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TECHNOLOGY**WORLD 8**
CHINA'S AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL
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SRK REVEALS
HIS LOCKDOWN
LESSONS
10 VIVACITY

Lockdown-4 till May 31, inter-State buses to ply

States empowered to mark buffer zones, passenger vehicles allowed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry on Sunday diluted the norms for "lockdown 4" which has been extended till May 31 by allowing States to operate buses and passenger vehicles while sticking to others existing restrictions, including wearing of masks in public places. The States are also now empowered to designate containment and buffer zones depending upon cases of Covid-19 in a particular area.

In these zones only essential services will be allowed while in rest of the areas all business and economic movements will go on with social distancing norms, according to the new guidelines issued by the Home Ministry.

The night curfew will remain in place from 7 pm to 7 am.

According to the latest guidelines, air passenger services and metro train services will remain shut till May 31. The States were asked to allow all inter-State movement of passenger vehicles and buses with mutual consent. The inter-State movement of all cargo vehicles and empty cargo vehicles will take place without any interruption.

States are empowered to decide the definition of passenger vehicles ranging from taxis, Uber-Ola kind cabs, auto rickshaws, cycle rickshaws and decide on limiting the number of passengers, including in



Migrants waves through a window after arriving by a special train from Mumbai at Howrah station during the ongoing nationwide Covid-19 lockdown in Kolkata on Sunday

PTI

buses.

Changing the earlier rules in certain areas on mandatory downloading of Arogya Setu App, the MHA said employers have to use "best effort services" on employees and district administration to advice the people on downloading the App. The Centre has changed the mind on this regard after critics of the App threatened to move the court against the "illegal" ordering of downloading the App citing privacy rules.

The containment zones

will be decided by the States in considering the health data on Covid-19 pandemic of particular areas. The Centre has asked the States to take all tracing, surveillance of Covid-19 patients in the designated containment zones and asked to ensure delivery of responsibilities of district authorities.

However, the MHA said across India people above age of 65, pregnant persons and kids below 10 years must be advised to stay home except for essential needs. The school, colleges and universities will con-

tinue to be shut. Consumption of alcohol, smoking, paan chewing in public places is banned across the country.

All restaurants are allowed to operate their kitchen services and engage in home delivery of food items. Restaurants and canteens are only allowed to operate in full-fledged manner at railway stations, hospitals and government offices.

Cinema halls, shopping malls, gyms, bars will continue to be shut till May 31, while sports complexes and stadia are allowed to operate without

GUIDELINES FOR LOCKDOWN 4.0

- States empowered to designate containment and buffer zones depending upon cases of Covid-19
- The night curfew will remain in place from 7 pm to 7 am
- Air passenger services and metro train services will remain shut till May 31
- States asked to allow all inter-State movement of passenger vehicles and buses with mutual consent
- Inter-State movement of all cargo vehicles and empty cargo vehicles will take place without any interruption
- States empowered to decide the definition of passenger vehicles ranging from taxis, Uber-Ola kind cabs, auto rickshaws, cycle rickshaws and decide on limiting the number of passengers including in buses
- Stadiums and sports complexes will be permitted to open but spectators won't be allowed
- Barber shops, spa and saloons will also be allowed in red zones
- In lockdown 3.0, e-commerce activities were allowed in the red zones, but only for essential items. The guidelines for lockdown 4.0 do not make any such distinction. Therefore, e-commerce activities — for both essential and non-essential items — will now be allowed in the red zones too

spectators.

All social, political, religious gathering not allowed and religious places will be closed for public till further notice. Religious places are closed for public but are allowed to continue their rituals. As many as 50 persons will be allowed for marriage and 20 persons allowed for funeral functions, said the MHA.

Opening of barber shops and spas are left to the decision of the States.

All offices including private are allowed to operate with

strict social distancing norms and managers are asked to ensure sanitation of bathrooms, doors, door handles on regular intervals and ensure to prevent congregation of employees in work places.

Office managers are asked to ensure thermal screening and sanitisation at entry points and staggering of working hours to avoid congregation. All shops are allowed to open with social distancing norms and asked the States to ensure that five customers at a time in a shop.

Delhi Govt may open markets, to unveil plan today

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

While the Central Government on Sunday extended lockdown for two more weeks till May 31 with certain dilution of curbs, the Delhi Government on Sunday said it will announce its detailed plans based on Centre's guidelines for lockdown on Monday.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the Centre's guidelines are largely in line with the proposal sent by the Delhi Government based on suggestions of Delhiites.

"We have always been saying that we all will now have to learn to live with corona.

We used the last two months lockdown period to prepare ourselves for dealing with corona by improving necessary logistics and health infrastructure. We do expect a slight increase in cases when the economy reopens and Delhi is prepared to deal with it," Kejriwal said.

Meanwhile, if officials in the Delhi Government are to be believed, popular shopping destinations like Khan Market, Chandni Chowk and Karol Bagh can open.

"Market places have now been allowed to open, however, operation of malls and cinemas continues to be banned," the official said.



Passengers at the New Delhi Station after their arrival by a special train amid ongoing Covid-19 lockdown in Delhi on Sunday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Over ₹1L cr for rural jobs as ₹40K cr added

Centre suspends bankruptcy filings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Sunday raised the allocation for job creation under MGNREGS by ₹40,000 crore and suspended new bankruptcy filings on loan defaults for one year to ease the pain for the industry hit by Covid-19. The other measures announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman focused on the consolidation of PSUs and making the environment con-



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman along with Minister of State Anurag Thakur and officials addresses a Press conference to announce the fifth and final tranche of economic stimulus package in New Delhi on Sunday

PTI

ducive for the private companies to boost ease of doing business.

The Centre has acceded to the request of the States and increased borrowing limit from 3 per cent of gross State domestic product (GSDP) to 5 per cent for 2020 subject to some conditions.

In the fifth and final tranche of the economic stim-

ulus package, the Finance Minister raised allocation for the employment guarantee scheme by ₹40,000 crore over and above the ₹61,000 crore budgeted earlier to provide employment to migrant workers moving back to their States. The FM said this will help generate nearly 300 crore person-days in total.

Continued on Page 2

India racing towards 1L mark

Maha adds half to country's total of about 5K new cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 crisis deepened further in Maharashtra on Sunday as 63 more persons succumbed to the pandemic and an all-time day's record 2,347 people tested positive, taking the total number of deaths to 1,198 and infected cases to 33,053 in the State. The country's overall count of confirmed cases stood at 95,648 with 3,025 deaths. As many as 4,999 new cases and 152 deaths were reported on Sunday.

Of the 63 deaths, Mumbai accounted for 38 deaths, while there were nine deaths in Pune, six in Aurangabad, three each in Solapur and Raigad and one each in Thane district, Pancel city, Latur and Aurangabad city.

Of the dead, 44 were men while 19 were women. Thirty four were aged over 60 years, 22 were from the age group 40 to 59 years and 7 were aged below 40 years. "41 out of 63 patients

Covid-19
TOTAL CASES: 95,648
DEATHS: 3,025
RECOVERED: 36,794

(65%) had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease," a State health bulletin said.

On a day when the total number of deaths mounted to 1,198 in Maharashtra, the total number of infected cases jumped 33,053. The authorities pegged the total number of active cases at 24,161.

With 38 deaths and 1,571 new cases, the death toll mounted to 734 and infected cases to 20,150 in Mumbai.

