he became the Health Ministry's No. 2 official in April, will be the interim minister until Bolsonaro chooses a replacement. Brazilian media have said that Teich's ability to do his job had been weakened by the appointment of dozens of military personnel to jobs in the ministry.

Trump's emergency powers worry senators, legal experts

Washington: The day he declared the COVID-19 pandemic a national emergency, President Donald Trump made a cryptic offhand remark.

"I have the right to do a lot of things that people don't even know about," he said at the White House.

Trump wasn't just crowing. Dozens of statutory authorities become available to any president when national emergencies are declared. They are rarely used, but Trump last month stunned legal experts and others when he claimed — mistakenly — that he has "total" authority over governors in easing COVID-19 guidelines.

That prompted 10 senators to look into how sweeping Trump believes his emergency powers are. They have asked to see this administration's Presidential Emergency Action Documents, or PEADs. The lit-

tle-known, classified documents are essentially planning papers.

The documents don't give a president authority beyond what's in the Constitution.

But they outline what powers a president believes that the Constitution gives him to deal with national emergencies.

The senators think the documents would provide them a window into how this White House interprets presidential emergency powers.

"Somebody needs to look at these things," Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, said in a telephone interview. "This is a case where the president can declare an emergency and then say 'Because there's an emergency, I can do this, this and this.'"

King, 7 Democrats and 1 Republican sent a letter late last month to acting national intelligence director Richard Grenell asking to be briefed on

any existing PEADs.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., wrote a similar letter to Attorney General William Barr and White House counsel Pat Cipollone.

"The concern is that there could be actions taken that would violate individual rights under the Constitution," such as limiting due process, unreasonable search and seizure and holding individuals without cause, King said. "I'm merely speculating. It may be that we get these docs and there's nothing untoward in their checks and balances and everything is above board and reasonable."

Joshua Geltzer, visiting professor of law at Georgetown University, said there is a push to take a look at these documents because there is rising distrust for the Trump administration's legal interpretations in a way he hasn't seen in his lifetime. **AP**

S Korea links 162 cases to clubgoers

Seoul: South Korean officials say they so far confirmed 162 coronavirus cases linked to club goers in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, but also expressed cautious hope that infections are beginning to wane.

Health Ministry official Son Young-rae on Saturday said the country may have ducked a major surge in transmissions in a region where half of its 51 million people live, pointing out that the daily increase in infections have been within 30 over the past days despite a jump in tests.

Son said 46,000 have so far been tested after health workers earlier this month detected a slew of infections linked to clubs and other nightspots in Seoul's Itaewon entertainment district.

"It's notable there were no new transmissions in churches, call centers and gyms where virus carriers went to," Son said. **AP**

He said this was a sign that facilities and businesses are properly practicing hygiene and enforcing distance between people, which he said would be crucial as the country explores a more sustainable form of social distancing.

Authorities had expanded what they call "anonymous testing," which allows people to provide only their phone numbers and not their names for COVID-19 tests.

Some South Korean media have described the Itaewon clubs linked to infections as catering to sexual minorities, which raised concern of discouraging sick people from coming forward in fear of homophobic backlash.

South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Saturday reported 19 new cases of the coronavirus, but 10 were linked to passengers arriving from abroad. **AP**

Pizzas, haircuts back on the menu, but with warnings

Venice: Venice geared up to receive tourists, Milan's pizzerias prepared to open and Australians headed out to eat for the first time in weeks Saturday, but the reopening of restaurants, pubs and cafes came with a warning: Don't overdo it.

Public health experts are urging caution as governments ease restrictions on eateries, shops and parks in many countries and roll out measures to restart dormant factories.

The coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 300,000 people, has slowed in many places but could pick up again if precautions aren't taken or officials move too quickly to get people back to work.

"The message is, yes, appreciate all the efforts, appre-

ciate the opportunity to release some of those measures, but let's not have a party, let's not go to town," said Tony Bartone, president of the Australian Medical Association.

Most restaurants are limited to 10 customers at a time, and Bartone said people must maintain social distance, follow coughing etiquette, wash their hands regularly and stay away from others if they are ill.

In New Zealand, even Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and her fiancé, Clarke Gayford, were initially turned away for Saturday brunch by a restaurant in the capital city, Wellington, because it was too full under coronavirus guidelines. Gayford took responsibility, saying he hadn't made reservations. **AP**

Virus spreads in Yemen with health system in a shambles

Sanaa (Yemen): Hundreds of people in Aden, southern Yemen's main city, have died in the past week with symptoms of what appears to be the coronavirus, local health officials said in interviews with The Associated Press.

The officials fear the situation is only going to get worse: Yemen has little capacity to test those suspected of having the virus and a 5-year-long civil war has left the health system in shambles.

One gravedigger in Aden told AP he'd never seen such a constant flow of dead — even in a city that has seen multiple bouts of bloody street battles during the civil war.

Officially, the number of coronavirus virus cases in Yemen is low — 106 infections in the southern region, with 15

deaths. Authorities in the Houthis rebel-controlled north announced their first case on May 5 and say there has been only two infection, one of whom died, a Somali migrant.

But doctors say the Houthis are covering up an increasing number of cases to protect their economy and troops. And the surge in deaths in Aden — more than 500 in just the past week, according to the city registrar — has raised the nightmare scenario that the virus is spreading swiftly in a country with almost no capacity to resist it. The upswing in suspected COVID-19 cases in Yemen is sounding alarms throughout the global health community, which fears the virus will spread like wildfire throughout the world's most vulnerable populations such as

refugees or those impacted by war. "If you have a full-blown community transmission in Yemen, because of the fragility, because of the vulnerability, because of the susceptibility, it will be disastrous," said Altaf Musani, the World Health Organization chief in Yemen.

WHO says its models suggest that, under some scenarios, half of Yemen's population of 30 million could be infected and more than 40,000 could die.

Half of Yemen's health facilities are dysfunctional, and 18 per cent of the country's 333 districts have no doctors. Water and sanitation systems have collapsed. Many families can barely afford one meal a day.

Yemen has no more than 500 ventilators and 700 ICU beds nationwide. There is one oxygen cylinder per month for

every 2.5 million people.

WHO provided some 6,700 test kits to Yemen, split between north and south, and says another 32,000 are coming.

The health agency says it is trying to procure more protective equipment and supplies to fight the virus.

But WHO said efforts have been hampered because of travel restrictions and competition with other countries.

The ongoing civil war pits the Houthis, who occupy the north, against a U.S. and Saudi-backed coalition that formed an internationally recognized government in the south.

Now that coalition in the South has fragmented: separatists backed by the United Arab Emirates rose up and expelled the government from southern capital Aden last summer and declared self-rule last month. The two factions are fighting in Abyan, a province adjacent to Aden.

The war has already killed more than 100,000 and displaced millions.

The two warring sides in Yemen's civil war have taken vastly different approaches to dealing with the pandemic, each in its own way fueling the possible spread of the virus.

The south is a picture of utter collapse: Rival factions within the U.S. Backed coalition are battling for control. No one appears to be in charge as an already wrecked health system seems to have completely shut down. Health personnel, with little protective equipment, are terrified of treating anyone suspected of having the coronavirus. **AP**

Trump fires State Dept Inspector General

Washington: President Donald Trump has fired the State Department's inspector general, an Obama administration appointee whose office was critical of alleged political bias in the agency's management.

The ouster is the latest in a series of moves against independent executive branch watchdogs who have found fault with the Trump administration.

A senior department official said Trump removed Steve Linick from his job on Friday but gave no reason for his ouster. In a letter to Congress, Trump said Linick, whos had held the job since 2013, no longer had his full confidence and that his removal would take effect in 30 days.

Trump did not mention Linick by name in his letter. Democrats in Congress immediately cried foul, with the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee suggesting that Linick was fired in part in retaliation for opening an unspecified investigation into



Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

"This firing is the outrageous act of a president trying to protect one of his most loyal supporters, the secretary of state, from accountability," Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., said in a statement. "I have learned that the Office of the Inspector General had opened an investigation into Secretary Pompeo. Mr. Linick's firing amid such a probe strongly suggests that this is an unlawful act of retaliation." Engel offered no details of the investigation, although two congressional aides said it involved allegations that Pompeo may have improperly treated staff. Linick's office has issued several reports critical of the department's handling of personnel matters during the Trump administration, including accusing some political

appointees of retaliating against career officials. "If Inspector General Linick was fired because he was conducting an investigation of conduct by Secretary Pompeo, the Senate cannot let this stand," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn.

"The Senate Foreign Relations Committee must get to bottom of what happened here," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi also condemned Linick's ouster, saying he had been "punished for honorably performing his duty to protect the Constitution and our national security." "The president must cease his pattern of reprisal and retaliation against the public servants who are working to keep Americans safe, particularly during this time of global emergency," Linick, whose office also took issue with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server while she served as America's top diplomat, played a minor role in the Ukraine impeachment investigation into Trump. **AP**

Pak's anti-graft body OK's filing of 2 more graft cases against Sharif

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's anti-graft body has approved the filing of two additional corruption cases against embattled former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who is currently in London for medical treatment.

Five corruption cases have been launched by the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan previously against the 70-year-old supremo of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz since his ouster from the office by the Supreme Court in July 2017 in the Panama Papers case.

The National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) regional board, under the chairmanship of its Director General Shahzad Saleem, discussed the additional corruption cases against Nawaz, his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif, daughter Maryam Nawaz and 13 others in money laundering and possession of assets beyond known sources of income investigation. **AP**

Pakistani doc planning to carry out 'lone wolf' terror attacks in US indicted

Washington: A 28-year-old Pakistani doctor on H-1B visa has been indicted by a federal grand jury on pledging allegiance to the Islamic State terrorist group and expressing his desire to carry out "lone wolf" terror attacks in the US.

According to the indictment, Muhammad Masood, a licensed medical doctor from Pakistan, was formerly employed as a research coordinator at a reputed medical clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

The indictment against Masood was announced on Friday by US Attorney Erica MacDonald. Masood was initially charged by criminal complaint and has been in custody since his March 19 arrest at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

Between January and March this year, he made several statements to others, including pledging his allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) and its leader, and expressing his desire to travel to Syria to fight for ISIS.

Masood also expressed his desire to conduct "lone wolf" terrorist attacks in the United States, the court papers said.

On February 21 this year, Masood purchased a plane ticket from Chicago to Amman, Jordan, and from there planned to travel to Syria.

On March 16 this year, Masood's travel plans changed because Jordan closed its borders to incoming travel due to the coronavirus pandemic.

He made a new plan to fly from Minneapolis to Los Angeles to meet up with an individual who he believed would assist him with travel via cargo ship to deliver him to ISIS territory. On March 19, Masood travelled from Rochester to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) to board a flight bound for Los Angeles, California.

Upon arrival at the MSP, Masood checked in for his flight and was subsequently arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Joint Terrorism Task Force. **PTI**

Burr submits final Russia report before leaving chairmanship

Washington: Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr has submitted the final report in the panel's three-year Russia investigation to the intelligence community for a declassification review.

The move came hours before he was to temporarily step aside as chairman of the panel.

The report on the panel's counterintelligence findings — including whether President Donald Trump's campaign coordinated with Russia — marks the conclusion of its Russia probe, which it first launched in January 2017.

But the panel did not release any of the findings Friday, instead asking the intelligence community to quickly allow the release of a declassified version of the report.

Burr said Thursday that he would temporarily give up the position as chairman after federal agents examining his recent stock sales showed up at his home Wednesday with a warrant to search his cellphone. **AP**

Top fugitive in Rwanda's genocide held in Paris

AP ■ KIGALI

One of the most wanted fugitives in Rwanda's 1994 genocide has been arrested in Paris, authorities said on Saturday.

Felicien Kabuga, who had a \$5 million bounty on his head, was arrested as a result of a joint investigation with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals office of the prosecutor, French authorities said.

The 84-year-old Kabuga had been wanted in the genocide that killed more than 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus who tried to protect them. French authorities said he had been living in Paris under an assumed name.

The UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda indicted Kabuga in 1997 on charges related to conspiracy to commit genocide, persecution and extermination. **AP**

Amendment to EC Act not something impossible to achieve: Paswan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Saturday said bringing an amendment to the six-and-a-half-decades old Essential Commodities Act to deregulate six types of agri-produce is not something impossible to achieve but one needs to see the practicality. "There is nothing impossible. What is to be seen - whether it is practical or not. We are examining this issue. It is a Cabinet-level decision," Paswan told reporters in a video conference. As part of the third tranche of the economic package to help farmers during the COVID-19 crisis, the government on Friday announced amendment to the Essential Commodities Act to deregulate sale of food items, including cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onion, and potato as well as and imposition of stock limit only under very exceptional circumstances like national calamities and famine when there is a surge in prices among others.

LOCKDOWN 4.0

Auto-rickshaws, malls, domestic flights likely

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

As the nationwide Lockdown 4.0 is set to begin from Monday with different specifications, it is expected that movement of auto-rickshaws, opening of shopping malls and starting of domestic flights could be on the cards allowing some amount of normalcy to return after nearly two months as the COVID-19 crisis brought the country to an unprecedented standstill.

Metro, bus services, barber shops, restaurants, local markets and home appliance repairing shops are expected to be allowed with considerable relaxations in the green and orange zones under the new guidelines for the fourth phase of lockdown that may extend for another 14 days.

However, the red zones will have no relaxations in the new guidelines to be announced by Saturday evening or Sunday but there is possibility of some specifications in containment zones as the 54-day lockdown in three

phases to help fight the Covid-19 pandemic is due to end on May 17.

After coordinating with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his advisor PK Mishra and Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a meeting with top Ministry officials in this regard on Friday and another meeting began in the Ministry of Home Affairs on Saturday, sources said.

As many States have advised to continue the lockdown till May end so far, the Home Ministry, which announces the lockdown measures under National Disaster Management Act (NDMA), has been considering the views received to take a decision.

On request of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, most of the states had shared their views on lockdown extension by Friday so that the Home Ministry could come up with a "totally different" lockdown measures, said a source.

While some states have supported extension of the lockdown, most have asked

for easing restrictions as well as more autonomy in deciding demarcation of areas as red, green, orange zones which as of now is determined by the Centre, the source said requesting anonymity.

Maharashtra, which has the highest number of novel coronavirus or Covid-19 cases and deaths from the virus, wants strict lockdown measures to continue in various cities such as Mumbai, Pune, Solapur, Aurangabad and Malegaon till May 31 considering the increasing number of cases.

Despite being the second-highest in COVID-19 cases, Gujarat expressed wish to resume economic activities in major urban centres citing economic activity as an important tool and that now people cannot afford to sit at home fearing the deadly disease.

The Home Ministry has been also considering the suggestions of Delhi government which has proposed opening of markets, shopping complexes and operation of buses and metro services with strict social

distancing norms.

The government has also mooted resumption of construction activities in the national capital and that movement of labourers within Delhi be allowed, sources in the government said.

National capital's neighbouring state Haryana has favoured extension of the lockdown with permission to states to be given liberty to decide what activities should be allowed for a gradual return to normalcy.

Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha have urged the Centre to extend the lockdown till the end of this month besides keeping air and rail traffic, other than Shramik Special trains, suspended during the period in view of the situation that has emerged following the return of migrants to Bihar from across the country on a large scale.

Tamil Nadu, however, expressed opinion to ease curbs to pep up the economy but it is against opening up air and train services till May 31 as the number of coronavirus cases in

the state inched towards 10,000, second only to Maharashtra.

The West Bengal government, which has been on loggerheads with the Centre on various points, has decided to support Home Ministry's decision to extend the lockdown but wants the states to be allowed to decide on relaxations in their respective areas.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is on the job to come up with a guideline in line with the latest announcement of Prime Minister Modi in which he announced that lockdown extension which will be enforced after May 18 will have a fresh 'avatar', with completely new rules and norms.

Relieving restrictions is the need of the hour as the economy is passing through its worst phase and there is a need to boost it up and bring back life on track despite COVID-19 exists. The Prime Minister had announced the lockdown on March 24 to break the chain of COVID-19 which has claimed 2,752 deaths and nearly 86,000 infected people across the country.



RIL rights issue opens on May 20

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The ₹53,125 crore rights issue of Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) will open for subscription on May 20. In a filing with the stock exchanges, RIL said the issue opening date is May 20 and the closing date is June 3.

This was approved by the Rights Issue Committee of the board of directors at a meeting held on Friday. The letter of

offer will be filed with BSE, NSE and the Securities and Exchange Board of India. The abridged letter of offer, application form of rights issue and rights entitlement letter will be sent to the eligible equity shareholders of the company. This is the first rights issue by RIL in nearly three decades. The rights issue of RIL will be priced at ₹ 1,257 per share with share ratio at 1:15. The issue amount is ₹53,125 crore.

Historic reforms to bolster domestic production, promote innovation: Thakur

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Historic structural reforms announced on Saturday will bolster domestic production and promote cutting edge innovation in defence, aviation, and atomic energy space, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur said.

"Today's announcements have unleashed a new frontier of business and domestic innovation with private partnerships. There will be a tectonic

shift in how India imports and does business. These sectors employ millions and will have a great significance in enhancing the economic outlook of the country in this decade," he said.

These reforms across various sectors including coal, mines, civil aviation, will have a positive impact on the growth trajectory by enhancing investments, increased production capacity and thereby offer avenues for job creation, he said

in a statement.

With diversified opportunities in the coal sector, he said the new incentives will spur the growth of the sector exponentially.

Private investments have been enhanced in the mining sector with the introduction of a seamless composite exploration-cum-mining-cum-production regime, he said, adding that this would bring many more mineral blocks into the auction.

Pushed to wall, may take vehicles off road: Transporters

New Delhi: Alleging that the Government seems to have turned a blind eye towards their plight, a section of transporters on Saturday said prevailing circumstances may compel them to take vehicles off the road if no relief is announced to mitigate the impact of coronavirus-related lockdown.

"If urgent relief measures are not taken the day is not far away when the transport fraternity of India will be auto compelled to stop its vehicles, which invariably is the scenario on the ground," the All India

Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) said.

"The Government imposed lockdowns and its apathy has pushed the road transport sector to dreadful levels... The temper and the frustration of the members from across the country were uniform and they were in unison in expressing their inability to run their vehicles and feel compelled to halt their vehicles running on roads," AIMTC said after holding a video conference with its members.

PTI

Reforms to empower consumers, provide quality power on cards

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

In the next wave of reforms, the Government plans to ensure quality power to consumers and empower them against poor services and inefficiencies.

Through a new tariff policy, the Centre will introduce regulations that will define the consumer rights to protect them from discoms' inefficiencies.

Under these set of regulations, standard of service would

be prescribed and deviations would result in penalties for discoms (power distribution companies). The distribution entities would also need to ensure adequate power, while load-shedding will be penalised.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the new tariff policy would also promote the industry as it would also progressively reduce cross-subsidies, making industrial power tariffs more transparent and market-driven.

Industry will also be provided time-bound grant of open access and the selection of generation and transmission project developers will also be done competitively.

The tariff policy will also bring in guidelines for elimination of regulatory assets, timely payment of Gencos.

Another major reform, proposed for the power sector, is introduction of direct benefit transfer (DBT) of the power tariff subsidy to identified consumers.

WESTERN RAILWAY				
VARIOUS CIVIL ENGINEERING WORKS				
Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway, 6 th floor, Engg. Dept., Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400 008. Invites E-tender as per details given as follows.				
Sr. No.	Tender Notice No. & Date	Work and location	Approx. cost of work in ₹	EMD ₹
1	BCT/20-21/58 dtd15-05-2020	CCG-VR Sec: Dewatering during monsoon 2020 in various section of Mumbai division.	₹1,04,81,280/-	₹2,02,400/-
2	BCT/20-21/59 dtd15-05-2020	Vasali Road, Naigaon, & Bhayander: Supply of potable drinking water by tanker to Vasali Road colony, stations, service building, Naigaon colony along with newly constructed quarters at Bhayander & Bhayander Rest house for a period of two years.	₹1,65,60,691.20	₹2,32,800/-
3	BCT/20-21/60 dtd15-05-2020	STC-VR Section: Repairs to DN take pipe, cross drainage & valley gutter in connection with monsoon work.	₹3,35,86,044.83	₹3,17,900
4	BCT/20-21/61 dtd15-05-2020	(Zone 7A- I): Santacruz-Virar Sec: General repairs & Painting, white washing, colour washing, distemper polishing etc for Kandivali and Virar carshed in the jurisdiction of SSE(W/Borivali).	₹50,00,000.00	₹1,00,000
5	BCT/20-21/62 dtd15-05-2020	Andheri, Jogeshwari, Ram Mandir, Goregaon and Borivali: painting of platform covering in the jurisdiction of SSE (W-III) BV1	₹2,26,70,464/-	₹2,63,400/-
6	BCT/20-21/63 dtd15-05-2020	Santacruz-Virar: Repairs to COP between COP & FOB gaps.	₹5,83,77,278.23	₹4,41,900/-
7	BCT/20-21/64 dtd15-05-2020	Zone-3A-1: - New works & ordinary repairs works in marine lines Khar section in the jurisdiction of SSW (W-II) Mumbai Central under ADEN(W/S)BA	₹1,08,00,000/-	₹2,04,000/-
8	BCT/20-21/65 dtd15-05-2020	Zone 3A-2: New works & all ordinary repairs works in the jurisdiction of SSE (W) Bamy under ADEN(W/S)BA.	₹1,07,00,000/-	₹2,03,500/-
9	BCT/20-21/66 dtd15-05-2020	Zone 4A: New works & all ordinary repairs. works in the jurisdiction of SSE (W-II)-Lower Parel, SSE(W-I)PL & SSE(W)Matunga Road under ADEN (Est/S) Lower Parel	₹1,00,00,000/-	₹2,00,000/-
10	BCT/20-21/67 dtd15-05-2020	Zone 4A-1: New works & all ordinary repairs works in the jurisdiction of SSE (W)-Pali hill under ADEN(W/S)BA.	₹80,00,000/-	₹1,60,000/-
11	BCT/20-21/68 dtd15-05-2020	Zone 5: New works & all ordinary repairs works in the jurisdiction of SSE (W)-Lower Parel under ADEN(W/S)BA.	₹72,82,185.45	₹1,45,600/-
12	BCT/20-21/69 dtd15-05-2020	Mel-Khar Sec: Supply of Potable Drinking Water by tankers on Railway Station for a period of two years for Mumbai Central Laundry at PDGR and on Railway Station on Marine Lines-Khar Road Section.	₹80,32,000.00	₹1,60,600.00
13	BCT/20-21/70 dtd15-05-2020	Mahalaxmi (Workshop): Supply of potable drinking water by tankers for a period of two years at Mahalaxmi (sports ground), Mahalaxmi (store), Mahalaxmi (RPF colony)	₹39,13,984.80	₹78,300.00
14	BCT/20-21/71 dtd15-05-2020	Zone-A : Churchgate - Virar Section - General repairs in the jurisdiction of SE(W) Badhwar Park section at Badhwar Park colony, including all Railway Officers flats / quarters, all Recreational buildings etc., at Badhwar Park area in Colaba.	₹81,03,293.17	₹1,62,100.00
15	BCT/20-21/72 dtd15-05-2020	Zone- B: CCG VR sec. General repairs in the jurisdiction of SE (W) Churchgate in section from CCG (incl) to Marine Line (excl) & (incl) CCG station complex with all Railway Offices therein, Western Railway HQ Offices, Service bldgs. including Churchgate Rly Qtrss In Churchgate	₹91,02,355.00	₹1,82,100.00
16	BCT/20-21/73 dtd15-05-2020	Zone-C Churchage Virar Section - General repairs including painting in the jurisdiction of SSE (W-I) Mumbai Central Includes Mumbai Central Station Main J.R. Hospital Quateres in J.R.Hospital, Agripada Colony, Skyscraper,14 officers flat, Reservation Office buildings, DRM's office and all service buildings in Mumbai Central.	₹75,03,025.86	₹1,50,100.00
17	BCT/20-21/74 dtd15-05-2020	Horticulture Zone- Churchgate - Virar section - Development of gardens of supply of fertilizers, manure seeds plants flower pots garden equipment and accessories	₹30,97,260.02	₹62,000.00

Sr No. 1 - 3 & 7 - 17 Date & Time of submission On 08-06-2020 till 15:00 hrs **Date & Time of opening** On 08-06-2020 at 15:30 hrs **Sr No. 4 - 6 Date & Time of submission** On 09-06-2020 till 15:00 hrs **Date & Time of opening** On 09-06-2020 at 15:30 hrs

Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of the tender document (non refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit www.ireps.gov.in Manual offers will not be considered.

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HRD Minister e-launches 7 titles on 'Psycho-social impact of pandemic & lockdown, how to cope with'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To counter these formidable circumstances that the world is facing these days, NBT has brought out these remarkable and unparallel set of books, and I hope that these books serve as guides to mental well-being of people at large", said Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India while e-releasing the print as well as e-editions of the set of 7 titles under NBT's Corona Studies Series, followed by an e-interactive session with the researchers/authors of NBT Study Group.

Congratulating the National Book Trust, India for its unique efforts, Dr Nishank added, "I want to thank the researchers as well, who have brought together this significant material in book form for easy reading of the people.



And I agree that preventive mental health is an important subject area that we all need in these difficult times to go ahead and fight as warriors against the pandemic."

He also quoted the famous lines "Mann ke haare har hai Mann ke jeete jeet", which means that our mind and psychological well-being decides our actions.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Govind Prasad Sharma, Chairman NBT said, "In my age, I have seen many epidemics and diseases affecting

the world, but what we are facing today is challenging because it is affecting the psychology of even those who are not corona-affected.

Hence the need for these books is of utmost importance, and they will serve the needs of the readers not only in India but abroad as well". Prof. Sharma also thanked the Hon'ble Minister for his guidance and his efforts in ensuring that children across India are not affected by this pandemic and has ensured e-learning for all.

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE FOR SUPPLY OF STORE ITEMS

E-TENDER NOTICE NO.: NIT/14/20/16, Dated: 12/05/2020.

South East Central Railway has implemented an e-system. On the behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Material Manager, South East Central Railway invites e-tenders for supply of the following items. Advertised tenders will be dealt through e-procurement system only. No manual offer will be entertained. These tenders can be accessed under the link www.ireps.gov.in.

Sr. No	Tender No.	Description	Tender closing/ opening date & time	Qty.
1	05201200	GI Boom 32 (feet)	08.06.2020, 10:30 AM	350 Nos

Railway reserve the right to issue any corrigendum to the tenders. Corrigendum & important Notice to vendors may be seen in the link www.ireps.gov.in.

For Principal Chief Materials Manager
S.E.C. Railway, Bilaspur
CPR/10/60
[South East Central Railway](https://www.facebook.com/SouthEastCentralRailway) @secrail

UJVNL LTD.
H.O.: 'UJJWAL', Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones : 0135-2763508, 2763808 & Fax : 0135- 2763507
CIN No.-U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website : www.ujvnl.com

Letter No. 308

Tender Notice Dated : 16.05.2020

NIT No. 04 & 05/EE(PATHRI)/2020-21

The office of Executive Engineer, (M&G) Pathri Power House, Bahadradabad, Hardwar invites sealed tenders from experienced firms for following works/supply for Pathri Power House:-

NIT No.04 : Supply of various types of electrical items at Power House.

NIT No.05 : Annual Contract for Sweeping, Cleaning & Up-keeping of Power House.

1. App. Value : Rs.4,93,984.00 (GST extra) & Rs.5,64,795.00 (GST extra) respectively

2. EMD : Rs.19,800.00 & Rs.17,000.00 respectively

3. Tender Fee : Rs.295.00 & Rs.590.00 respectively

4. Last date of downloading tender document : 08.06.2020 up to 14:00 Hrs.

5. Last Date of submission of tender : 08.06.2020 up to 16:00 Hrs.

6. Date of opening of tender : 10.06.2020 at 11:00 Hrs.

For Eligibility Criteria and fuller and further details kindly visit our website. These tenders are available on our website ["www.uttarakhandjalvidyut.com"](http://www.uttarakhandjalvidyut.com) with the facility to download the tender documents.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

Relaxation by BIS in Grant of License for N95 Masks Manufacturers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With a view to promoting the domestic production of FFP2 masks (commonly known as N95 masks), as per Indian Standard (IS 9473), BIS has taken a few important decisions. The requirement of complete in-house test facility for the Grant

of License for the production of FFP2 masks has been relaxed. The manufacturers can get their product tested in any BIS recognised lab or the testing facilities available with other BIS license-holders.

BIS has also undertaken an advocacy campaign with the firms manufacturing masks to encourage them.