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	33,053	1,198	7,688
Gujarat	11,380	659	4,499
Tamil Nadu	11,224	79	4,172
Delhi	9,755	148	4,202
Rajasthan	5,202	131	3,055
Madhya Pradesh	4,977	248	2,403
Uttar Pradesh	4,464	112	2,636
West Bengal	2,677	238	959
Andhra Pradesh	2,380	50	1,456
Punjab	1,946	35	1,366

After Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu recorded 639 fresh cases on Sunday, taking the tally of total infected persons in the State to 11,224. As many as 79 deaths have been registered in the State including five deaths on Sunday.

Gujarat on Sunday recorded 391 new Covid-19 cases and 34 deaths, taking the total case count to 11,380 and the number of fatalities to 659. Of them, Ahmedabad recorded 276 new cases with 31 deaths.

Madhya Pradesh reported 187 new infections, total rises to 4,977, according to a bulletin issued by the State health department. The State also reported five deaths, pushing toll to 248. Uttar Pradesh reported 206 new cases for an overall count of 4,464 cases.

Simultaneously, a total of 191 patients were discharged from hospitals, taking the total number of recovered patients to 4,499 so far, she said.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

6 HINDU RAO HOSPITAL STAFF TEST COVID +VE
New Delhi: Six healthcare workers of the Hindu Rao Hospital have tested positive for coronavirus after coming in contact with a infected person.

HIZBUL COMMANDER KILLED IN ENCOUNTER
Doda/Jammu: A top Hizbul Mujahideen commander wanted in the killing of an RSS functionary and his PSO was killed in a gunfight with security forces in Doda district of J&K.

TWO COPS MARTYRED IN ENCOUNTER WITH NAXALS
Gadchiroli: Two police personnel were martyred and three others injured in an encounter with Naxals in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli.

DELHI'S COVID DOUBLING RATE IS 11 DAYS: JAIN
New Delhi: The doubling rate of coronavirus cases in the national Capital is 11 days, Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain said on Sunday. He said containment zones in the city are increasing and many doctors, nurses, police and BSF jawans are being infected with the virus.

Migrants run amok in UP against curbs on movement

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

Migrant workers went on rampage at several places on Uttar Pradesh border after the Yogi Government imposed strict restriction on their movement on foot or by any mode of transport to check road mishaps.

Big crowds of migrants and long queues of vehicles were witnessed at road blocks put up by the authorities to stop the migrants. The arrangements made by the State Government to ferry back the migrants to their State of origin turned out to be inadequate in view of their huge numbers leading to tough time for the local authorities to handle the situation.

Besides, rising temperature also created problems.

Continued on Page 2

Chinese copters intruded into India twice in April

Same area in HP had seen Chinese Army's heightened activities in 2017

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In yet another case of Indian airspace violation by China, its helicopters intruded into the Indian territory in Himachal Pradesh last month at least on two occasions before returning to their bases across the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The border has also seen two incidents of face-off earlier this month in Sikkim and Ladakh respectively when soldiers from both sides were engaged in fisticuffs leading to injury of some from both sides.

On the transgression by air, a Chinese helicopters entered Indian airspace in Lahaul-Spiti on April 11 and then on April 20. Local authorities said the



helicopter came at least eight to ten kilometres inside Himachal and flew back after sometime. The State had seen similar airspace violations some years ago too.

The last village in India, where the latest helicopter intrusion took place, had witnessed enhanced Chinese army activities in 2017 also when the 73-day stand-off between India and China was on in Doklam in Sikkim. Since then, the Chinese have improved its infrastructure across the LAC besides increasing helicopter flying, sources said on Sunday.

Continued on Page 2

ACP deployed at Rashtrapati Bhawan Police Lines tests +ve

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) posted at Rashtrapati Bhawan has tested positive for the coronavirus after which five police men have been quarantined.

The 58-year-old ACP was posted at Rashtrapati Bhawan Police Lines, away from the Rashtrapati Bhawan core area which comprises the residential premises of the President.

The ACP was tested and isolated on May 13. Five other personnel who came in contact with him too have been quarantined as a precautionary measure, police officials said.

"We were informed about his reports today. He has tested positive for the virus but he is asymptomatic. He was in isolation since May 13 and has been admitted to a private hospital," a senior police officer said.

Goa to charge ₹2K Covid test fee from those entering State

PTI ■ PANAJI

Amid a spurt in coronavirus positive cases, the Goa Government on Sunday decided to charge ₹2,000 for Covid-19 testing per person entering the State.

The State Executive Committee (SEC), led by State Chief Secretary Parimal Rai, is responsible for overseeing the Covid management and relief work in the State. During a meeting held on Sunday, the committee took stock of the Covid situation in the State, where the number of positive cases has gone up to 16.

"After the recent positive cases emerging amongst the travellers, the SEC decided that the practice of testing every person entering Goa needs to continue," said a Government spokesperson.

Continued on Page 2

Cyclone Amphan intensifies into severe storm

17 NDRF teams in Odisha, Bengal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as India grapples with Erapidly spreading novel coronavirus disease Covid-19, another natural threat looms over the east coast of the country. Several coastal districts of Odisha and parts of West Bengal are on high alert as cyclone Amphan (pronounced as UM-PUN) intensified into a severe cyclonic storm over the Bay of Bengal on Sunday, raising the likelihood of heavy rainfall with high-speed wind.

It is likely to cross West Bengal-Bangladesh coasts between Sagar Islands in West Bengal and Hatiya islands in Bangladesh between afternoon and evening of May 20 as a very severe cyclonic storm.

The India Meteorological



Corporation workers clear an uprooted tree that fell on a power line during a storm in Coimbatore on Sunday

PTI

Department (IMD) said cyclone Amphan is likely to make landfall in between Sagar Islands (West Bengal) and Hatiya Islands (Bangladesh) during the afternoon/evening of May 20 as a very severe cyclonic storm. It lay centred about 980 km south of Paradip in Odisha, 1,130 km south-southwest of Digha in West Bengal and 1,250 km south-southwest of Khepupara in Bangladesh.

Continued on Page 2

MIGRANTS THRONG SAHARANPUR HIGHWAY

Haryana buses carrying migrant workers return to State

Yamunanagar (Har): A number of buses arranged by the Haryana Government for ferrying migrant workers to different parts of Uttar Pradesh had to return to this district on Sunday as those walking homes thronged the Saharanpur highway.

Officials here said there were reports that a number of migrant labourers had thronged the Saharanpur highway. The buses were brought back to Yamunanagar as there were apprehensions that they may get stuck due to law and order problems arising at the border, they said.

Necessary arrangements for the food and stay of the migrants have been made and they will soon be sent back to their native

places, the officials said.

In the last two days, thousands of migrant labourers were sent from Yamunanagar to different parts of Uttar Pradesh, particularly western UP.

Haryana has been sending those migrant workers in buses who are from neighbouring areas including western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir UT and Himachal Pradesh while 'Shramik Special' trains carry the workers to far off places like Bihar, other parts of UP, Madhya Pradesh and other states.

In Chandigarh, a state government spokesman said 1,60,300 migrant labourers have so far been sent to their

native states through buses and the Shramik trains. The cost of their journey is being borne by the Haryana government, he said.

So far 75,600 migrant labourers have been sent from Haryana to Uttar Pradesh, he said.

Meanwhile, a day after police here used mild force to disperse a group of migrant labourers who had blocked the national highway demanding that they be sent back to their native states, Haryana's Home Minister Anil Vij said he has directed state DGP to ask the district police chiefs to depute a senior official to handle the situation if it turns volatile and restrain from using force against the migrants. **PTI**

Migrant worker dies of snake bite in Chhattisgarh quarantine centre

Mungeli: A 31-year-old migrant worker died after being bitten by a snake at a quarantine centre in Chhattisgarh's Mungeli district on Sunday morning, officials said.

The incident took place in Kirna village under Kotwali police station limits, Mungeli Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Chitrakant Chali Thakur said.

"Migrants workers Yogesh Verma had returned from Pune in Maharashtra on Saturday. He was kept at a quarantine facility in a government school in the village. He was sleeping on the floor in the verandah outside his room when he was bitten by a snake. He died during treatment in a nearby hospital," the SDM said. The kin of the deceased was given immediate assistance of Rs 10,000 and a compensation of Rs 4 lakh will be paid out after completing necessary formalities, he added. "The panchayat staff have been told to make sure no one sleeps outside their rooms in quarantine facilities," the official said.

100 varsities to run e-degree courses from May 30: HRD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced for promotion of digital-education in India in a post-coronavirus era and announced 'PM eVIDYA' programme for multi-mode access to e-education under which top 100 universities would be permitted to start online courses by May 30.

The Finance Minister said the HRD Ministry has allowed top 100 Indian universities to start online degree courses automatically from 30 May. These universities need not to seek any fresh approval from the education regulators to offer online degree courses. HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank thanked the Centre for the announcement and said this will be a great step towards e-learning.

"Technology-driven education to be the focus- PM eVIDYA programme for multi-mode access to digital/online education to be

launched immediately. Top 100 universities will be permitted to automatically start online courses by 30th May 2020", Sitharaman said.

The minister said the 'PM eVIDYA' programme would consist of 'Diksha' involving e-content and QR coded energized textbooks for all grades and would be called as 'one nation, one digital platform'.

There will be extensive use of radio, community radio and podcasts and special e-content for visually and hearing impaired, the minister added.

The government is ensuring that education of students does not suffer during the nationwide lockdown, the minister said.

Sitharaman said besides this, the government is going to launch 'Manodarpan, an initiative for psychosocial support of students, teachers and families for mental health and emotional wellbeing, with immediate effect.

Jamia student arrested in connection with violence during anti-CAA protest

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's crime branch has arrested a student of Jamia Millia Islamia in connection with the violence in the Jamia area during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act in December last year, officials said on Sunday.

The police said Asif Iqbal Tanha, a resident of Abul Fazal Enclave in Shaheen Bagh, is a member of the Students Islamic Organization and was part of the Jamia Coordination Committee which spearheaded protests against the new citizenship law.

"He has been arrested in connection with a case which was registered at Jamia police station on December 16, 2019 in connection with riots in the Jamia area in which he was named an accused," a senior police officer said.

Asif, 24, is a third-year student of BA in Persian language.

On December 15 last year, protesters torched four public buses and two police vehicles as they clashed with police in New Friends' Colony near Jamia Millia Islamia during a demonstration against the amended Citizenship Act, leaving at least 40 people including students, policemen and fire fighters injured, officials had then said.

10 more BSF personnel test positive

New Delhi: Ten more Covid-19 cases were reported in the Border Security Force (BSF) in the last 24 hours, said officials on Sunday. All the new positive cases reported are under treatment at designated Covid-19 healthcare hospitals.

"Since yesterday, 13 (all from Delhi) personnel who had tested positive earlier, have been discharged," said BSF. The nationwide tally of coronavirus cases on Sunday stood at 90,927 including 2,872 deaths and 34,109 discharged/migrated patients.

Agency

Auraiya accident: Family awaiting body of lawyer aspirant turned migrant labourer

Kolkata: 20-year-old Chandan Rajwar wanted to be a lawyer but he quit college and joined a marble factory in Rajasthan to support his family, while Ajit Mahato, his 50-year-old colleague, was saving money to marry off his daughter.

The two had left the western State for their villages in Purulia district of West Bengal during the ongoing lockdown, but their families are now waiting for their bodies.

Chandan and Ajit are among the 24 migrant workers who were killed when a trailer truck collided with another

truck in the early hours of Saturday near Auraiya in Uttar Pradesh. Both the vehicles were carrying passengers.

Two other men from Purulia also lost their lives in the same accident. Purulia Zilla Sabhadhupati Sujoy Bandyopadhyay visited their modest houses at Dumdumi and Uparbati villages on Sunday and assured the families the administration's help in bringing back the mortal remains of their dear departed. "My son wanted to come back when the lockdown started. But no transport was available then.

The money he had started reducing as days passed by," said Bhiksakar Rajwar, Chandan's father. Rajwar, a mason, said he heard from Chandan for the last time on Thursday evening informing him that he would board a vehicle which will take him to Purulia along with some labourers from Jharkhand.

"Chandan had wanted to study and got admitted to a local degree college. However, there were livelihood issues. He quit studies and went to Rajasthan before the Durga Puja last year to work in a marble unit in Rajasthan," Rajwar said. **PTI**

Goa to charge ₹2K Covid test fee from those entering State

From Page 1

The SEC discussed the issue of charging people for the cost of testing, he said.

"After deliberations, the SEC directed the Inter-state Movement Cell of Goa to convey to the Railways and other authorities that any traveller arriving in Goa will have to go through compulsory testing and fee of Rs 2,000 per person will be charged for testing, irrespective of their mode of transport," he said. However, those covered under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana or under any other exempted category, like on duty government staff, will not have to pay, the spokesperson added. "Director of the Department of Information Technology said that 17,085 people have moved out of the state, while 2,129 have entered since April 29," he said. The SEC also discussed about the evacuation of foreign nationals, who are stranded in the state. During the meeting, the Nodal Officer (Foreigners) said that till May 14, as many as 7,352 foreigners have left Goa in 36 special flights, he said.

Last 5 tranches...

From Page 1

The Rajya Sabha member accused the Centre of misleading people of the country. "Government misleading people of country in name of economic package; PM Modi must walk the talk now," he said.

Speaking on the plight of the migrant workers, Sharma said the Government must apologise to poor citizens left abandoned by it, "their fundamental and legal rights violated".

"The Government has to answer on plight of migrants forced to walk on roads due to lack of planning," he said. Sharma also slammed Sitharaman for her describing as "drama" Rahul Gandhi's interaction with migrant workers in Delhi. "We expect seriousness, gravitas from the Finance Minister; what she has said against the Congress is frivolous," he said.

India racing...

From Page 1

"Gujarat has now achieved recovery rate of 39.53 per cent," said Principal Secretary (Health) Jayanti Ravi. Of the 6,222 active cases, 38 are on ventilator, she said.

Delhi recorded 422 new cases of novel coronavirus infections taking the tally to 9,755 cases in the national Capital. Till now, 148 deaths have been recorded in Delhi including 19 casualties on Sunday.

Rajasthan recorded 123 fresh cases, taking the total count of infected persons to 5,083. As many as 128 deaths have been witnessed in the State which includes two fatalities on Sunday. The Covid count in West Bengal reached

2,677 with 101 new cases on Sunday. The State has witnessed 238 deaths till now which includes six casualties on Sunday.

Bihar recorded 73 new cases, leading the total count to 1,251 which has recorded eight deaths till now.

Andhra Pradesh registered 25 new cases, stretching the tally of infected persons to 2,380 where 50 deaths have been witnessed which includes one casualty on Sunday.