WESTERN RAILWAY				
VARIOUS CONSTRUCTION WORKS				
Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway , 6 th floor, Engg. Deptt., Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400008 invites E tenders as per details given below				
Sr. No.	Tender Notice No & Date	Work & Location	Approx. Cost of Work in ₹	EMD in ₹
1	BCT/20-21/75 dtd 15/5/2020	Repairs to MCGM ROB's and MCGM FOB's including old staircases on condition basis etc between Churchgate - Khar Section as per IIT report.	₹8,73,70,507.72	₹5,86,900.00
2	BCT/20-21/76 dtd 15/5/2020	Repairs to MCGM ROB's and MCGM FOB's including old staircases on condition basis etc between Santacruz - Dahisar section as per IIT report.	₹6,23,29,213.00	₹4,61,700.00
3	BCT/20-21/77 dtd 15/5/2020	Replacement of bearings of MCGM ROB's and its ancillary work in Churchgate - Khar section as per IIT report	₹4,94,68,517.13	₹3,97,400.00
4	BCT/20-21/78 dtd 15/5/2020	Replacement of bearings of MCGM ROB's and its ancillary work in Santacruz - Dahisar section as per IIT report	₹7,91,94,567.21	₹5,46,000.00
5	BCT/20-21/79 dtd 15/5/2020	Zone 3C-1 Marine Lines - Khar section General repairs, Painting, etc in zone in the jurisdiction of SSE(Bridges-Lower Parel), between Marine Lines (incl) and Khar (incl) for FOB's, ROB's only.	₹49,94,721.34	₹99,900.00
6	BCT/20-21/80 dtd 15/5/2020	Zone 3C-2 - Santacruz - Virar Section - General repairs, Painting etc, in zone in the jurisdiction of SSE (Bridges - Lower Parel) between Santacruz (incl) and Virar (incl) for FOB's, ROB's only.	₹49,41,103.69	₹98,800.00

Sr.No.1-4 Date & Time of Submission on 22.06.2020 till 15:00 hrs, **Date & Time of Opening** on 22.06.2020 at 15:30 hrs

Sr. No. 5 & 6 Date & Time of Submission on 10.06.2020 till 15:00 hrs, **Date & Time of Opening** on 10.06.2020 at 15:30 hrs

Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable) EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit www.ireps.gov.in. Manual offers will not be considered.

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There have been several cases of rape survivors turning hostile during trial, mostly due to social stigma and family pressure. However, justice is now being delivered despite such hiccups, thanks to the increased use of DNA evidence. SHALINI SAKSENA and MUSBA HASHMI tell you more

STAMP OF EVIDENCE

Over the last couple of years, we have seen a noticeable improvement in the quality of investigations with extensive use of advanced forensic technologies. In Gujarat, there has been a remarkable increase in DNA casework across categories of crime, including sexual offenses. Increasing awareness and growing confidence in collection and handling of forensic DNA material is evident in police investigations being able to withstand judicial scrutiny in sensitive cases

— **KESHAV KUMAR**
Senior IPS Officer, Gujarat

As per the NCRB report, in 2018, every fourth rape victim across the country was a minor and in almost 95% cases, the offender was known to the victim. These statistics show the vulnerability of children to sexual predators and explain why survivors are pressured by their family to turn hostile. This is the gap that forensic DNA technology is addressing. Top-notch investigations in sexual crimes against women and children remain a priority for Delhi Police even during this pandemic and we're taking steps to equip the force with the training and resources for proper collection, handling and transportation of DNA samples in all such cases.

— **SUMAN NALWA**
DCP, Delhi Police

When rape survivors are children, we require evidence to prove the crime beyond reasonable doubt. There are a few ways to do this. One of them is CCTV camera. Second, if the child has some STD. Third, injuries that are disproportionate and unnatural. Fourth, is DNA. Today, DNA testing is considered as conclusive evidence. But one has to ensure that it is not planted or contaminated and the custody is properly maintained.

— **DR OP MURTY**
Professor Forensic Medicine and Toxicology,
All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

Every fourth rape victim across the country in 2018 was a minor, the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data states. There is more — 14.1 per cent rape survivors (4,779) were aged above 16 years and below 18 years, followed by 10.6 per cent (3,616) who were between 12 and 16 years, 2.2 per cent (757) who were between six years and 12 years and 0.8 per cent (281) were below six.

But there is hope for rape survivors in getting justice. In the last six months, several cases of rape committed against minors have been expedited in courts because the Judiciary is now treating forensic DNA testing results as conclusive evidence. This is a step in the right direction given that there has been a surge in cases of sexual violence against children, especially during the COVID-19-triggered lockdown since March 25, 2020. More so, because courts see survivors and their families turn hostile during the trial. This pattern is particularly true in cases of sexual assault under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012.

Chandra Suman, Child Rights Lawyer says that forensic DNA testing is an appreciable step. However, the report itself takes a minimum of six months to come, if not more. "In the last six years, I have handled more than 500 rape cases under the POCSO Act. If you go back a year-and-a-half, DNA reports take almost two years to come. In such circumstances, where a DNA test report holds maximum importance, this delay can act as a setback. In the last year, in 30 per cent cases the time a report takes has considerably decreased to six months. Also, in sexual offences, there is a trial limit of a year, but if the report takes such a long time to come, the rest goes unsaid," he tells you.

The delay, he says, is because of multiple reasons. First, the survivor is warned by the doctors to not go through the test. They are told that the test can leave them with some internal injuries and they can even become infertile. Sometimes the

policemen ask the survivor to avoid going through such tests in order to save their image in the society. It can be because of the family pressure. Second, even if the DNA test is done, the sample remains unattended. Ideally, a day after the test, the DNA sample should reach the special labs. However, this happens rarely. It is seen that mostly, the sample keeps lying in police offices for around a month. During this time, it petrifies due to improper storage, leading to no clear results.

To rely on DNA testing for speedy action, the work should be done from the grassroot level. "The police/crime team should consider collecting the samples in a timely manner and make sure they reach the lab on time too. The staff should be trained to deal with the sensitivity of the samples. The capacity of labs should be increased and more experts hired for this," he says.

Advocate Siddh Vidya says DNA testing has a major role to play. It is a scientific evidence that can corroborate the survivor's oral evidence. "As per the law, the survivor's verbal evidence in court is sufficient to punish offenders but, at times, it comes with limitations. There have been instances where the survivor's memory starts to fade. In such circumstances, the defence lawyers manage to confuse them during cross-examination and make their statement appear to be contradictory or false. There have also been cases where the rape survivor has turned hostile during the trial, perhaps due to fear of social stigma and under family pressure. On many occasions, due to the absence of corroborative evidence, courts take a reluctant approach while punishing the offenders. While such an approach can't be called totally unjustifiable, in such a situation, DNA evidence has a major role to play as it is considered authentic and substantive. The good part is that courts have taken a positive outlook towards DNA reports and it has considered this to be enough for securing conviction for accused," Vidya says.

Dr Indrajit Khandekar, a known foren-

sic consultant and associate professor, Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Kasturba Hospital, Sevagram, Wardha, tells you that DNA testing as evidence in rapes cases has been in place for some time. It was a PIL back in 2010 with Maharashtra High Court which started it all. It stated that if the police machinery was not taking the help of DNA testing as evidence and that there was need for guidelines to make forensic DNA testing mandatory, provided that evidence is there (semen was found in testing).

"In May 2013, guidelines were placed by the Maharashtra Government. In March 2014, the Centre put in guidelines making DNA evidence compulsory in rape cases. Since then, all cases that have come my way, in Wardha, have requested for DNA testing," Khandekar tells you. What is even better is that while initially DNA testing was only in cases of rapes women over 18, the new guidelines also apply to POCSO Act.

"This is a positive move given that there are cases where small children are victims and are unable to explain what actually transpired. Also, cases in India take a long time and memory fades and defence lawyers take advantage and the accused goes scot-free. But if the DNA evidence matches, the accused will be behind bars. There are cases that involve date rape. Here, too DNA evidence can be used," Khandekar says.

He tells you that initially, though doctors were collecting samples from rape survivors, DNA evidence was not analysed. Forensic science labs were only blood grouping and said that there was semen evidence and writing blood group. "We all know that many people can have the same blood group. Also, the police while sending the sample never asked questions. Today, they put a request: If there is a semen stain, do a DNA forensic testing. Also, what has changed is that unlike the past where one had to take permission from the accused for a DNA sample, it is not so now. According to the Sec 53 of the

■ As many as 33,356 incidents of rape were reported during 2018 involving 33,977 victims, an average 89 rapes daily. In 2017, 32,559 rape cases were registered, while in 2016 the number stood at 38,947.

■ In 2018, 51.9 per cent rape victims (17,636) were aged between 18 and 30 years, 18 per cent (6,108) above 30 and below 45 years, 2.1 per cent (727) above 45 and below 60 years and 0.2 per cent (73) above 60 years.

■ Among states, Madhya Pradesh reported the highest (5,433) such cases in 2018, followed by Rajasthan (4,335), Uttar Pradesh (3,946), Maharashtra (2,142), Chhattisgarh (2,091), Kerala (1,945), Assam (1,648), Delhi (1,215), Haryana (1,296), Jharkhand (1,090) and West Bengal (1,069).

■ In 15,972 of the total 33,356 rape cases, the offenders were either family friends or neighbour or employer or other known person, while in 12,568 cases, the offenders were friends or online friends or live-in partner on pretext of marriage or separated husband.

■ In 2,780 cases, the victims were violated by their own family members, while only in 2,036 cases the offenders were unknown to them, according to the statistics.

NCRB

CrPC, the police can per force take the sample of the 'arrested person,' Khandekar shares.

A point to keep in mind is that that one must not mix investigative proceeding with court proceedings, says Supreme Court senior advocate Vivek Sood. "DNA testing is part of the investigative process. It doesn't really involve the court. However, the law has been amended and reasonable force can be used to extract the DNA profile of the accused here he refuses to give the sample. Here the investigative agency can move an application before the court to seek an order directing the accused to give his DNA. Once the DNA evidence has been collected it goes before the court," Sood say who has been practicing since 1992.

What this translate into is that before the law was amended, one could not use reasonable force. "This has changed. Once the DNA is lifted and it matches the survivor, then it is fool-proof evidence that the accused committed rape. For example, if from the clothes or private parts of the survivor, the DNA is found, it is credible scientific evidence. There are stipulations that come," Sood says.

According to him, there is nothing absolute in law. "Near conclusive means that it is authentic. If the survivor alleges that she was raped by an unknown accused, in say darkness, this is blind case where the survivor can't identify the perpetrator. The DNA from the survivor is lifted and kept frozen for years. And, as an when a suspect is caught and it matches, it is near conclusive. And therefore, making DNA testing mandatory is revolutionary," Sood says.

Tim Schellberg, president of Gordon Thomas Honeywell-Governmental Affairs (GTH-GA), tells you that the significant rise in DNA testing in India can be all tied to awareness. The public and policy makers are demanding it. "When a rape occurs, DNA is almost always left behind at the crime scene. Now that the survivors and their families are educated about DNA,

they are asking the police to take the DNA and demanding that Government test cases to serve justice. The police are more aware as well. As a result, the police are encouraging the collection of DNA. The Government is more aware too. They realise that DNA is the answer to reduce sexual assault and other crimes," Schellberg says. The GTH-GA focuses on providing policy, legislative and legal information regarding forensic DNA to crime labs, police and Government policy makers that are interested in establishing or expanding their forensic DNA programmes.

Interestingly, the company had conducted a study that highlighted that forensic DNA represents truth. With one simple test, it can determine who was at the crime scene and therefore who committed the crime. Also, it can quickly exonerate innocent suspects. By having robust DNA programmes, the police can quickly determine who committed the crime and save valuable time by not questioning and arresting innocent people.

"India needs DNA. Like the US, India has a crime problem, especially a sexual assault problem. To show the world that it is serious about crime, India should also have the best tool to fight crime, which is a strong DNA programme and database. Until India collects DNA routinely from all violent crime scenes and tests that evidence quickly, it will be ignoring the best crime control programme to ever exist. If 58 countries already do this, India can too," Schellberg says.

For Sood, the way forward to ensure a high conviction rate, lies in spreading awareness at all levels. "It is not just the common man who needs to know about the importance of DNA testing, but there is need to sensitise the agencies involved as well. We need to train people and create awareness in courts. There should be some kind of manual or a hand-out that says that there is need for DNA testing so that it becomes part of standard operating procedure when it comes dealing with rape cases," Sood says.



'Adopting even 30 per cent of what Kohli did is enough'

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India and Royal Challengers Bangalore leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal believes that the best thing about India skipper Virat Kohli is that he loves to take everyone along and doesn't believe in individual glory.

Speaking on Star Sports' show Cricket Connected, Yuzvendra Chahal revealed the most important lesson he has learned from the captain: "I have been playing with him for around 6 years now since our RCB days. One thing I have learned is that he is a down to earth person. No matter how much fame he has got, he will take everyone with him — whether it's personal or on field; that I have learned from him."

In fact, Chahal went on to add that while Kohli has changed his complete routine and eating habits, adopting even 30 per cent of what the captain does would be more than enough to be a successful cricketer.

"I know that he's a gym freak and how he has changed his body - I want to learn that from him. I have seen him since he was 18-19 - the transformation after 2012 or 2013, if anyone adopts even 30 per cent of what Virat did, it's more than enough."

While Kohli adores Chahal, on a lighter note, he recently called the spinner a clown. With the world coming to a standstill due to the coronavirus pandemic, cricketers have been forced to stay indoors and Chahal has been a constant on social media, either making TikTok videos or joining other cricketers on their live Instagram sessions. And that saw the



India skipper pull his leg while interacting with RCB teammate AB de Villiers.

Kohli asked de Villiers to check out Chahal's TikTok videos. "Have you

seen his TikTok videos? You should go and check out Yuzvendra Chahal's TikTok videos," said Kohli.

"You will not believe this guy is playing international cricket and he is

29-year-old. Just go and look at his videos. He's an absolute clown."

In fact, Kohli recently said he was even surprised to see Jasprit Bumrah take to social media like fish takes to

"I have been playing with him for around 6 years now since our RCB days. One thing I have learned is that he is a down to earth person. No matter how much fame he has got, he will take everyone with him — whether it's personal or on field; that I have learned from him."

water. "For me, definitely the biggest joker is Chahal. Next is Jasprit (Bumrah). He has been a revelation," Kohli said.

"I never knew he would talk in details like this publicly. One on one he does it quite often but I never thought he would do so openly like this," he added.

'Bowlers should be banned from using sweat & saliva'

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus outbreak has come to a standstill, but talks are on about life in the post-coronavirus era and one of the biggest talking points has been whether bowlers should be allowed to use sweat and saliva on balls to make them shine and aid swing. While various people have spoken for or against the issue, former India chief selector M.S.K. Prasad feels such techniques to shine the ball should be banned.

Speaking about changes in the rules due to COVID-19,

Prasad said on Star Sports' Telugu show Cricket Connected - Field Gurunchi: "Rules of the game state that external sources cannot be used to shine the ball as it will amount to ball tampering. So, players were used to using their own sweat, and in most cases, saliva to shine the ball to get it done. But in the current scenario, they should be banned from using this technique and ICC should come up with an alternative route."

Interestingly, India batsman Shreyas Iyer spoke to IANS about this and said that the law-makers should take the final call as it is important that bowlers also get a fair deal at the end of the day to stay relevant in the game.

"If we are starting, there shouldn't be any restrictions. As a batsman, I look for the ball to be new and as a bowler you need the ball to swing so it is kind of equally important for both. And it will be the law making body's decision and we will have to abide by that," he said.

Interestingly, Australia pacer Pat Cummins in a recent interview for Kolkata Knight Riders had said that if the situation is such that applying saliva or sweat to a ball can lead to spread of coronavirus, cricket wouldn't be starting in the first place. And Shreyas echoes the sentiments.

"Definitely, he is talking as a bowler. From the bowler's perspective it is really important to swing the ball as I said. It is important to maintain the ball and if that isn't there, then there would be no point of playing," he said.