Punjab added 18 new cases where the tally has reached 1,964 cases. The State has a total death count of 35 including three on Sunday.

Likewise, Karnataka added 54 new cases where there are a total of 1,146 cases now with 37 deaths till so far. Only one death was reported on Sunday.

Chinese copters intruded into India twice in April

From Page 1

Incidentally, Chinese helicopters flew close to the LAC on its side in Eastern Ladakh during the face-off on May 5 and 6 this year. The SU-30 fighter jets of IAF also flew sorties in the region. However, both the sides did not violate airspace. The two countries have an agreement that its helicopters and fighter jets will maintain a distance of at least 10 kilometers from the LAC.

Meanwhile, India is maintaining a close watch in Ladakh even as the stand-off ended some days back. China has increased its troop strength on Pangong Lake and the Indian side has also taken precautionary measures though the Army said it had not rushed more troops there.

Also, the security agencies are monitoring enhanced Chinese activities on its side of the LAC near river Galwan in Ladakh. The Chinese have pitched tents and increased construction, sources said.

Reacting to the two recent inci-

dents of face-offs, Army Chief MM Naravane had said the issues were resolved locally as per the strategic guidelines laid down by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping during their two informal summits.

The Army Chief had also said, "You are coming to know where face-off has occurred. Daily, we are meeting at 10 different places which is absolutely business as normal. It is only at one or two places where this has happened. And this does happen from time to time. It also happens when there is a change of commanders on ground."

However, in an apparent reference to China, he also said Nepal was objecting to the Lipulek road for Kailash Mansarovar yatra "at the behest of someone else." Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had inaugurated the 80-kilometer long road last week shortening the holy pilgrimage by at least ten to 12 days. The road is about four to five kilometer away from the LAC in Uttarakhand.

From Page 1

It is likely to intensify further into a very severe cyclonic storm during the next 12 hours and then move nearly northwards slowly during the next 24 hours.

Thereafter, it is likely to recurve north-northeastwards and move fast across northwest Bay of Bengal and cross West Bengal-Bangladesh coasts between Sagar Islands and Hatiya islands between afternoon and evening of May 20, said H R Biswas, Director of the Meteorological Centre in

Bhubaneswar.

Under its impact, the coastal districts of Gangetic West Bengal, including North and South 24 Parganas, Kolkata, East and West Midnapore, Howrah and Hooghly are likely to experience light to moderate rain at many places with heavy downpour at isolated places on May 19. The IMD further said that on May 20, rainfall will occur in many places over the districts in Gangetic West Bengal, with heavy to very heavy downpour in North and

South 24 Parganas and East Midnapore districts. As many as 17 teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have been deployed in Odisha and West Bengal. While seven teams of the force have been deployed in six districts of West Bengal- South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, East Midnapore, West Midnapore, Howrah and Hooghly, 10 teams are on alert in seven districts of Odisha-Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Bhadrak, Balasore and Mayurbhanj.

Over ₹1L cr...

From Page 1

The Government announced a new policy for companies under State control saying public sector undertakings under the non-strategic sector will be privatised while those in the identified strategic sector would be capped by not more than four by merging some of them.

For industries, she said the minimum threshold to initiate insolvency proceedings will be raised to ₹1 crore from ₹1 lakh, which largely insulates micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from bankruptcy on defaulting on loans.

Also, a special insolvency resolution framework for MSMEs under Section 240A of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) will be notified soon, she said adding that fresh initiation of insolvency proceedings will be suspended up to one year depending upon the pandemic situation.

Coronavirus-related debt will be excluded from the definition of "default" under the IBC for the purpose of triggering insolvency proceedings, she said adding that the changes will be effected by promulgating an Ordinance.

Additionally, minor technical and procedural defaults under the Companies Act such as shortcomings in CSR reporting, inadequacies in board report, filing defaults, and delay in holding AGM will be decriminalised.

Last week, the Government

pledged a ₹20 lakh crore (nearly 10 per cent of gross domestic product) package to support the economy headed for its first full-year contraction in more than four decades.

Sitharaman said this package included previous announcement of ₹1.7 lakh crore package of free foodgrain and cooking gas as well as cash to some poor for three months and the Reserve Bank of India's ₹8.01 lakh crore worth of liquidity measures since March. Also included was ₹15,000 crore that was allocated to the healthcare sector to deal with the pandemic.

The five announcements since May 13 entail limited cash outgo for the Government as the majority of them deal with liquidity issues.

The Finance Minister said companies will be permitted to directly list securities in permissible foreign jurisdictions. Private companies that list non-convertible debentures (NCDs) on stock exchanges will not be regarded as listed companies.

There will be lower penalties for all defaults for small companies, one-person companies, producer companies and start-ups, she said adding that the changes in the Companies Act would also be done through promulgating an Ordinance.

Announcing a new public sector enterprises (PSEs) policy, Sitharaman said a list of strategic sectors requiring the presence of PSUs in the public interest will be notified.

In strategic sectors, at least one enterprise will remain in

the public sector but the private sector will also be allowed. In other sectors, PSUs will be privatised, she said adding that timing would be based on feasibility.

"To minimise wasteful administrative costs, the number of enterprises in strategic sectors will ordinarily be only one to four. Others will be privatised/ merged/ brought under holding companies," she said.

For States, she said the Centre has acceded to their request and increased borrowing limit from 3 per cent of gross State domestic product (GSDP) to 5 per cent for 2020-21 only.

States' net borrowing ceiling for 2020-21 is ₹6.41 lakh crore, based on 3 per cent of GSDP. States have so far borrowed only 14 per cent of the limit authorised, she said adding that the increase in borrowing limit would give States extra resources of Rs 4.28 lakh crore.

But, the increased borrowing limit would be linked to specific reforms such as One Nation-One Ration Card, ease of doing business, power distribution, and urban local body revenues.

The conditions include an unconditional increase of 0.50 per cent in the borrowing limit. Thereafter, 1 per cent increase will be allowed in four tranches of 0.25 per cent, with each tranche linked to clearly specified, measurable and feasible reform actions.

The last of the 0.50 per cent will be allowed if milestones are achieved in at least three out of four reform areas.