Watch Cricket Connected in your preferred language exclusively on Star Sports 1 Tamil, Star Sports 1 Telugu and Star Sports 1 Kannada every Saturday at 7pm.



No crowds, no problem: Anderson

AFP ■ LONDON

James Anderson has insisted he is still excited about playing for England this season, even if matches are played behind closed doors.

England cricketers are set to return to limited individual training next week, with bowlers such as Anderson leading the way, amid assurances that health protocols will make their sessions less risky than going to a supermarket.

The England and Wales Cricket Board hope they can kickstart a season delayed by the coronavirus by rescheduling for July a three-Test series at home to the West Indies that was meant to take place in June.

But officials have conceded the only way international matches can be staged in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic is by barring spectators from what will be 'biosecure' grounds.

Anderson though has lost none of his enthusiasm when it comes to the prospect of adding to his England record tally of 584 Test wickets.

"It's exciting in a way we're actually talking about the possibility of playing cricket this summer," pace-man Anderson said Friday in an Instagram Live with longstanding new-ball colleague Stuart Broad.

"I think as long as everything is place with safety concerns then I'll be pretty comfortable playing.

"We've been a part of the England set up for a long time now. We've got some great people working on every possibility and outcome from this summer and going forwards."

As for playing in matches with no spectators, Anderson reckoned his experienced of taking part in some sparsely attended county matches for Lancashire would stand him in good stead.

INTENSITY

"It's quite easy to play in front of a big crowd because of the intensity, you have to be on top of your game," explained Anderson, a 37-year-old veteran of 151 Tests.

"If there's no people there you have to try and find your own energy and intensity from somewhere.

"To be honest it will be pretty similar to county cricket!" The ECB's plan in having the bowlers go back first is to try to give then a seven-week lead-in to a rescheduled first Test in July.

And with Britain in a state of lockdown, Broad said they would need that time to get themselves somewhere near match fitness.

"It's going to take us eight or nine bowling sessions I reckon for us to feel like our bodies are ready to get going," Broad said.

Anderson added: "Yeah it's hard. As much as you can bowl in your garden or with a tennis ball or whatever, nothing replicates practice or (being) out in the middle so we've got to give ourselves time to get back into it.

"And I think the other thing is not to get frustrated again because it's been so long since we bowled.

"If a balls got where you don't want them, you've just got to bide your time while you get back into it"

Smith comes nowhere close to Kohli: Pietersen

PTI ■ LONDON

Steve Smith's accomplishments pale in comparison to Virat Kohli's "unreal numbers" and the Indian captain has outstripped even the great Sachin Tendulkar with his mastery of chases, feels former England star Kevin Pietersen.

Smith and Kohli are among the leading batsmen in the world now but for Pietersen, the Australia doesn't even come close to the Indian superstar.

"Kohli, hands down. Freakshow. His record chasing, winning games for India with the amount of pressure he consistently lives under, Smith doesn't even come close," Pietersen told former Zimbabwe cricketer Pommie Mbangwa during an Instalive.

When Mbangwa asked Pietersen to choose between Kohli and Tendulkar, he said: "Again Virat



because of his chasing numbers. His chasing numbers are frightening. He averages 80 in chases, all his one-day hundreds come when chasing.

"He consistently wins games of cricket for India. He just keeps on turning the numbers, chasing, chasing, chasing."

Winning games for the coun-

try is much more important than individual performances, said Pietersen.

"That's what drives me. My Man of the Match performances.

It was not the way that I played or how I played. How many Man of the Match performances and how many games that you win for England. And he (Kohli) does that for India. Unreal numbers," added Pietersen.

Kohli, who has scored 70 international hundreds, averages more than 50 in all three formats. Smith, on the other hand, averages higher than Kohli in Tests with 7227 runs in 73 games at 62.74.

Kohli has scored 7240 runs in 86 Tests at 53.62. The Indian star averages 59.33 and 50.80 in ODIs and T20s, while Smith averages 42.46 and 29.60 respectively, in the two formats.

Steve was easily the most selfish cricketer I ever played with: Warne



IAN S ■ SYDNEY

Spin legend Shane Warne said on Friday that his former Australian teammate and captain Steve Waugh was "easily the most selfish cricketer" that he ever played with. Warne was responding to a stat on Twitter which talked about the number of times Waugh was involved in run-outs during his international career.

"Wow ! So S Waugh was involved in the most ever run outs in test cricket (104) & ran his partner out 73 times - is that correct ? Mmmmmmmmm (sic.)" he tweeted.

He then said in a later tweet: "For the record AGAIN & I've said this 1000 times - I do not hate S Waugh at all. FYI - I picked him in my all time best Australian team recently. Steve was easily the most selfish cricketer that I ever played with and this stat..... (sic.)"

Despite the number of years the pair shared the dressing room in the dominant Australian team of the late 1990's Warne and Waugh share a frayed relationship ever since Warne was dropped during a Test tour of the West Indies in 1999.

Warne had previously called Waugh selfish in his 2018 autobiography as well.

"Steve Waugh was the most selfish player I ever played with and was only worried about averaging 50," he had said in the book.

Srikanth calls for competition between bat & ball in ODIs

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

There have been quite some talk in recent times over the ODI rules which the likes of Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly have said work in favour of the batsmen and bowlers get a raw deal. While Tendulkar has said that using two new-balls in ODIs have meant that reverse swing has gone out of the game, Ganguly feels having two new balls during his time would mean scoring a boundary almost every over.

Speaking about the evolution of the ODI format, former India cricketer and chief selector Kris Srikanth said on Star Sports' Tamil show, Cricket Connected-Aatam Thodarattam: "When the competition between bat & ball is good, you'll always have contests in whichever format - the 2019 Cricket World Cup was an example. In our days, boundaries used to be 80-90 meters, now it's not more than 70-75 meters making life easier for the batsmen."

In contemporary times, an ODI inning is played with two new white-balls from each end. When it comes to field restrictions, each inning is divided into three powerplays.



In the first powerplay from overs 1-10, only two fielders are allowed outside the 30-yard circle. In the next 30 overs, i.e. from 11-40, four fielders are allowed and in the last 10 overs, five fielders are allowed outside the 30-yard circle.

On Tuesday, the International Cricket Council (ICC) had reminded the fans about the great Indian duo of Tendulkar and

Ganguly with a fact that they both stitched together 176 ODI partnerships throughout the course of their careers and scored 8227 runs at an average of 47.55.

The Master Blaster had taken note of the stats and said they would have probably scored more runs had the current rules applied during their playing days.

"This brings back wonderful memories Dadi. How many more do you think we would've been able to score with the restriction of four fielders outside the ring and two new balls?" tweeted Tendulkar.

Ganguly was quick to respond to Tendulkar and said: "Another 4000 or so...2 new balls...wow...sounds like a cover drive flying to the boundary in the first over of the game...for the remaining 50 overs."

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh suggested that ICC should amend the laws.

"At least few more thousands runs easily...such a bad rule this is...need few bowlers in ICC to keep the balance right between bat and ball...and games become more competitive when team scores 260/270 now days everyone scoring 320/30 plus and getting chased as well often," Harbhajan wrote while replying on Tendulkar's tweet.

Faf now has more time to help young batters: Van der Dussen

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG



South African batsman Rassie Van der Dussen feels senior teammate Faf du Plessis will now have more time to share his "wealth of wisdom" with the youngsters, having stepped down from captaincy.

Du Plessis had resigned as South Africa's Test and T20 captain in February.

"Captaincy is an awesome responsibility, but you carry so much on your shoulders. You get scrutinised and it always comes back to the captain and you've got to deal with that as well as the praise that you get," Van der Dussen told Sport24.

"Maybe that load off Faf's shoulders, not that he ever strug-

gled to carry it, might open him up a bit more to influence young batters coming in where maybe in

the past he just didn't have enough time to attend to those things.

"He has a wealth of wisdom

that young batters can feed off and that I have fed off in the last 18 months," added the 31-year-old, who had entered the national team under Du Plessis' leadership.

Talking about the impact that du Plessis had on him when he made his debut, Van der Dussen said: "Faf was a big one for me when I started, but all of the senior guys made me feel really at home. Faf was definitely someone that I went to for advice.

"Faf and myself are not dissimilar players. I can relate to what he did in his game and his mental strength and everything that goes with that," said the batsman, who made his Test debut against England in December.

'Afridi was always against me and ruined my career'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Pakistan spinner Danish Kaneria on Saturday accused Shahid Afridi of treating him unfairly all through his career and blamed him for a rather short limited overs outing.

Speaking to PTI from Karachi, the 39-year-old said, beyond his religion, it was difficult for him to think about the reason behind Afridi's discriminatory behaviour.

"He was always against me, when we were playing for the same department in domestic cricket or playing me in ODIs. If one person is

always against you and you are in that situation, what other reason would think other than that (religion)," said Kaneria. Kaneria, who last year supported Shoaib Akhtar's claim that he was treated unfairly in the team because of his religion, said he could have played a lot more than 18 ODIs if it was not for Afridi.

"I could not play more ODIs because of him and he also treated me unfairly when we used to play for the same department (in domestic cricket), he was the captain. He used to keep me out of the side and often he would do the same in ODIs without any reason.

HAALAND

Teenage sensation finds name in scoresheet to help Dortmund crush Schalke in Ruhr derby as Bundesliga return without fans

AFP ■ DORTMUND

Norwegian sensation Erling Braut Haaland stole the limelight Saturday as the German Bundesliga became the first major European football league to return since the coronavirus lockdown, with teams playing in empty, echoing stadiums.

The 19-year-old striker claimed the first goal in Germany's top flight for over two months to set Borussia Dortmund on the way to a 4-0 win over their local rivals Schalke. Portuguese international Raphael Guerreiro then added two goals either side of a Thorgan Hazard strike as second-placed Dortmund moved to within a point of leaders Bayern Munich, who are chasing an eighth straight title and play Union Berlin away on Sunday.

Haaland steered a low Thorgan Hazard cross into the far corner on 29 minutes to claim his 10th goal in just nine Bundesliga matches.

It was his 41st goal this season in all competitions and his 13th for Dortmund in just 12 games since joining in January from Red Bull Salzburg.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

He celebrated by dancing alone — making no contact with team-mates, who clapped him on — to comply with the strict hygiene guidelines which allowed the league to return.

In front of empty terraces and no more than 300 people allowed into Signal Iduna



Park, which is normally packed with almost 82,000 fans, Guerreiro added Dortmund's second goal just before half-time following an error by Schalke goalkeeper Markus Schubert.

Haaland played a role in the build-up to the third goal before Julian Brandt set up Hazard to fire home on 48 minutes.

Schalke looked short of match fitness,

while Dortmund were sharper and Guerreiro grabbed his second in style after a one-two with Haaland in the 63rd minute.

Elsewhere, third-placed RB Leipzig were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Freiburg, leaving them four points off top spot.

Defender Manuel Gulde gave visitors Freiburg a shock lead and celebrated by

elbow-bumping teammates, before Leipzig striker Yussuf Poulsen grabbed a late equaliser. Freiburg were then denied a stoppage-time winner when a VAR check spotted a marginal offside.

Later, Borussia Moenchengladbach can move up past Leipzig if they win at Eintracht Frankfurt. Bruno Labbadia, who replaced Jurgen Klinsmann during the lockdown,

Reyna misses Ruhr derby after injury in warm-up

AP ■ DORTMUND

Gio Reyna was set to make his first professional start when Germany's Bundesliga resumed Saturday following a two-month break caused by the new coronavirus, but the 17-year-old American got hurt during warmups before Dortmund's match against Schalke.

Reyna made his debut for Dortmund on Jan. 18, becoming the youngest American in the Bundesliga at 17 years, 2 months, 5 days.

Before the season was stopped by the pandemic, the attacking midfielder had 11 appearances as a substitute: eight in the Bundesliga, two in the Champions League and one in the German Cup.

He scored his first senior goal on Feb. 4 in a German Cup loss to Werder Bremen. He is a son of former U.S. National team captain Claudio Reyna and women's team player Danielle Egan Reyna.

Reyna left the academy of Major League Soccer's New York City team, where his father was then director of soccer, to sign with Dortmund in July. Reyna had been set to join the U.S. National team for the first time in March, but the Americans' matches were called off because of the pandemic.

The game, played without fans, was among five Saturday as the Bundesliga became the first major European league to resume following the coronavirus outbreak.

made a winning start as Hertha Berlin coach with a 3-0 success at Hoffenheim.

The goals came in quick succession with a Kevin Akpoguma own-goal being followed by Hertha captain Vedad Ibisevic grabbing a second before the Brazilian Matheus Cunha danced past defenders on the way to making it 3-0.

In order to get the political green light to resume this weekend, the German Football League (DFL) has tested players and coaches regularly for the virus and teams have been in quarantine for the past week.

Players and staff must follow stringent hygiene guidelines.

Teams arrived at stadiums in several buses in order to meet social distancing requirements inside vehicles.

Although Germany has suffered far fewer deaths from coronavirus than other large European countries, it is still too dangerous for crowds to return

MASS TESTING

The DFL has made no secret of the fact that several clubs are already in a dire financial situation as a result of the lockdown.

If they are able to complete the nine remaining rounds of matches by June 30, clubs could receive around 300 million euros

(\$324 million) in money from television contracts.

Clubs in England, Spain and Italy, where leagues are weeks away from returning, will be watching to see how the weekend goes. The Bundesliga has been expecting millions of extra fans to watch coverage worldwide. In Germany, there were concerns that fans would try to approach stadiums to support their teams from afar. Police in Dortmund appealed to fans to stay at home and broadcaster Sky reported it was quiet outside the ground. Some players and coaches have already fallen foul of the rules.

Augsburg's new coach Heiko Herrlich had ruled himself out of his side's 2-1 home defeat against Wolfsburg after leaving the team hotel to buy toothpaste.

While Herrlich was criticised, there was sympathy for Union coach Urs Fischer after he broke quarantine following a family bereavement. It means he must miss his side's clash with Bayern. Ex-Chelsea striker Salomon Kalou, 34, was suspended by Hertha for shaking hands with team-mates.

"If the health experts have given you these suggestions, if the league itself has worked out concepts at great expense, then you have to abide by these rules," Soeder said Friday.

Liverpool can win title without being at their best: Klopp

AFP ■ LONDON

Jurgen Klopp has insisted Liverpool have no need to be at their "all-time best" in order to clinch a first English league title in 30 years.

Premier League officials are now aiming to restart the season in mid-June, with Liverpool just two wins away from the title when the campaign was postponed on March 13 because of the coronavirus outbreak.

For so long the dominant force in English football, the Merseysiders have not been crowned domestic champions in the Premier League era, with the last of their league titles coming when they won the old First Division crown in 1990.

But as teams start returning to training, Liverpool manager Klopp has tried to ease any mounting pressure on his runaway leaders who are 25 points clear at the top.