Executive Engineer Provincial Division, P.W.D. Bijnor									
Letter No. 13/E-Tender/20-21						Dated : 30.04.2020			
(E-Tender)									
1. The Executive Engineer Provincial Division, U.P.P.W.D. Bijnor on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved Contractors registered in Road/Building Works with UP PWD, class A,B,C,D The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.									
2. S.L. No. DISTRICT Name of Work Estimated cost (Rs. in Lakhs) Bid Security (Rs. in Lakhs) Cost of Bid Document Time of Completion Address of Executive Engineer of the work Address of Superintendent Engineer Address of Chief Engineer									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Bijnor	Maintenance of Inspection House Bijnor	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
2	Bijnor	Maintenance of Inspection House Dhampur	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
3	Bijnor	Maintenance of Inspection House Chandpur	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
4	Bijnor	Maintenance of PWD Office Campus Bijnor	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
5	Bijnor	Maintenance of PWD Office Campus Dhampur	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
6	Bijnor	Maintenance of Inspection House Noorpur	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
7	Bijnor	Repair/ Maintenance of PWD Roads in Block Moh-Pur Deomal in Distt Bijnor	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
8	Bijnor	Repair/ Maintenance of PWD Roads in Block Haldaura in Distt Bijnor	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
9	Bijnor	Repair/ Maintenance of PWD Roads in Block Nehrour in Distt Bijnor	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
10	Bijnor	Repair/ Maintenance of PWD Roads in Block Noorpur in Distt Bijnor	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
11	Bijnor	Repair/ Maintenance of PWD Roads in Block Dhampur in Distt Bijnor	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
12	Bijnor	Repair/ Maintenance of PWD Roads in Block Jalpur in Distt Bijnor	10.50	1.05 (Security will be accepted only by Net banking)	766/- (Tender Cost be accepted only by Net banking)	12 Months	Provincial Division P.W.D. Bijnor	Rampur Circle P.W.D. Rampur	Chief Engineer Moradabad Zone P.W.D. Moradabad
♦ The Rate adopted in the BOQ include all Other taxes but excluding GST. Bid Security and tender cost should be deposited online through Net Banking as per Column 5 and 6 in the table. Bids must be downloaded online from 10:00 AM on date 22.05.2020 to 5:00 PM on date 27.05.2020 and the technical bids will be opened online on date 28.05.2020 at 12:30 PM in Office of Executive Engineer Provincial Division PWD Bijnor and Financial bids of the qualified bidders will be opened on date 4 time as notified. According to the provisions of Government Order No. 1/2018/3070/78-2-2018/42 17/2017 (22) Date 03-01-2018 after opening of the technical and financial bids, the qualified bidder has to submit original documents personally in department office. In the event of non submission of original documents by the bidder, the appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the provisions of G.O. All terms & conditions can be seen on website http://tenderup.nic.in									
(Sunil Sagar) Executive Engineer Provincial Division, P.W.D. Bijnor Ph: 01342 - 262776 Email - pdsbijnor@gmail.com									
UP-1472 Dt. 14.5.20 बिहार सरकार :www.upgovt.nic.in पर जायें									



मध्यप्रदेश मध्य क्षेत्र विद्युत वितरण कंपनी लिमिटेड
कार्यालय उपमहाप्रबंधक (सिविल), चम्बल कालोनी, गोविन्दपुरा, भोपाल
फोन आफिस : 0755-2678206, ई-मेल : gmcivil.mkvvel@gmail.com
क्रमांक 050/उपमहाप्रसि/क्रय/68-69
भोपाल, दिनांक : 16.05.2020

निविदा सूचना क्र. 01/01

सिविल संधाग भोपाल के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित कार्यो हेतु कम्पनी म.प्र. शासन/केन्द्रीय शासन के विभिन्न विभागों में सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत, ई.पी.एफ. नं. एवं जी.एस.टी. रजिस्ट्रेशन नं. प्राप्त ठेकेदारों से प्रपत्र 'अ' में लोक निर्माण विभाग मध्यप्रदेश शासन के दिनांक 01.08.2014 से प्रभावी (वर्तमान तक संशोधित) एस.ओ.आर. (भवन एवं विद्युत) में 10 प्रतिशत की कमी कर एवं आयटम रेट में 18 प्रतिशत जी.एस.टी. जोड़ कर भाष्यर e-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं।						
निविदा सूचना क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	अनुमानित लागत रुपये में	धरोहर राशि रुपये में	निविदा प्रपत्र डाउनलोड करने की प्रारंभ तिथि एवं समय	ऑनलाइन निविदा प्रपत्र जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	निविदा खुलने की दिनांक/ समय
उप.मप्रसि 01/01 (ई. निविदा क्र. (2020) MKVVC 89616_1)	निष्ठा परिसर गोविन्दपुरा भोपाल स्थित डाटा सेन्टर भवन एवं महाप्रबंधक आई.टी. सेल कार्यालय भवन में रिनोवेशन का कार्य।	12.85 लाख	15,000/-	19.05.2020 15.00	29.05.2020 15.00	30.05.2020 15.00

निविदा संबंधी विस्तृत जानकारी कंपनी की वेबसाइट portal.mpcz.in पर देखें एवं mptenders.gov.in पोर्टल से निविदा क्रय कर सकते हैं।
म.प्र. माध्यम/97369/2020

उप महाप्रबंधक (सिविल)

Detained for helping workers: DPCC chief

Cops deny charges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi interacted with migrant labourers on the streets of the national Capital, the Delhi Police on Sunday detained and put under house arrest Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) chief Anil Chaudhary for allegedly violating lockdown norms and calling migrant labourers to East district's Ghazipur area.

Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar on Sunday alleged that he was detained by police for "helping migrant workers", a charge denied by a senior police official.

"Police came to my home from the New Ashok Nagar police station in the morning today. Police told me that I was being detained but no reason was given for doing so," he said.

Kumar said police kept asking him if he had gone to the Ghazipur border on Saturday. "We have registered an FIR under IPC section 188 against Chaudhary for violating the norms of lockdown", police said. He was arrested and later released on bail, they added.

Meanwhile, hundreds of migrant factory workers, daily

wagers, street vendors, all rendered jobless due to the coronavirus lockdown, who were heading towards their homes in States like UP and Bihar, were stranded on the Delhi border after the police stopped them from walking on foot for their onward journey.

With worry and despair writ large on their faces, many said there was no reason for them to stay back.

"There was no way but to go back to Sitapur because I was paid nothing since March," said Vijay Kumar, a worker.

"I thought I will catch a bus on the UP border. But there is no transport here. I just have around ₹700 and there is little help from anyone. If nothing is available, I will walk with my family to go to Sitapur," said the desperate man.

Anil Soni, a house painter by profession, too tried to cross Delhi-UP border along with his family when the policemen stopped them.

"I lost work because of lockdown and coronavirus, because people do not want any unknown person to enter their homes," he said.

Accompanied by his wife and three children, the youngest just ten months old, Soni hoped to make it to his home in Badayun in UP.

"I will not come back here even if I have to beg at home. This is no life. Can you tell me what am I supposed to do. Policemen do not allow us to go ahead and there are no buses or trains even if one is ready to buy a ticket," he said, the frustration palpable in his voice.

The dirt and filth covered area under the flyover at the border served as a temporary shelter for the stranded migrants as policemen did not allow them to enter Ghaziabad.

"We have been directed to ensure that no person without proper authorisation crosses the border. There is nothing we can do for these people," said a Delhi police officer present on the spot. Food and water was arranged by some social organisations and members of Youth Congress for the stranded people whose only worry was to reach home.

Among them was a group of eight farm labourers trying to reach Bahraich in UP on their cycles.

"I have nothing with me now, because I used ₹4,000 for purchasing this bicycle. Now the policemen are saying to keep it at the police station and go to a shelter of Delhi Government. I am not going anywhere, I will not move from here," said 21-year-old Babloo.

G'gram dispatches 3,810 labourers from UP, Bihar to home

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Gurugram district administration on Sunday sent about 3,810 labourers of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar back to their native States via two special train and Haryana Roadways buses which were dispatched from Gurugram railway station and Sector-21 community centre.

Of these, the first train left for Madhubani in Bihar at 4.00 pm with 1,600 labourers and the second train with 1,310 left for Mujafarpur in Bihar at 7.00 pm.

While around 900 migrant workers from the district boarded 30 buses of Haryana Roadways left for Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh.

"Thermal scanning of all those workers and their families before boarding the trains ensured that none of them was corona infected. Also, face masks, food, water bottles were also provided to them" said Amit Khatri, deputy commissioner Gurugram.

The two labour special train from Gurugram railway station left for Madhubani and Mujafarpur in Bihar, with around 2,910 workers going to

their villages. The both train had 22 bogies and each bogie had a capacity of 80 seats.

"All the workers who went to Madhubani and Mujafarpur had their registration done. They were accumulated at Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Sector 38. Only those workers have been sent who had no symptoms of corona infection," Khatri said.

A 48-year-old migrant worker Hiralal, who was going to Madhubani in Bihar said he used to work in Gurugram and lived with his family in Udyog vihar. He said that due to the lockdown, he made up his mind to go to his state and as soon as the conditions are good, he and his family will come back here.

Expressing similar views, another worker Chaluram a resident of Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh said he used to work in a shop in the village Islampur and would come back here after the things will be normal.

Apart from this, 11 more coronavirus cases were reported in different areas of the Gurugram district on Sunday, taking the total cases to 204, including 100 active cases in different hospitals of the district and 104 have been cured and discharged.

422 new cases, total 9,755

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With 422 corona positive cases being added on Sunday, a total of 9,755 Covid-19 cases have been reported so far in the national Capital.

According to a report of Delhi State Health Department, a total of 4,202 people have recovered so far.

Delhi has reported 148 deaths due to the infection, total active cases in the national capital stand at 5,405.

Around 276 people had

recovered on May 16. "We have directed all the hospitals to submit the death summary records and we are compiling the records. We are hopeful that within two or three days every report will be compiled," Health Minister Satyendra Jain said.

The Delhi Government has also asked the police to act carefully on the issues related to the migrant labourers. The Delhi Government is ensuring food, stay and travel of all the migrant labourers stranded in Delhi.

Right now the doubling rate of Covid-19 in Delhi is 11 days.

The containment zones in Delhi are not increasing but there are many new cases of the doctors, nurses, police and BSF jawans.

The Delhi Government has sent the proposals to the Central Government for the lockdown 4.0. The Delhi Government will follow the orders of the Central Government on the matter of the lockdown.

Govt will never leave workers to fend for themselves: CM

35K migrants ferried from Delhi, 12K more to leave: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said that his Government will never leave the migrant workers to fend for themselves in the crisis unfolded in the wake of the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The responsibility of migrant labourers living in Delhi is ours. We will ensure full care of them if they want to live here. In case they want to return to their homes, we will arrange for trains for them. We won't leave them alone in such a crisis," tweeted the Delhi CM in Hindi.

In a series of tweets, CM Kejriwal said, "The Delhi Government has ordered all the officials to ensure that no migrant labourer should face any problem. The government will arrange trains as many as needed for the stranded labourers."

According to Delhi Government orders, there should be proper cooperation with the railways in running of more number of Shramik special trains so that travel of stranded migrant workers facilitated at a faster rate.

"Now, therefore, in the exercise of powers conferred under Section 22 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 the undersigned in his capacity of as Chairperson,

State Executive Committee, DDMA, GNCTD, hereby issues directions to Sh PK Gupta Pr Secretary (Social Welfare)/state nodal officer, Sh Muktesh Chander, Spl Commissioner of Police/Nodal officer of Delhi police and all DMs and counterpart District DCPs of Delhi," Delhi government's order noted.

It further stated, "It should be ensured that the migrant workers do not resort to walking on the road and on railway tracks. In case they are found in such condition, they should appropriately be counselled, taken to nearby shelters and provided with food, water etc. Till such time they are facilitated to board the Shramik special trains or buses to their native places."

"All Shramik special trains should be received without any hindrance and facilitate faster movement or stranded migrant workers to their native places," quoted the order.

It may be noted that over 33 trains and a large number of buses have carried over 47,000 migrant labourers to their home states.

Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi Manish Sisodia also asserted that over 25 trains and a large number of buses have carried over 35,000 migrant labourers to their home states and today 8 Shramik Special trains will carry around 12,000 migrant labourers to their homes States.

"Already, over 25 trains and a large number of buses have carried over 35,000 people to various destination States. Today 8 Shramik Special trains will carry around 12,000

migrant labourers to their homes states," Sisodia tweeted.

Sharing registration link, Sisodia added his tweet, "Migrants labourers who want to travel by the Shramik Special trains will need to register online. Link for registration: <https://epass.jantasamvad.org/rain/passenger/>"

To get into these trains, first registration has to be done. I am giving the link of registration below. Without registration, no one will be allowed to board the train. <https://epass.jantasamvad.org/rain/>

He visited some of the shelters where the Delhi Government has arranged stay, food and medical check-up of the migrant labourers.

After visiting and an interaction with migrants, Sisodia said, "Most of these labourers came to Delhi 2-6 months back for jobs. They all were working but the lockdown has devastated their life. When I asked them when will they return they told me that they will return after the lockdown is removed."

The Delhi government is making all requisite arrangements for facilitating the movement of stranded migrants to their home states through Shramik Special Trains in coordination with the Indian railways as well as by buses in coordination with their respective states.

The Delhi Government is also assessing the requirement of additional trains for facilitating early and smooth movement of stranded persons including migrant labour to their home states.

Give ₹1 cr each to three deceased Covid warriors' kin, LoP asks Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri has asked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to immediately release an amount of ₹1 crore each to the families of three Corona warrior sweepers who lost their lives due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Delhi.

Bidhuri said that Kejriwal had announced that on the death of the Corona warriors on duty, an amount of ₹1 crore would be given to their families by the Delhi Government.

LoP issued a statement on Sunday saying that due to corona infection, three Corona war-



rior sweepers, Vinod, Shrimati Sunita and Shrimati Daya have died so far in Delhi but the government has not given any assistance to their families.

"The sanitation workers of Delhi are literally risking their lives like a warrior to make Delhi clean in such situation. The government should immediately release an amount of one Cr rupees to the families of the three deceased sweepers," he added.

6 healthcare workers of Hindu Rao hospital +ve

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least six health care staff of Hindu Rao Hospital including doctors, paramedics and other medical workers have tested positive for coronavirus after coming in contact with an infected person. With this, ten healthcare workers, including seven doctors, of the Hospital have tested positive for Covid-19 till date.

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) had quarantined 69 hospital staff after they were suspected of being contracted with the dialysis patient who tested positive for Covid-19, a senior NMC official said on Sunday.

Out of 69, who were placed



under quarantine, six of them tested positive and report for the rest 63 came negative, he said.

The official further said that out of our total strength of almost 58,000 employees, a total number of 45 staff of North Corporation have tested positive for Covid-19. "It is to be noted that almost all our staff is front-line in the on-

going battle. Out of 45, 37 are hospital personnel and eight are field staff," he said.

The hospital is being sanitised every day and the welfare of the staff is being looked after by North MCD, he added.

North Delhi mayor Avtar Singh on Wednesday inspected the Hindu Rao Hospital, where 10 healthcare workers have tested positive for Covid-19 till date.

The North Corporation had issued a statement saying the mayor took stock of the situation in view of the coronavirus pandemic. Singh said all facilities were available for patients at the facility and all suspected cases were being tested on time.

Special trains ferried 3.5L passengers in 5 days: Rly

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Railways has ferried 3.5 lakh passengers by the special trains started since May 12 to help stranded people to reach at their native States.

At least 27,788 passengers travelled on Saturday, a total of 30,127 people are boarding 21 trains on Sunday, according to the Indian Railways.

The Railways started special train service with 15 pairs of trains, including the return journey, from May 12 to ferry stranded people. According to the railways, while 1,87,827 tickets were booked till date, "a total of 3,48,634 passengers have travelled so far on these special trains".