"Football is a game where everyone is pretty much in the same situation we play against another team and we don't have to be at our all-time best we have to be at our best possible and that's exactly the same for the other teams," he told the BBC's Football Focus programme.

"Whenever we will start we will have had the same time for preparation and our job was always, and always will be, to use the situation you are in. We will be in as good a shape as possible."

Meanwhile the German boss said he was desperate to return to "normal life" after an unexpected two-month break by getting back to Liverpool's Melwood training base, where players will initially train in small groups.

"Lockdown has been as good as possible it's not exactly what I want to do but it's what we all have to do so we try to make the best of it,"



said Klopp.

"We started eight weeks ago and now you feel everyone is desperate to get back to a 'new' normal life.

"I have missed the boys the most because we have created a group there not only the boys but all the people at Melwood because we have a really good relationship and we became friends over the last four-and-a-half years.

"We see each other pretty often with Zoom and those things but it's still not the same and going back to Melwood and doing all the things we usually do is something I really miss."

FIFA to pick 2023 Women's WC host next month

AP ■ ZURICH

The 2023 Women's World Cup host will be picked by FIFA's ruling council on June 25.

The contest is between Brazil, Japan, Colombia, and a joint bid from Australia and New Zealand.

In an open vote of the 37-member FIFA Council, the result of each round of balloting and each voter's choice will be made public.

FIFA inspection teams visited the four bid candidates in January and February before international travel was restricted due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"FIFA is now finalizing the evaluation report, which will be published in early June," FIFA said in a statement on Friday.

The 2023 World Cup will be the first to feature 32 teams. There were 24 at the 2019 edition won by the United States in France.



Messi says pandemic stoppage can benefit Barca

AP ■ BARCELONA

Lionel Messi believes the long break caused by the coronavirus pandemic will be a boon for Barcelona.

"Maybe this stoppage will end up benefiting us, but we will have to see if we are restarting the competitions and then we will know the truth," Messi told Spanish sports daily Sport on Friday. Barcelona and Spain's soccer leagues have not played since March 12, when La Liga halted action as the country's COVID-19 virus outbreak picked up speed. More than 27,000 Spaniards are known to have died from the disease.

Messi did not cite his reason for thinking the stoppage would be good for Barcelona, but the return of strike partner Luis Suárez from injury is surely one, and resetting another.

Another boost could be more rest. Barcelona has suffered big losses in key matches in the Champions League in the last three seasons, including last season's 4-0 debacle at Liverpool in the semifinals. In those matches it appeared that Barcelona was worn down by a long season.

When played was stopped in March, Barcelona was leading the Liga by two points over Real Madrid. It was also in the round-



of-16 of the Champions League.

It has, however, been a rocky season for Barcelona. Besides public spats between club officials and players over their inconsistent play, the club also made a rare in-season coaching change when it fired Ernesto Valverde and replaced him with Quique Setién.

Barcelona struggled to adapt to Setién's playing style, whose emphasis on ball possession and attacking was different from Valverde's more balanced approach. The time off could help the squad and staff work out their differences.

"Playing like we did in the matches before play was stopped, we would never win the Champions League," Messi said.

"I have no doubts about my teammates and that we can win it all, but not in the way we had been playing."

Teams have recently returned to practice at club facilities, but they are training individually and undergoing tests to make sure there is no spread of the virus.

The Spanish league says it wants to return to playing matches on June 12, but that will depend on the public health situation. As of now, Spain is allowing small gatherings of only up to 10 people in some regions.

'Bala is an inspiration to all women footballers'



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All India Football Federation president Praful Patel has asked the country's women footballers to take inspiration from Bala Devi, who excelled at Scottish Premier League club Rangers.

The national team striker from Manipur is currently on a professional contract with Rangers, the first Indian woman footballer to do so.

During a virtual interaction with national team players across all age-groups, Patel told Bala Devi: "We are

extremely proud of your achievements. You have shown the road ahead to the budding footballers, and have proved that our women footballers are in no way inferior to anyone. "I am sure you will make others - your colleagues, the U-17 women's team girls dream too."

Bala Devi, who is currently in Glasgow said that the exposure stints with the national team made her confident as a player.

"In 2018-19 we were constantly playing, or camping. It made me more confident of my abilities as a player, and

made me believe in myself. We played against so many countries including matches in Europe," she said.

"Those matches helped me immensely to get myself the current club contract."

Bala Devi was referring to the senior team playing 25 friendly matches in 2018-19, something which was also highlighted by goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan.

"On behalf of everyone in the team I need to thank you for all the exposure tours," Aditi told the AIFF president.

"The standard of football in our team has improved drastically. Results have followed and it has made us more confident, and helped us mature into better players."

Striker Dangmei Grace added: "The more we got to play the more we improved. The strong International calendar helped us a lot. It was exciting, and we look forward for such matches."

Patel interacted at length with all the players on an individual basis to understand their mindset during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indian men's team central defender Sandesh Jhingan maintained that everyone should "do their best to stay fit."

"We cannot control what is not in our hands. But we need to utilise the time to stay fit as and whenever everything opens up once again," Jhingan expressed.

"On my part, we have been provided schedules from the national coach (Igor Stimac) and professor (Luka Radman) and I am sticking to it."

Murray you are better than Djokovic: Kyrgios



AFP N LONDON

Nick Kyrgios told Andy Murray on Saturday the British tennis star was better than world number one Novak Djokovic, claiming the Serb "dodges" his serve while the Scot "is on it like a light."

By his own estimate Kyrgios had drunk six glasses of wine when he logged on from his Canberra home for an Instagram live chat with Murray that started after midnight for the Australian.

"My knowledge and interest in red wine has gone incredibly up during this quarantine," said Kyrgios, well known for his withering comments about leading tennis players, even though the

undeniably talented world number 40 has never gone beyond the quarter-finals of a major championship.

Murray, however, appears to be one of his few rivals Kyrgios respects, with the Scot having defeated Djokovic in both the 2012 US Open and 2013 Wimbledon finals.

Djokovic, however, leads their head-to-head record 25-11 and has won 17 Grand Slam singles titles to Murray's three.

That didn't stop Kyrgios telling Murray: "I think you should have one of the best careers ever. I think you are better than Djokovic."

"Djokovic was playing dodgeball on my serve and you were slapping it for a winner. He

'I can beat Slam titles and world number one record'

AFP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic said he is confident he will end his career as the greatest Grand Slam title winner of all time and break the record for weeks in the world number one spot.

The Serb has 17 majors, three back from the record of Roger Federer's 20 and two behind the 19 of Rafael Nadal.

Before the coronavirus brought the 2020 season to a halt, Djokovic had captured an eighth Australian Open and was on an 18-0 winning streak for

was trying to dodge it, you were on it like a light."

Murray responded by saying: "The results would suggest otherwise." Kyrgios has endured a rocky relationship with Djokovic, once describing the Serb's post-match 'cup of love' celebrations as "cringeworthy".

Djokovic, claimed the Australian, had a "sick obsession with wanting to be liked".

In one of the less bizarre parts of their Saturday conversation Kyrgios asked Murray, who has long been sidelined with hip, and

the year. "I think that I still have things to do in this sport. I believe that I can win the most Slams and break the record for most weeks at No. 1. Those are definitely my clear goals," Djokovic told the 'In Depth with Graham Bensinger' TV show. Djokovic has been on top of the rankings for a combined total of 282 weeks.

Federer leads the way on 310 with the long-retired Pete Sampras on 286. However, time is comfortably on the side of Djokovic who will celebrate his 33rd birthday on May 22.

more recently, thigh injuries when he might be back on court following the coronavirus outbreak.

Murray, who celebrated his 33rd birthday on Friday, said: "I feel pretty good I was doing well before the injury at the Davis Cup. I think when things get back to normal I think I will be alright."

Kyrgios suggested the pair should play doubles together, prompting a wry Murray to reply: "Only if you promise to behave, you said you were going to."



■ **What is your role in Netflix's Mrs. Serial Killer?**

I play Dr Mrityunjay Mukherjee. He is traumatised by his past. He's has studied medical science and is quite an expert in things that he does. He loves his wife. But there is a past that keeps haunting him. So this combination of a patient family man with a very twisted mind makes him a very interesting character.

■ **What attracted you to this role?**

My part was well-written and so was the script. Most importantly, I did it because of Shirish.

We had collaborated for

Talktime
MANOJ BAJPAYEE

The actor whose recent project, Netflix's Mrs. Serial Killer is trending Number 1, speaks with Musba Hashmi about what made him take up the role, whether he is a director's actor and a lesson learnt in the industry, among other things

a short film, *Kriti* and that worked out well. We were talking of collaborating more and when he came to me with this project at the eleventh hour, I just took it up. I had no clue people will love it so much.

■ **The film is trending on number 1. How does it feel?**

It's an amazing feeling. I was so happy to know that it was trending on number 1 on the second day after it's release. Our happiness knew no bounds. I was so overwhelmed to see how a movie that was thought of two-three years ago, had been executed well and was ruling the trending charts.

■ **Do you think OTT platforms will continue to see a surge post lockdown?**

OTT platform is a medium that has got a huge boost because of the lockdown. I had never thought that a pandemic would force people inside their houses. And now people are using and enjoying OTT platforms, more than what I had ever imagined.

People have no better choice than to watch OTT content for entertainment post lockdown and now they are so addicted to it that they are consuming all the content available. They are showing hunger for more content. After the lockdown, this habit of theirs won't go away. People are ready to watch everything worth watching and this is going to be a great opportunity for film-making in the coming near future.

Neither do I take criticism to heart nor do I let any appreciation go to my head. I keep doing what I have to do and never stop learning the art each day. In our industry, no friendship or enmity is permanent. Any actor is as good or as bad as his last project

■ **Do you ever feel pressure when it comes to taking up new roles, since you are a brand in yourself?**

Whatever I am going to say is with total humility and don't take it as arrogance at all. I have always performed my roles keeping in mind the character and tried to do justice to the film by keeping in mind the director's directions. I am in this business for the sheer love of acting. It's my passion. So I only think of my character and how do I do justice to it and don't think about the audience at that very moment. I am the one who adds pressure on myself by raising the expectation bar for myself.

■ **Are you a director's actor or take the liberty to tweak according to your own way, at times?**

I work with different kinds of directors, in different genres. I always go by the script and the director. When I work on a movie like *Rukh* with Atanu Mukherjee or a movie like *Bhonsle* with new director Devashish Makhija, we work a lot on the pre-production of the movie.

We go into the detailing of the movie, do workshops, get into understanding the details of the character. They are script oriented movies and are belonging to the independent genre. But when I work for Milap Zaveri for *Satyameva Jayate* or Ahmed Khan, I understand where they are coming from. Their purpose is to excite people and that's why my job becomes very easy as I know what they expect. There are times when Milap or

Ahmed ask me to push up my performance as they do not agree to it. They ask me to make it a little more entertaining and I do it. I am an actor and my job is to enhance the director's vision and take it a little forward. I can't argue.

■ **A lesson that you learnt in the industry.**

Never take anything or anyone to heart. I have been following it for years now. Neither do I take criticism to heart and let it affect me nor do I let any appreciation go on my head. I keep doing what I have to do and never stop learning the art each day. In our industry, no friendship or enmity is permanent. Any actor is good or as bad as his last project.

■ **Did you have a specific genre or role in mind when you entered the industry?**

When I debuted, the art film concept had died and TV was also just flourishing. I had just one concept in mind that I had to do good movies and play good characters. I wanted to do something new as I had learnt something new while doing theatres. We all, including myself, Irrfan, Kumud Mishra, Sanjay Mishra and Nirmal Pandey wanted to do something different. After a few years of struggle, I got *Satya* and it changed my life. It also changed the storytelling concept. *Satya, Shool, Kaun* — Ram Gopal Varma's movies changed it all. Later, new directors came in and had different kinds of roles for us. Today the change that we see in the industry's storytelling style, we should give credit to Shekhar Kapur, Mani Ratnam and Ram Gopal Varma.

DRAM UP A PERFECT DRINK

SHALINI SAKSENA speaks with mixologists about the future of cocktail culture, fine dining and whipping up cocktails with ingredients and tools that one has in kitchen

Even during this lockdown, there is no reason why one shouldn't have celebrated the World Whisky Day. And if by one was caught up with work, there is no reason to lament, one can always catch up and celebrate the day at one's convenience. There are many out there who don't understand the nuances of a good alcohol and the responsibility and comes with not driving while drinking. People also get confused between the difference in whiskey and Whisky. Whiskey (with an 'e') is a broad and general term used for the liquor which is produced towards the US. Whisky (without the 'e') is a Scotch made in Scotland.

While many may be under the impression that India is a rum and or beer drinking nation, the truth is that we have been consuming Whisky for a couple of centuries now, since the Britishers came to India. But of course, over a period of time, we have developed our own signature style and instead of nursing the drink on a cold winter night sitting in front of the fire and having a hot Toddy, in modern times given the weather that the country has, we have our own signature style of consuming Whisky — something that is refreshing like a cocktail infused with ginger ale, fresh lime juice and Whisky.

Mixologist Greg Benson from Scotland, who the DEWAR's India brand ambassador and has been in the country for the last seven-and-a-half-months tells you that his time here has been spent in whipping up cocktails that will accompany fine dining street food with certain changes. "One of the changes that we have made is to pair gourmet street food with cocktails. One of my favourite pairing is a gourmet version of lamb or mushroom *kebab* with Calcutta Highball. The others combos are Coconut Highball to be paired with crispy *poori* and Eat Indian chicken or East



Indian potatoes," Benson tells you.

According to him some of the changes that he has been witness to is that the millennial's shift to Whisky a lot more. In the past, Scotch would be drunk from a lowball glass with water, ice or soda. "But now we have been seeing rise of highball drinks. The drink is a lot more modern and

has a lot of history that goes back to 1890s. One of the most prevalent things that one gets to see here in India, something that we don't get to see in Scotland, is the combination of food and drink. That's why we have come up with the fine dining culture with cocktails," Benson says.

The reason for growing popularity of

Whisky-based cocktails is due to millennials, the Internet savvy and educated Indians are looking for everything that is high class including a good Whisky. "I am bit biased since I am Scottish and would prefer to have it water, but there is a trend towards a drink that has high quality ingredients to elevate that whole experience. In the past, the whole idea to have a cocktail was to hide the taste and flavour of the alcohol.

It is different today. Cocktails are no longer trying to hide the taste but to showcase the taste it. One that I love to do is to do is Calcutta Highball. I take Scotch, make sugar syrup adding ginger, cinnamon and *elaichi*, lemon juice and soda water. These flavours go very well. *Mosambi* and mango *lassi* Highball is a great refreshing cocktail as well. You need Scotch, mango *lassi*, and fresh *mosambi* juice. Shake well with ice and serve with lime leaf, pistachio and saffron strands," Benson says who has sampled around 2000 Whiskies from around the globe and knows which ingredient goes well with which catch to serve you the perfect cocktail.