The Indian Railways is running 15 air-conditioned (AC) express trains equivalent to its premium train Rajdhani

Express since May 12 with limited stops. All passenger trains services were stopped due to national lockdown amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Indian Railways has decided to run 300 "Shramik Special" trains per day to transport more than four lakh stranded persons per day in a mission mode. Starting from just four trains on 1st May, Indian Railways managed to operationalise more than 1000 such Shram Shakti trains in last 15 days.

"In a remarkable achievement, a total 145 "Shramik Special" trains were operationalized from various states carrying more than 2.10 lakh passengers back to their home states on 14th May," the railways had said in a statement.

"This is for the first time that on a single day, passenger count on Shramik trains crossed

the two lakh mark. These trains began operations with just around 5000 passengers on 1st May," it said.

These trains were terminated in various states like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal.

The Ministry further said that these trains are being run by Railways only after concurrence is given both by the state which is sending the passengers and the state which is receiving them. "Proper screening of passengers is ensured before boarding the train. During the journey, passengers are given free meals and water," it said.



Migrants rest at Ghazipur border as they travel towards their native places during the ongoing Covid-19 nationwide lockdown in New Delhi on Sunday

AAP holds BJP responsible for migrants' plight

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Am Aadmi Party (AAP) national spokesperson Raghav Chadha on Sunday slammed the BJP-led Union Government, saying that it left the migrants in lurch and is solely responsible for plight of migrants.

"Today, for the first time after 1947, there is a migration of workers across the country. The BJP government is solely responsible for the ill-treatment being given to the migrant workers going to their home states," Chadha said.

Chadha also accused the BJP of arranging luxurious ships and private chartered planes to bring the rich and the

capitalists back to India from abroad but it did not pay any attention to arrange transport to send the poor labourers and migrants to their home states.

"Scores of migrants have died in accidents/collapsed due to exhaustion, crores lost their jobs, millions are taking back-breaking journeys to get back to their villages, others are lining up for hours in the heat to get ration. Celebrating humanitarian crisis?," he tweeted.

Thousands of migrants got stranded across the country due to nationwide lockdown announced by the centre.



60% of sex workers return to their home States

STAFF REPORTER/PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Over 60 per cent of Delhi's sex workers have returned to their home States due to loss of means of livelihood amid the coronavirus-induced lockdown that pushed many of them to the brink of starvation.

The fear of contracting the deadly pathogen has kept customers away, leaving a debilitating impact on sex workers in the city.

Kusum, who is president of the All India Network of Sex Workers (AINSW) — a group of sex workers that assists others with legal rights, health issues and social security across the country, said over 60 per cent of the sex workers in Delhi have already left for their



home states. "The 60 per cent population accounts for around 3,000 sex workers. According to government figures, a total of registered 5,000 sex workers reside in

Delhi," Kusum said.

She said they were forced to leave the city after enduring weeks of struggle for basic facilities like food and medicines.

Shalini, one such worker,

moved back to her village in Uttar Pradesh after living for eight years in Delhi.

"I ran away from my abusive home in UP at the age of 18. I wanted to be an actress but

got into prostitution to survive in this city," 26-year-old Shalini told PTI.

"After getting into this business (sex trade), at least I was not struggling for food, I was not on streets. But ever since the coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown, I have zero customers and money is drying up," she said.

Another sex worker Rajni (name changed) said she and her four-year-old son have not eaten properly in the last two months.

"When my son fainted out of weakness two weeks back I decided to move back. I have some relatives in UP who do not know what I do here. I will stay with them for some days before figuring out what to do next," she added.

Sharmila (name changed) who grew up as an orphan on the streets of Kanpur became a sex worker in Delhi five years ago to make ends meet.

"But now there is no food, no medicines and no customers. It is impossible to survive any longer in Delhi with the savings that I have. The social distancing is going to hit our business more than anything so there is no point staying here," Sharmila, who is planning to move back to Kanpur, said.

Rajni, Sharmila and Shalini are residents of the Garstin Bastion Road, or more famously GB Road, and now renamed Swami Shradhanand Marg. There are around 100 brothels on the one-kilometre stretch housing approximately 1,500 sex workers.

Activists fear that many of these women who were on medication for different diseases, including HIV-AIDS, will not be able to get proper treatment in their home towns.

"We feel all the work which we did in the past years for HIV and other diseases would be of no use. Many of them who escaped abusive homes can again become victims of domestic violence. There are many concerns but mostly we are worried about their health," Kusum said.

She further said that similar migration of sex workers is taking place in other cities too.

Amit Kumar, the national coordinator for the AINSW, said the GB Road has completely shut down and most of its residents have returned to

their home towns.

"We were doing our best to provide dry ration, medicines, masks and sanitiser. We also gave them basic information on HIV treatment," he said.

Kumar said many of the sex workers went to their homes during Holi but they did not return after that.

India is currently under the biggest lockdown with around 1.3 billion people asked to stay home in view of the coronavirus pandemic. The nationwide lockdown was initially imposed from March 25 to April 14, but was later extended till May 17 to contain the spread of the deadly disease. The virus has so far claimed 2,872 lives and infected over 90,000 people in the country.

‘Do gaz ki doori’ vital to fight corona: Harsh Vardhan



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the country witnessed a massive surge of around 5,000 Covid-19 cases on Sunday, at least eight States and Union Territories - Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Ladakh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Puducherry, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Dadra and Nagar Haveli - did not report any case of Coronavirus in the last 24 hrs. Sikkim, Nagaland, Daman and Diu, and Lakshadweep have not reported any case till now, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said in a statement here.

With India entering the fourth phase of the nationwide lockdown from Monday, Vardhan said that our policy, perseverance coupled with aggressive and early measures have shown encouraging results.

He said that while India sees a gets accustomed to a "new normal", following simple hygiene measures like washing hands with soap frequently or using alcohol-based sanitisers, not spitting in public, sanitizing one's workplace, using face covers in public places are a must. "Physical distancing is the most potent social vaccine

available to us and hence it is advisable to ensure 'Do Gaz Ki Doori' (two-years distance) while interacting with others and to limit social gatherings by opting virtual gatherings," he said while people advising to travel only when it is absolutely necessary and not to visit crowded places to limit the exposure to the virus.

Due precautions, safe handling of food can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the minister said as he pointed out that the doubling time of coronavirus infection in India has improved to 13.6 days in the last three days from 11.5 in the past 14 days.

The fatality rate is down to 3.1 per cent and the recovery rate has improved to 37.5 per cent, he said.

The Minister said coronavirus cases in India reached the 80,000 mark in 106 days while developed nations such as the UK, Italy, Spain, Germany and the US took 44-66 days to reach that mark.

"Also as of Saturday, 3.1 per cent of the active COVID-19 patients are in the ICU, 0.45 per cent are on ventilators and 2.7 per cent on oxygen support."

Elaborating on the health infrastructure preparedness, Vardhan said "916 dedicated COVID-19 hospitals with 1,80,473 beds - 1,61,169 isolation and 19,304 ICU - and 2,044 dedicated health centres with 1,28,304 beds (1,17,775 isolation beds and 10,529 ICU beds) along with 9,536 quarantine centres and 6,309 care centres with 5,64,632 beds are now available in the country."