One is told that there is need to understand the difference between a mixologist and a bartender. When it comes to cocktail innovation, double is always better. Bartenders are always behind the bar and hence great at consumer engagement — understanding what guests enjoy, their flavour preferences. A mixologist on the other hand, is more focused on the liquid itself and the science and art of making a cocktail.

Some people find it a challenge to whip up a cocktail at home. But the task is no as daunting. Myles Carroll, also DEWAR'S India brand ambassador tells you that the essential cocktail making tools are a shaker, a strainer with tight coils and a jigger, an hourglass-shaped measuring device. "The go-to ingredients are ice, syrups and fresh garnish. Always make sure there's plenty of ice and use it straight from the freezer. There are four simple syrups one can keep ready for use — sugar syrup (sugar to water 1:1), grenadine (fresh pomegranate juice to sugar 1:1), honey syrup (honey to water 2:1) and ginger syrup (fresh ginger juice to sugar 1:1). Stock up on the right alcohol — have an aged Scotch gin, rum and vodka," Carroll advises.

The one thing that he has learnt about Indian consumers when it comes to cocktails is that they definitely prefer less ice in their drinks. Some Indians prefer sweeter cocktails as well. "A lot of Indian consumers prefer sweeter drinks, but there's a growing number who appreciate a well-balanced cocktail. With the country leading in Whisky consumption globally, Indian consumers definitely have more evolved preferences in the brown spirits category. Also, traditionally, men have been known to prefer brown spirits and beer while women are assumed to steer towards wine and cocktails. However, the drinking culture across the globe is evolving. There are plenty of women who'd like a cold beer, not to mention those who are also connoisseurs of several brown spirits. Men too are evolving and are now showing an increasing interest in wine," Carroll says who loves a crisp rosé as well as different cocktails.

‘Competition is part and parcel of rap’



20-year-old YASHRAJ MEHRA recently released his EP Azaad Hu Mein. The rapper speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about his journey, collaborations and the rap scene in the country

◆ **How did you get interested in rap?**

Right from school days, my friends and I would listen to rap whenever we met at each other's place. To begin with, it was a combination of pop and rap – the Eminem era. I also joined dance classes and got introduced to hip-hop. My interest piqued in rap from there.

◆ **Tell us about yourself – where are you from and music journey?**

I am still a student and in second year of BMM with Jai Hind College. I have practically been on stage my entire life, either acting or hosting events. To be on stage was my destiny. Back during school days, I used to write a lot of poetry and that transcended into rap now. My first rap verse was penned pre-Gully Boy days when few knew about this genre and I was still exploring it. The only rappers I had heard of in India were Divine and Naezy. Since I was always on stage, when the film was being made, they wanted extras. That's when I realised that there was huge rap scene in India including Mumbai. I put out my first track and entered a competition and did gigs after gigs. This is when I met my manager and here I am.

◆ **How tough and competitive are open mics?**

I honestly believe that if one wants to be part of the hip-hop scene competition is part and parcel of the genre. It is about being the best lyrics wise, it is about being the best delivery wise. If one wants to know where he stands in this huge pool of rappers, is when you go to these open micers. The entire culture is based on how good your writing is and how well you can deliver that. Psychologically, this is tough but physically not so much given that there are so many venues for new rappers to showcase their talent.

◆ **You recently released an EP with three songs – what are they about?**

It all about how when one is mentally free, how it affects one's work and how it affects relationships – when all the haze clears – one can see things is a clearer light. That is what Azaad Hu Mein, Sote Raho and Kaise Badlengi about. I chose this theme because I wanted the lyrics to emotive how I would feel and think in such a situation rather than just addressing the situation.

◆ **Is rap and songs the same?**

There is a misconception that rap and music is different but this is not true. Take an example, if I write a verse, it means I am rapping but it doesn't mean I am making rap music. It is the responsibility of every rapper to make it musical. Anybody can write a verse and rap it to a beat but a true rapper will make great music. This is what I am trying to do, take elements from other genres and do my thing.

◆ **What is your collaboration with Zaeden and Lost Stories about?**

I let them through my manager. These are the people looking up to. I just came onboard to learn from them. The collaboration was how we could come together, help each other and work on *Tere Bina* and *Thandi Hawa* remixes.

◆ **Where you get your subject for rap?**

When I rap, I don't have a story to tell. I don't come from a poor background and then reached a stage where I want people to look at my back story. I am boy from a middle-class family who gets to express what he wants from music. I have the responsibility to dig in a little deeper to research on topics I can write on. I want to put an effort into my writing hence my topics are different.

◆ **Did your parents support you?**

One thing that gets your parents going is when they see their child grow in the career he has chosen. I have tried to prove it to them. My mother is extremely supportive. But I am young and have a long way to go.

Pour in your Vodka vocabulary

SHALINI SAKSENA ■ NEW DELHI

The lock down blues is getting everybody down with no parties or having friends over for a fun evening filled with nice conversation to be enjoyed with a cocktail or two. Though the lock down means that you can't have a gathering, it doesn't mean that one can't enjoy a relaxed cocktail in the evening after typing away on your laptop the whole day. Worried that you many not have the necessary ingredients to make that perfect drink? Don't worry. Help is only a click of a mouse away.

All you have to do is log on to the more popular delivery apps and a pre-mix kit will be delivered right at your doorstep. That's correct. One can now choose from 20-plus kits that the company to offer and sells from its website and delivery apps.

Some of the cocktails that one can make at home are Beer hood, Bourbonology, Tequilastan, Vodkaology, Whiskypedia, Bloody Mary, Margarita and El-Macua.

Deepender Singh, founder-director of Swizzle, a Bengaluru-based company, tells you that the idea came after his business partner, Vrinda Singhal, an ardent cocktail fan wouldn't be able to find the necessary ingredients to have her favourite cocktails. "This got us talking and turned the idea into a business proposal. We spent the next few months on research on what were the popular cocktails and how we could deliver a pre-mix kit to the people who had no idea how to make one at home but still enjoyed their drink. The end result was that in October 2019, we went live in Bengaluru and the response has been great,"



Singh says. However, there is a catch in the kit. The company can't deliver alcohol, that is something that the customer needs to have at home. Now, that liquor shops are open and if one

was low on an alcohol, a visit to the nearest wine shop will do the trick. So, what does the kit include? Plenty according to Singh.

First, the kit has all the dry

ingredients if the cocktail's recipe entailed it. For example, if one ordered a Bloody Mary kit, it would have salt, tomato juice, Tabasco, Worcestershire sauce, pepper, lemon juice and even ice to make one cocktail. Second, garnish is just as important as are the ingredients, the kit will have this too. Three, if the cocktail required to be stirred, it would have that, if the cocktail needed to be shaken, it would have a shaker and even a measuring glass for how much alcohol to add. There is a prep card that tells you which glass one can use and the three easy steps needed to make the perfect cocktail.

Sadly, these wonders kits are not available in any other metro but Bengaluru for now but plans are in place to expand to other cities including Delhi at the earliest. "We are looking at several metros where we can

expand and it will happen sooner than later. We chose Bengaluru because home parties are a fad here especially over the weekend," Singh says.

Some cocktails have undergone a twist given that there are many ingredients that are extremely expensive. Take Orange Tundra. This cocktail requires pink soda, coffee liqueur and orange juice. "Coffee liqueur is expensive. With our kit, one can make this great cocktail hassle-free and it tastes just as fantastic," Singh shares.

The kit price starts from ₹149, ₹179 and ₹219 per kit. "Our aim is to offer people the best cocktail that they can enjoy at home that are not expensive to make. There are discounts and value packs if one wanted to make more an one cocktails. These prove to be much cheaper," Singh says.



It is the passion that is going to help us all sail through this storm, says GAURI CHAUDHARI, as she studies the market trends, lessons for and adaptability by the brands in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic

SURVIVAL OF THE QUICKEST



Corona has taught us the basic rules of the nature — ones that we probably had forgotten: “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one most adaptable to change.” This lesson is equally important for the brands, of course, with a small rider — “To survive and thrive, brands must not only adapt to the new environment but also do it quickly enough.”

In the Covid-19 era, agility and speed of response will decide the fate of brands. Companies reacted to Covid-19 from a range of emotions. From the feeling of uncertainty and sense of retreat to confidence and surety, companies travelled the full circle. While some adopted ‘wait and watch policy,’ others were quick to accept the situation and move forward. Instead of looking at Covid-19 as a problem, they studied the external and internal environment to align their brands to the new reality. They discovered many opportunities on this path. Brands that are agile and quick to respond will stay ahead of the curve.

The Covid-19 touched every aspect of brand's existence. From the product portfolios, packaging, distribution, to customers' post-purchase experience, everything needed re-evaluation.

PRODUCTS, PORTFOLIOS AND PACKAGING

While some may believe that Covid-19 has shut many doors for brands, it has opened up unusual opportunities particularly, for those who are open and receptive. Those who can give up a rigid approach to their products and portfolios stand to gain. Lockdown is no deterrent for them. They have formulated new products and set up manufacturing lines during the lockdown period.

For instance, ITC Ltd. was quick to launch its Savlon disinfectant surface spray. It converted its state-of-the-art perfume manufacturing plant into a sanitiser unit to build up production capacity. Asian paints is quick to launch its sanitiser ‘Viroprotek’ and will make it available in hardware shops for painters and carpenters who will need to be extra careful before they visit any home post lockdown.

Nippon Paints launched anti-viral paint for hospitals, public spaces and even homes. The quickness at which they operated was commendable. Zomato modified its services and offered to deliver groceries to customers.

Ayurvedic and pharmaceutical companies too are launching wellness, immunity booster brands. While ayurvedic companies are busy formulating *chawanprash* that can be consumed in summers, pharma companies are stepping up the production of anti-oxidants with zinc and ascorbic acid.

Raymond used its expertise to launch ‘Complete Care from Raymond’ comprising of masks and Personal Protective Equipment (gears). The range has well-designed premium products for use in the post lockdown era. It not only fits into the Raymond portfolio but also strengthens the mother brand image of the ‘Complete Man’.

Covid-19 has helped companies to relook at their products and portfolios. Those who manage to go beyond the straight jacketed approach stand to gain. The trick is to stay in the domain of expertise and ensure portfolio and channel fit. If a new line extension is launched, it must strengthen the mother brand. If it's a new brand, it must enhance the portfolio and leverage channel strength.

PACKAGING AND PROCESS

Covid-19 will increase demand for single-use, safe packaging. So, reusables have to wait for a while. US National Health came out with report stating that the virus survives on plastic for two to three days but only for a day on cardboard. Will that make companies denounce plastic and move for porous material? There is a good chance that consumers will prefer goods that are packed in virus-unfriendly material.

Another important point is the contactless deliveries. Though fast food companies' earnings are falling by double-digit, Domino's Pizza delivery revenues are expected to be either flat or move upwards. Thanks to their ‘contactless delivery mechanism’. It is running an advertising campaign stating that “only hands that would touch Pizza would be yours’s.”

Some brands have used Covid-19 situation to redesign their packs and be socially relevant. CGFI promotes WAI WAI noodles in India. WAI WAI redesigned its pack with a dedicated space to promote the WHO-led hand wash program. When a brand aligns itself to a social cause, it definitely scores points over its competition. WAI WAI took that opportunity.

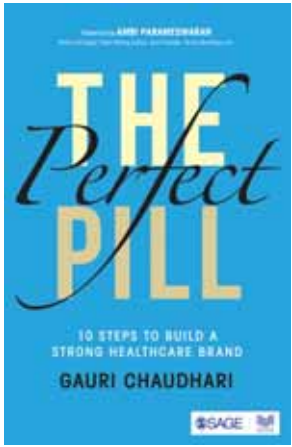
The Virus really has made companies press a reset button and revisit processes to add value to the business. In the post lockdown scenario, companies need to relook at packaging and processes to see if any change is needed to stay in the consideration set of customers.

PRICE AND PLACE SHIFT

The post lockdown period will see an increase in demand for certain categories. Looking at the challenges posed by public transport, the sale of two-wheelers and cars is expected to go up. The second-hand automobile market will see a surge in demand. Given safety concerns with housemaids, demand for washing machines, dishwashers and floor cleaning robots is expected to grow. Brands will need to offer good discounts and exchange prices to attract customers.

At the same time, Covid-19 and lockdown has opened up newer channels of distribution. ITC Ltd. entered into a tie-up with Jubilant Food Works, master franchisee for Domino's Pizza. ITC's Aashirvaad *atta* and spices will be soon available on Domino's app for order and delivery. Another big change that lockdown has brought about is in the way doctors and patients interact. E-consultations are gaining popularity. The e-consulting platforms are here to stay. This is the time for Medtech companies to advertise their services for onboarding doctors and patients.

E pharmacies have seen a 200% upsurge in orders. Most of the e-pharmacies are on a hiring



HERE ARE THE THREE LESSONS COVID 19 IS TEACHING US: ACCEPT THE SITUATION AND ADAPT TO NEW NORMAL; RELOOK AT EVERY POSSIBLE ASPECT OF YOUR BUSINESS, STARTING FROM PRODUCTS TO POST-PURCHASE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES AND ADD VALUE. DON'T SHY AWAY, TALK TO YOUR CUSTOMERS AND PARTNER WITH THEM. IF DONE WITH SENSITIVITY AND EMPATHY, THEY ARE GOING TO HOLD YOUR HAND TIGHTLY



spree. Medlife, an e-pharmacy that is flooded with orders, has tied up with Uber, Yulu and Zoomcar to use their fleet for deliveries.

Covid-19 has reminded us of yet another lesson; if there is a will, there's a way. Need is to explore every possibility with zero assumption.

WORK ON YOUR PROMOTIONS

Despite an information overload, people are hungry for authentic information. This is the time to talk to customers and clients more frequently. Customers must get a sense that they are in it together and their trusted brands will help them in every possible way to navigate through this situation.

Locked up in homes, glued to smartphones, computer and television, customers are finding ways to live life during and post lockdown. This is an unprecedented time for brands to communicate with a sensible and empathetic approach. Those who managed to do it connected with customers, but those who were busy promoting irrelevant product features were pushed back.

With plummeted advertising rates across media and relatively higher exposure of customers to smartphones, computers and TV, now is the time to get seriously engaged with customers.

BUT THERE ARE CLEAR CUT RULES...

● Positivity and Empowerment

People are fed up with negative, scary situation around. They want to hear positivity and get a sense of empowerment. Brands that communicated from a sense of empowerment, instantly connected with customers only to increase their brand equity. Nike's campaign ‘*Play inside Play for the world*’ echoed sentiments of the serious athletes. The brand launched an app that has indoor workout plans designed by Nike trainers. Surf Excel's Ramazan ad too, expresses the same feeling of empowerment. Pharmaceutical companies conducted webinars for doctors on various subjects. The idea of webinars was to empower doctors during the pandemic to treat COVID and Non-COVID patients.

People want to hear from brands assuming that they are experts in their own categories. They want AC companies to guide on how to use office ACs post lockdown situation. Given office designs, it might not be possible for small, medium size companies or doctor clinics to shut ACs completely. They want to know what precautions should be taken to be safe. The one who will reach out first will stand to gain.

● Be helpful and partner with customers

Brands can be helpful in easing out the pain of the customers. Kansai Nerolac Paint Ltd. has tied up with Urban Company to provide a discount on sanitisation services for dealers' offices. The company has announced a weekly scheme and settlements for dealers. It is heartening to see that the company has declared Covid-19 insurance for shop boys working with dealers. The company is also working closely for the welfare of painters. They are educating painters for safe practices. They are giving cash rewards to painters and are providing special support to

those who are diagnosed with Covid-19. Nerolac has launched a crowdfunding initiative for painters who need additional support. Alkem Laboratories, a pharmaceutical company, provided Covid-19 protection kits to the doctors in private practice so that they can continue working without fear. Abbott India provided flu shots for doctors and their families to stay safe. Lupin Pharmaceuticals launched helpline for patients who need any kind of help during Covid-19.

PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS

Marketing and branding experts Ambi Parameswaran and Sridhar Samu wrote in one of their articles that in the post lockdown phase, there will be three types of customers in the market. Revenge shopper, Revelation shopper and Restricted shopper. Revenge shoppers are those who are waiting to be out there and shop to their hearts' content. They are young and affluent. The revelation shoppers are a middle-aged shoppers with spouses and kids. They have gone through severe hard work. They will respond to discounts, sales and exchange offers to buy things that will help them doing household chores better. According to these marketing experts, restricted shoppers are old age shoppers who may discuss and deliberate their shopping lists.

Brands will have to understand their customers and the emotions they are going through to strike the right chord. All post lockdown strategies need to be based on this understanding. Education and awareness about how to be socially responsible are extremely critical factors in the post-lockdown era. The salespersons and servicemen have to be extra careful if they are required to come face to face with customers. It is not only important to take care but also to be seen as the one who is taking care. Customers will react adversely if they feel unsafe. Sanitising hands is not enough; doing it in front of the customer is critical. Taking body temperature before setting out for work is not enough, but having a certificate from a company stating the wellbeing of the salesperson is important. Those who accept the new dynamics and show concern for customer safety will go a long way.

All it takes during this time is the passion for your business and brands. Who would have ever thought that working from home would result in higher productivity? But here are the corporate honchos, entrepreneurs and the MSME owners who are slogging it out. Those who have the passion and never-say-die attitude are here to stay and grow. It is the passion that is going to help us all sail through this storm.

So, here are the three lessons Covid-19 is teaching us. Accept the situation and adapt to new normal; QUICKLY. Relook at every possible aspect of your business, starting from products to post-purchase customer experiences and add value. Don't shy away, talk to your customers and partner with them. If done with sensitivity and empathy, they are going to hold your hand tightly.

The writer is author of *The Perfect Pill: 10 Steps to Build a Strong Healthcare Brand*, published by SAGE Publications India



ONCE YOU START A WORKING ON
SOMETHING, DON'T BE AFRAID OF FAILURE
AND DON'T ABANDON IT. PEOPLE WHO
WORK SINCERELY ARE THE HAPPIEST
—CHANAKYA

POST-COVID WORLD ORDER PROJECTION

The rising demand for independent investigation is the first step to address the lack of international accountability and transparency flowing from China, says DR ASHUTOSH MISRA, as he studies the world reactions to the pandemic

As the Covid-19 curve and economic graph headed in opposite directions, by mid-March, exasperation and helplessness of the world turned into anger against China. It is unlikely that China would get away unscathed from the crisis. The world is angry. Very angry!

American physician Antony Fauci was the first to pull up China for deceiving the world by providing “misinformation” on a critical matter of global public-health importance. The US President Donald Trump called it a “Chinese virus”, and now Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says there are “strong evidence” that the virus originated from a Wuhan lab. Trump has also ceased funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for its alleged role in downplaying the seriousness of the pandemic, allegedly at China’s behest.

Italy, Germany, France and United Kingdom have suffered exponentially from the virus onslaught. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson barely escaped with his life in the hospital after contracting the virus. Much of the industrialised capitalist economies across retail, education, entertainment, hospitality and education sectors face a doomsday scenario. Over 50 of the top US multinationals including Apple, Nintendo, Dell and HP are downsizing their China operations. Japan has set aside over \$2 billion to help Japanese multinationals to relocate or return home. Over 100 German firms, and Korean giants Samsung, Hyundai and Kia are all relocating.

Spain, Turkey, Slovakia, India and the Netherlands among others are furious over the supply of faulty personal protective equipment from China. If Boris Johnson warned of ramifications for China, the French President Emmanuel Macron summoned the Chinese envoy to register his anger and German Chancellor Angela Merkel joined the US and British calls for an official investigation saying, “the more transparent China is about the origins of Covid-19, the better it will be for the world”. So much so, even a middle power Australia, with a two-way A\$238 bn trade and free trade pact, has demanded an independent investigation or review into the origins and spread of Covid-19, with the support of “like-minded” nations in the G-20 like the US, Canada, France, Germany and UK.

Australia’s demand symbolises a long-running pushback from liberal democracies against China’s ‘sharp power’ that is, influence operations in their internal affairs and call for a rule-based and transparent global order. Sovereign interests have now gained ascendancy over business interests.

Alarm had set off in Canberra in mid-December 2017 when the Australian



Labour Party Senator, Sam Dastyari, resigned over his dealings with the Beijing-linked billionaire Huan Xiangmo, who reportedly paid Dastyari’s legal bill and donated \$1.8 million for the Australia China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney, and around \$500,000 to the New South Wales Labour Party. The expose triggered the Australian Secret Intelligence Organisation’s raids across the country, prompting former PM Malcolm Turnbull and Attorney General George Brandis to introduce the Foreign Interference Bill, passed in 2018, carrying strict penalties for spies and political gents for espionage. ASIO claims Chinese spies were being groomed in Australia to penetrate the federal parliament to influence policy-making, something a Chinese intelligence officer now seeking asylum in Australia also testified.

A wary Australia has also denied the contract to Huawei for the 5G infrastructure rollout after the immigration minister Peter Dutton made claims of “Chinese cyberattacks” on Australian government institutions. Foreign Minister Marise Payne too has strongly condemned the

human rights abuses in Xinjiang, and Prime Minister Scott Morrison had urged the Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam “to listen carefully” to pro-democracy protesters, which also triggered clashes on Australian university campuses between pro-China and pro-Hong Kong students. A 2019 Lowy Institute survey recorded the lowest trust levels among Australians in China’s ability to act responsibly in world affairs, something Geoff Raby, former Australian Ambassador to China also confirms.

The demand for independent investigation is the first step to address the lack of international accountability and transparency flowing from China’s one-party authoritarian system. Frances Adamson, Secretary Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade remarked that “...differences on systems and values will endure”, and Scott Morrison called it “entirely reasonable and sensible” to ask for an international inquiry.

The Chinese Communist Party-controlled Global Times labelled it as ‘panda bashing’ and warned, “It is a crusade against China and Chinese people by

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TRANSPARENT GLOBAL
ORDER

Australia... and Canberra is treading a hazardous path with no u-turn”. The Chinese Ambassador to Australia Cheng Jingye also issued a veiled warning for economic consequences, which Australia has called a “threat of economic coercion”.

Upping the ante, Chinese Counsel Long Zhou in Victoria, aided by Australian billionaire Andrew Forest’s invitation, also gave crashed a press conference of the Australian Health Minister Greg Hunt, to dismiss Australia’s demand and praise China’s anti-Covid-19 response. The act has drawn a severe political backlash in Australia, with Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment firing back saying, “Australia won’t change its policy position on public health due to economic coercion or threats, and must look into alternative markets in the European Union and India”.

In the Covid-19 aftermath, Henry Kissinger has thrown his weight behind preserving the liberal order and Fareed Zakaria identified values, individual rights and transparency as the key to shaping the post-Covid world order. For India’s global

leadership, opportunities are enormous on the horizon. As the pushback from liberal democracies gathers steam India will need to stick its neck out. The Doklam crisis had symbolised India’s newfound resoluteness vis-à-vis China, and now as the angry world folds its sleeves to constitute an international investigation, fence-sitting may cost India key support in the international arena.

As Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Scott Morrison prepare for the virtual summit to formalise the Mutual Logistics Sharing Pact and a joint front against Covid-19, India will do well to recall Australia’s help in getting the Nuclear Supplies Group waiver to materialise uranium supplies, and boosting its UN Security Council candidature. India must rally behind Australia’s demand for an independent investigation. If over 4 million cases of Covid-19 including 270,000 plus deaths and inestimable loss to the world economies cannot awaken liberal democracies, there is no hope for redemption for us all.

The writer is CEO, Institute for Australia India Engagement, Brisbane

India needs start-ups, which can address future challenges: Agnishwar Jayaprakash

Garuda Aerospace has carved a unique path by creating several use cases for drones in sectors such as agriculture, industry, Power, infrastructure, mining and sanitisation, among others. SANJANA MOHAN speaks to the man behind the show

Garuda Aerospace is one of the leading drone start-ups in India that has gained ground over the past few years. It has been involved in several drone-based sanitisation projects to prevent the spread of Covid19 recently. Founded in 2016, Garuda Aerospace is an ISO 9001 firm (a certification that is rare for a drone start-up), that designed an agricultural drone that was selected as one the top 10 social-economic innovations of 2016 by the United Nations. The firm has since designed novel solutions to address issues in diverse sectors.

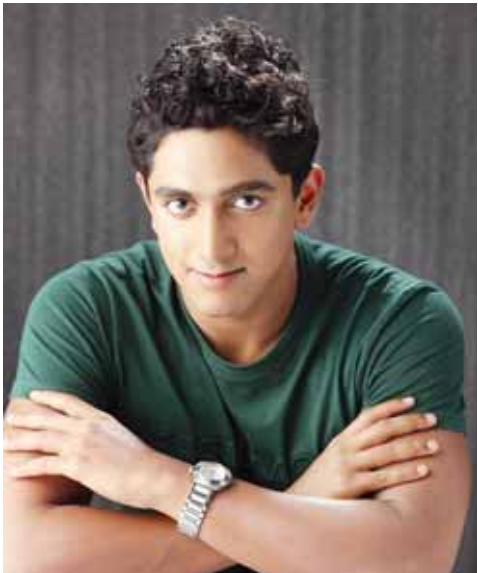
Contrary to the perception that drones are used only for films, events and surveillance, Garuda Aerospace has carved a unique path by creating several use cases for drones in other sectors, such as agriculture, industry, Power, infrastructure, mining and sanitisation. Edited excerpts from an interview with Agnishwar Jayaprakash, the man behind the show:

What is Garuda’s vision in India’s fight against Covid-19?

We are disinfecting and sanitising a vast area of 3.28 million sq. km in India to prevent the spread of Covid-19. We are assisting in places where public workers find it impossible to reach by manual spraying process. Our DaaS (Drones as a Service) ecosystem can accomplish the sanitisation operations in a quarter of the time. Automated Sanitisation operations aim to address the inaccessibility, speed and efficiency of public health workers who are conducting manual spraying operations under severe health risks to themselves and their families.

How can your technology be integrated into the current battle against Covid-19?

Corona Killer (CK) is an Automated Disinfecting UAV that aids in sanitisation of public spaces, hospitals and tall buildings. Drone operations are faster, last longer and a lot safer than manual spraying carried out by the health workers, who can become potential carriers of Covid-19. But, only large scale use of drones would make the innovation sustainable. Drones



also have the advantage of reach and can access heights up to 450 feet and spray disinfectants on buildings, something that is impossible to accomplish in manual spraying operations. We have proposed a Drone-based Swachh Bharat campaign to Clean India regularly to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This would also help us be prepared for any future pandemic and infectious diseases that may arise due to unhygienic conditions

What makes the company unique?

Garuda Aerospace is an ISO 9001 company and has executed several government orders over the past four years. Our CK-100 sanitisation drone, currently being used in 26 cities, was selected as one of the top 10 socio-economic innovations on Oct 24, 2016 by the CEO of Niti Aayog, Amitabh Kant, who presided over the UN day celebrations. CK-100 consists of patented autopilot technology, advanced flight control system and is equipped with fuel-efficient



motors that enable the drone to deploy for 12 hours a day. The features include Payload capacity of 15-20 litres, flight duration of 40-45 minutes and maximum ceiling height of 450 feet which is sufficient to disinfect 99% of tall buildings across India. Each drone can cover 20 km a day. Our existing fleet of 300 CK-100 drones can conduct sanitisation operations covering 6000 km every single day. Garuda Aerospace has also designed a unique UBER like DaaS tech platform which will aggregate over 16,000 drones from our associate companies ready to be deployed across India if a massive Swachh Bharat Campaign using drones is launched.

Where all have your drones been used so far?

We have received work orders from Smart city municipal corporations of Varanasi, Raipur, Bhopal and municipal corporation in Chandigarh, Jaggaipeta, Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. Apart from these, we are servicing eight

states and 26 cities. Several private companies have signed three-year contracts for conducting sanitisation operations using drones in and around their premises. Additionally, we have been of service to the Tamil Nadu Electricity Department and the TN Health department to commence sanitisation operations. Garuda Aerospace drones have also been deployed during emergency operations such as Chennai Floods 2015, Cyclone Vardha 2016, Kerala Floods and now the Coronavirus pandemic.

What advantages do you hold over your competitors to scale and execute large scale orders for the Government or private sectors?

Having secured ₹3.5 crore in funding over the past four years, Garuda Aerospace is one of the very few profitable drone manufacturing and DaaS companies that exist in India. Being able to function out of 26 cities and having a pan India presence is a definitive advantage. We have

focused on the B2G market for the past three years, having serviced the forest department, police, electricity department, metro, water and the city corporation departments. Over the years, we have grown into a very reliable company, manufacturing indigenous drones in India and continue to be guided by retired IAS, IPS, Army and RAW officers. We are also being advised financially by several corporate honchos such as Boeing, KPMG, Trans Advisory, CBRE etc. With our existing advantages, we aspire to scale from a national market leader to a global market player in the next one year.

Garuda Aerospace is also one of the very few aerospace companies which are ISO 9001 Certified. Technology has been validated by the CBRE (Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis) Group, Inc., which is an American commercial real estate service and investment firm. It is the largest commercial real estate services company in the world. The firm had conducted an independent study and validated our drone-based innovation as a game-changer in the sanitisation industry in the years to come.

What were the challenges in setting up the business?

As is the case with any start-up, nothing came easy. We had to really drive the need for drones and automation in India. Most people have the inertia to try anything new in general, drones were no different. In fact, drone technology faced several regulatory roadblocks which have stunted the growth of the industry for many years. Jeff Bezos during his first visit to India in 2014 said Amazon will commence drone deliveries in 6 months’ time. After 6 years, he said the same when he visited India in 2020. If the richest man in the world with unlimited resources found it challenging to get the ball rolling in this sector, one can imagine how difficult it must have been for a start-up! However, we have endured the tough times and Covid-19 situation has shed light on the importance of technology and automation where drones are right among the top 5 on that list.

PERSPECTIVE

CSR to PSR: Covid duties



ANJANA HAZARIKA

The global business community should rescue humanity from this saga of darkness. With CSR, we need to practise the personal social responsibility (PSR) so as to inculcate good old habits to first save the family, then neighbourhood and finally the community

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the alignment of business activities with social values. It is not an optional or an add-on function to the core activities of any corporate houses. Conceptually, the CSR is all about the way any business is managed, and that is managing fairly, with an eye on its social responsibilities. Further, the CSR focuses on the social, environmental and financial success of an enterprise i.e. the so-called “Triple Bottom Line”, with an objective to full-fill social development without compromising its business interests. Now at a time when the whole world is almost trampled down by the Covid-19, it is the right moment for the global business community to step in and rescue humanity from this saga of darkness. Business and governance are intimately connected. The historic role of the public-private partnership is not new to us. But around this time, it is not only partnering with the public institutions, but also helping employees, stakeholders and consumers together manage sustainability is the prime challenge of the business organisations. Put it simply, all of them are in crisis today.

The responsibility demonstrated by the corporate community is no less than that of the public institutions, if not greater. Both in times of crises and peace, the business enterprises have resolutely stood behind the governments around the world, barring a few exceptions. For the business community, such crises are even moments of opportunities as well.

Thinking and labeling business organisations as social units as evoked by Peter F Drucker, we can certainly underline their responsibilities towards society. He was right in highlighting that “businesses, even fairly small ones, will have to start their strategic thinking and planning with the world economy rather than with their own domestic economy”. Therefore, any crisis that takes place in any corner of the globe can easily affect trade activities. Such is the case with the outbreak of the Covid-19 that originated in Wuhan in China that the pandemic has spread to all the 189 nations across the world.

This has further resulted into a historic economic downturn with massive loss of workforce, income, unreasonable working hours, breakdown of supply chains and hunger, accompanied by death of lakhs of people around.

The need of the hour is performing socially responsible business. And this can well be performed by them after delivering on to their core trading activities. Absolutely, a corporate juggernaut is the need of the hour. It's not just to counter the current Covid-19, but simply to push society to a sustainable future. The term “CSR”, coined by American economist Howard Bowen three generations ago, is now made into strategic decision making by the international business community.

Both at global and local stages, the CSR has become a standard and even a unique yardstick to deal with customers, stakeholders and the employees of the business enterprises. It is also a tool to measure how well a brand or a company could interact with its stakeholders. Today, the digital age has changed the way we use to receive information. This age is democratising information and delivering it to more and more, probably to millions in micro-seconds. Our consumers and ordinary people are waking up to the realities within no time. No wonder that in today's world how our social media outlets like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram can influence billion dollar industries of Hollywood with # MeToo Campaign. Again, with the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011, we can witness the sweeping changes that have come over from far away Tunisia to the rest of the West Asia. These events have very well proved that commoners are no easy goers and they need to be engaged wherever possible.

What has been a permanent trend in business today is that rising number of consumers and stakeholders are talking and making sense about human rights, environment protection, sustainable development and social justice. Covid-19 is seemed to be an uncharted territory for the corporates. But in practice, it is not. This planet has seen many such crises like the Spanish flu of 1918, Zika virus, etc.

Currently, if we glean knowledge from our life-altering circumstances, we can very well realise that our institutions can do much more than what they are displaying at the moment. And, perfectly, it goes far beyond responding to this visible pandemic. The reason behind is that they are truly capable and they know their job more than others do. Therefore, a myriad of business organisations and their consistent efforts to ease out the burden of Governments across the globe is simply a reflection of their embedded responsibility only.

Apart from this, we must argue here that measly efforts from individuals may not help save this planet. The time has arrived for a road ahead to personal social responsibility (PSR). With CSR, we need to practise this PSR so as to inculcate good old habits to first save the family, then neighborhood and finally the community.

The PSR indicates what once Gandhi said, “The future depends on what you do today”. If we don't make any change now, it is just impossible to make changes in the future. And this creates more inroads for our future generations and for humanity to march ahead. It's the right time to stand behind each person who has suffered and/or has lost the dear ones and those frontline workers who have come out to save our lives.

It's the only way that we can save future lives and can renew our hopes for a fresh beginning. When the business enterprises set their plans, policies, goals accompanied by activities to deliver their social responsibilities, we need to have same high standards to perform our PSRs. It starts from maintaining our social distancing at neighborhood to public gatherings. What we expect from the trading communities must reflect in our PSRs so as to demonstrate our basic minimum duties to save lives at this time of Covid-19.

Hence, urging the corporates to be more responsible is absolutely fine. But they are also human organisations at their core. Without leaving all to them, governments must see to it that their relevance is not lost at all. Covid-19 is not about surrendering duties and responsibilities to the big business magnates in the name of performing CSR. All public offices and functionaries have to ensure that a fair play is practiced, resources are properly distributed, the long arm of the State is present in the remotest corners of the country and the poor and the economically vulnerable are not at the mercy of the powerful.

(The writer is an Associate Professor at Jindal Global Law School, OP Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana)

Time to bolster India-EU ties



Parishad (ARSP) by numerous delegations of Bangladeshi Hindus. Number of Hindus opted to remain in East Pakistan at the time of partition but their hopes of receiving a fair and equitable treatment there were systematically eroded because of oppression and injustices inflicted on them. This forced many of them to naturally flee to India over last several decades.

Acknowledging this is in no way meant to be a criticism of the present Awami League Government in Bangladesh which remains firmly committed to secular principles and which has traditionally maintained a friendly posture towards India. In fact, on several occasions, Hindus have been targeted by BNP and Jamaat mobs merely because of Hindus' perceived support for the Awami League.

Issue of persecution of Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh has been a subject of extensive debate and reflection in India over the years. In a sense, the problem is seen by many as a legacy of our partition imposed on us by the British on their departure from India and ensuing largescale transfer of population which resulted in enormous loss of lives and dislocation. Even Pt Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, had expressed deep concern over the condition of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan. The CAA is actually meant to partly rectify that festering problem by India accepting some responsibility towards the Hindus and Sikhs left behind in Muslim dominated Pakistan after partition.

Our law has a provision for citizenship by naturalisation but that is not available to illegal immigrants. The CAA changes the law on citizenship by naturalisation by providing immunity to some people (members of persecuted religious minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan) from being regarded as “illegal immigrants” and reducing the time required by them to acquire Indian citizenship. Question of who this dispensation would apply to is a sovereign matter solely for India to decide keeping in view its socio-security considerations without any imposition from outside.

A number of issues have been raised by the critics of the CAA about its constitutionality. Arguments being

advanced are completely baseless and appear politically motivated designed to wrongfully malign the present Government and tarnish India's image and reputation globally. Article 15 of the Constitution in the fundamental rights chapter which prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of religion has been quoted by the opponents but it must be noted that this article only applies to citizens and therefore the question of non-citizens seeking non-discrimination under the provisions of this article simply does not arise. Article 14 of the Constitution does indeed provide for equality before the law to all persons residing in India but even there classification for the purpose of legislation is allowed provided such classification is reasonable. It is perfectly alright to make such a dispensation in respect of the persecuted minorities in the three countries in order to provide them the requisite protection and dignity.

India shares an important relationship with European Union and its constituents. Both India and Europe are fully aware of the evolving global geo-political dynamics which has brought India closer to Europe than never before. In a study by Delhi-based Foundation for National Security Research, three European countries viz. France, Germany and UK were placed among India's top six strategic partners worldwide from the standpoint of defence, security, economic linkages as well as political-diplomatic cooperation.

The EU is also one of India's largest trading partners with the annual trade and services turnover exceeding \$125 billion. We have longstanding shared values and interests based on our commitment to democracy and rules based international order. But despite overall positive sentiments, the relationship has not achieved its full potential. The trade and investment agreement which has been under negotiations since 2007 is yet to be finalised.

There has been some anxiety in Europe as in other parts of the world over China's predatory investments in strategic assets. China's hyper-activism, especially in central and east European countries which are now part of EU, seems to be a cause of particular concern to the EU.

There have been, for instance, reports of Serbia having prioritised quick Chinese aid over European support in dealing with the spread of Covid -19, even as there was growing anger in Europe over China supplying defective and low-quality masks and other protective gear.

In fact, there appears to be a great deal of suspicion in Europe over Chinese Government having suppressed information about the outbreak of the virus in Wuhan in the early days which may have been responsible for spread of infection and eventual largescale casualties in Europe. Both Merkel and Macron have personally raised serious questions over transparency in China and its handling of the pandemic. There have been reports citing German intelligence sources that Chinese President phoned WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to delay “global warning” over the coronavirus outbreak in January. The pandemic could well lead to a transformational evolution of global geo-political dynamics with western powers acting in much greater concert than at present to check the rise of China. India could benefit at the expense of China in that scenario.

There is also understandable frustration in Europe for having allowed almost complete dependence on China for manufactured goods. This concern is also shared in the USA and other developed countries. Those countries would do everything in their power to push their companies to shift at least some of their manufacturing to the other parts of the world. India seems to be well placed to attract part of the manufacturing taking place in China presently. There are reports of new trade enquiries being directed to Indian manufacturers from Europe in the field of textiles, ceramics, construction tiles and homewares.

Modi's visit to Brussels for the 15th India-EU summit was scheduled for March this year but had to be postponed due to the outbreak of coronavirus. Even though the summit is supposed to be an annual affair, it could not be scheduled in 2018 and 2019 because of unresolved issues and other difficulties. Both sides now seem intent on holding the summit hopefully this year itself as soon as

India and EU have opportunities to take their relations to newer heights. Mischievous initiatives which cast aspersions on the CAA or legal changes brought about by the Indian Government in J&K should not be allowed to impact the growth of these ties



VIRENDRA GUPTA

the conditions normalise. It would provide an opportunity to both India and EU to revive their strategic partnership which was announced in 2004 but which does not seem to have made much headway. India has robust economic and strategic engagement with Germany, France and several other leading member countries of the EU and there is no reason why this solidity should not be reflected in India's ties with the EU as a whole.

Pending trade and investment issues revolving around negotiations for a free trade agreement which have remained stalled for the last several years can be resolved in the spirit of give and take keeping in view the emerging strategic convergence between them. Market access by India for some European goods, including wines and automobiles, are not insurmountable issues and some accommodation would also seem possible with regard to opportunities for investment in banking insurance and e-commerce sectors. But the EU on its part would do well to let go of its unreasonable insistence on labour and environment issues on which India has strong reservations.

In the changing geo-political realities, India and the EU have new opportunity to take their relations to newer heights. There is a huge potential to double or even triple our trade and investment engagement for the mutual benefit of our people. Mischievous initiatives which cast aspersions on the CAA or legal changes brought about by the Indian Government in J&K should not be allowed to impact the growth of these ties.

(The writer retired from the Indian Foreign Service a few years ago after having served as Indian Ambassador in several countries. He is currently president of well-known NGO Antar Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad)

INSIGHT

Taliban's rise shoots up Hazaras' anxiety

Even as the much-vaunted Taliban-Afghan Government's peace talks, brokered by the US, are yet to be finalised, the two sides have again locked horns, thus further jeopardising the environment for a lasting peace sought by the people, particularly the marginalised Hazaras. The Afghan Government has intensified its counter-terror operations against the Taliban following the two deadly attacks on May 12, one of which killed many innocents in a Kabul hospital.

In this saga of devastation, the anxiety of the Shia Hazaras is unique. The society and culture of the Hazaras bear quite significant traits unlike the other communities of Afghanistan. Poetry and music are integral part of their life. These poems and musical traditions have passed from generation to generations. Hence they form more of a folkloric part of their larger life. These cultural traditions are not in sync with the radical Islamism followed by the Taliban.

Therefore the Hazaras are facing continued persecution from the ethnic Pashtuns. Many of them are either fleeing from Afghanistan to the Western countries or to nearby safe places. But still a majority of the Hazaras is battling for survival in their

homeland.

The Hazara people are spread out across the rugged central mountains in Afghanistan since the 13th century. This region is known as the “land of the Hazaras”, i.e. “Hajarajat or Hazarestan”. Some of them are living in the Badakhshan Mountains of the Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan. Interestingly, this province, the farthest in the North-East is situated between Tajikistan and Northern Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan Province.

There are contesting claims about the exact number of the Hazaras in Afghanistan. One of the recent surveys shows that they constitute nine per cent of the total population of the country. But another report claims that they are one of the largest ethnic minorities, forming 20 per cent of the total inhabitants of Afghanistan. Before the 19th century, the Hazaras used to be the largest ethnic group, counting for more than 67 per cent of the country's population. But between 1880 and 1883, as a result of the Hazara uprisings against the Afghan King Abdur Rahman Khan, almost 60 per cent of them were killed and many of them fled to nearby Quetta region of Pakistan. He also distributed the lands of the Hazaras among the

Pashtun villagers. Today many of them live on the peripheral areas of the country bordering Pakistan and Iran. Another small group of the Hazaras known as the Ismaili Hazaras live in the Hindu Kush mountains.

The Hazaras speak languages of Asiatic origin and their physical features are akin to the people of the continent. They use a dialect of Dari (Parsi) popularly called Hazaragi, also known as Khorasani Persian. These unique features set them apart from the predominant ethnic Pashtun population of Afghanistan. Most important aspect of the Hazaras is that they are mostly Shia Muslims unlike the majority of the Afghans who follow the Sunni sect of Islam. However, a significant group of the Hazaras is believers of Ismaili sect.

Considered as heretics by the radicals, the Hazaras have become easy targets of the Sunni Islamists such as the Taliban and the Islamic State (ISIS). Even in nearby Pakistan, they are facing constant attacks from the Sunni groups. Pakistan-based terror organisations such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have accepted the responsibility of eliminating the Hazaras from its country.

When the Taliban came to power

in 1996, its Government declared jihad on the Shia Hazaras. During their entire rule from 1996-2001, the Shia Hazaras had to undergo severe repression and persecution. Today, they are prime target of the ISIS which is losing its strongholds in the West Asian region.

Now, if the Taliban come back to power, the Hazaras will once again face threat to their life. Many of them fear that they will face mass massacre. The Taliban are trying to broad-base their organisation by appointing Hazara leaders into their fold, but this is just an eyewash. The centuries-old hatred against the community would not die down so easily. Probably, the Taliban will draw out their radical agenda after the US troops drawdown.

The mass persecution of the Hazaras must be stopped. It is the responsibility of the international organisations and the Government of Afghanistan to guarantee them a safe life in their homeland. The systematic discrimination against the Hazaras in their homeland by the Islamic radicals is a blot on the international human rights organisations.

(The young writer is a rights activist)

The revival of the Islamist forces in Afghanistan and the resultant persecution of the minority Hazaras is a blot on the international human rights organisations



CHITRANGADA SAIKIA