Deprivation, living in a densely populated area, may increase corona risk

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Older age, being male and underlying conditions such as cardiovascular diseases are already known risk factors associated for Covid-19. But now, the scientists have identified, deprivation, living in a densely populated area, ethnicity, obesity, and chronic kidney disease as also likely risks associated with the Coronavirus. These observations have been published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal.

Moreover, previous studies have focused on the risk of severe COVID-19 in hospital cases; this new study, however, identifies risk factors for testing positive for COVID-19 using electronic health record data from General

Practitioners .

Older age, being male, deprivation, living in a densely populated area, ethnicity, obesity, and chronic kidney disease (CKD) are seven factors associated with a positive test for COVID-19, according to results from 3,802 people tested for SARS-CoV-2 (including 587 positive tests) in the UK.

The study holds importance in the context of India too where a large number of cases have started pouring from slum areas like Dharavi in Mumbai which are heavily populated. Dharavi has already reported over 1,200 positive cases so far. Covid-19 positive cases are being reported from other slums too from various States. Moreover, India has a large number of people suffering with CKD.

Study author Professor Simon de Lusignan from the University of Oxford, and Director of the Royal College of GPs Surveillance Centre, UK, said: "While clear trends have emerged from hospital data for the people with severe symptoms, the risk of infection among the general population remains a grey area. It's important to know which groups in the wider community are most at risk of infection so that we can better understand SARS-CoV-2 transmission and how to prevent new cases."

The authors noted that other socio-economic factors, which were not measured in this study, may also be linked with SARS-CoV-2 infection, such as employment in high risk jobs, education, income, and differences in access to

healthcare and testing among ethnic groups. Further research is needed to understand these associations.

Professor de Lusignan said: "This result does not indicate that smoking protects against infection, and there are many potential alternative explanations - such as smoking hampering the sensitivity of the SARS-CoV-2 test, or people who smoke being more likely to have an ongoing cough so being more likely to be tested despite not having the virus."

"As well as the well-documented harms to overall health from smoking, there is potential for smoking to increase the severity of COVID-19 disease, and so our findings should not be used to conclude that smok-

ing prevents SARS-CoV-2 infection, or to encourage ongoing smoking."

The authors analysed data from 587 people with positive results and 3,215 with negative results, collated by GP practices in England who are part of the Royal College of General Practitioners Research and Surveillance Centre primary care network.

Among adults, those aged 40 to 64 years were at the greatest risk of testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 (18.5 per cent tested positive, 243 out of 1,316 people), compared with children aged up to 17 years (4.6 per cent, 23 of 499). Among 1,612 men, 18.4 per cent (296) tested positive, compared with 13.3 per cent (291/2,190) of

women, said the study funded by Wellcome Trust.

There was a large difference between people living in the most and least deprived areas too as well in urban vs rural areas. Co-author Dr Gayatri Amirthalingam, from Public Health England, said: "With each day that passes our knowledge of COVID-19 improves."

This analysis of primary care outcomes of individuals testing positive for virus is an important contribution to our wider understanding of how COVID-19 is affecting people of different demographic groups."

The authors suggested that a larger population survey is urgently needed to confirm which groups are most at risk.

Indigenous people in 90 countries ignored in Covid-19 fight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the fight against Coronavirus pandemic that has affected more than 4.6 million people, it is the indigenous population worldwide that is being ignored even though it may be especially vulnerable to Covid-19, according to a research published in The Lancet.

The authors noted that they are largely excluded from most national or regional

efforts to curb the spread of the disease.

According to the World Bank, over 370 million indigenous people inhabit over 90 countries, in both rural and urban areas. India is home to about 700 tribal groups with a population of 104 million, as per 2011 census. These indigenous people constitute the second largest tribal population in the world after Africa.

Even in high-income countries, indigenous groups

like the Navajo have been hit hard by Covid-19, with per capita infection rates rivaling those of New York and New Jersey.

To address this, a team of anthropologists, physicians and tribal leaders has developed a strategy for mitigating the impact of Covid-19 among the Tsimane, an indigenous population in the Bolivian Amazon.

Led by University of California-Santa Barbara's

Michael Gurven and Hillard Kaplan of Chapman University, their plan brings together relevant stakeholders to best serve Tsimane interests.

"They hope to provide a general template that can be applied to other indigenous groups, and to promote a wider discussion on how to adapt strategies to local circumstances, with the goal of minimizing harm to indigenous populations due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic," said

the study.

While every individual around the world is vulnerable to Covid-19 because it is new and no one has developed any immunity, many indigenous communities are at additional risk because of widespread respiratory illness, including prior history of tuberculosis, bronchitis and lower respiratory tract infections and compromised immune function.

Though health clinics may

be present in rural areas, access and resources such as medication, portable oxygen and other treatments may be very limited.

The potential for higher mortality among infected individuals makes Covid-19 more salient for indigenous populations, Gurven noted, for reasons different from those typically considered.

The authors hope their paper will serve to affect policy and call for action.

Vehicles with invalid FASTag to be charged double toll fee

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Henceforth, if you enter the dedicated lane with a FASTag but which is invalid or non-functional, then you will be charged double the toll fee applicable to the category of your vehicle.

So far, prior to this new rule, the user of a vehicle had to pay twice on the fee plaza 'only' if the vehicle didn't carry the FASTag and entered in the dedicated tag lane.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways brought in this amendment through a notification on May 15.

"If a vehicle which is not fitted with FASTag or the vehicle is without a valid or functional FASTag, enters into "FASTag lane" of the Fee plazas, then they shall pay a fee equivalent to two times of the fee applicable to that category of vehicles," the amendment in the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules stated.

The Government had made FASTags mandatory from December 15, 2019.

A total of 1.68 crore FASTags have been issued across the country till the beginning of May 2020. FASTag employs Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for making toll payments on national highways directly from the prepaid or savings account linked to it.

A prepaid tag, fixed on vehicles' windscreen, allows automated deduction of toll charges, and lets any vehicle pass through a toll plaza with zero human contact.

Central Vista Redevelopment project: 60 ex-babus express grave concern

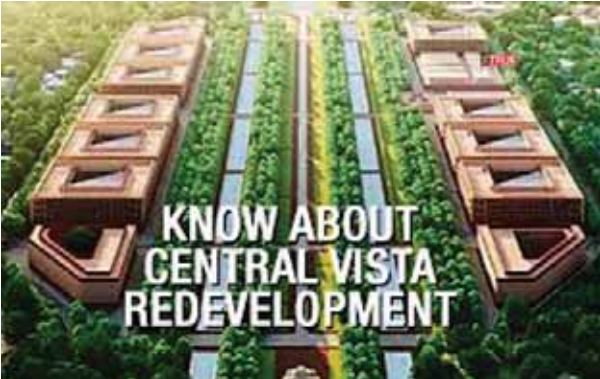
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, as many as 60 retired bureaucrats, including former ambassadors and secretaries, have expressed grave concern about the Central Vista Redevelopment project currently planned in the most iconic heritage precinct of New Delhi and urged them to stop the project.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and other opposition parties have earlier asked PM Modi to scrap the project in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The redevelopment planned will, moreover, cause severe environmental damage. In the post Covid-19 scenario, when enormous funds are required for strengthening the public health system, to provide sustenance to people and to rebuild the economy, taking up a proposal to redesign the entire Central Vista at a cost of at least Rs 20000 crores, a figure likely to escalate significantly, seems particularly irresponsible. It seems like Nero fiddling while Rome burns," the letter read.

The former bureaucrats said that this project needs to be stopped forthwith for the multiple and complex reasons. "We appeal to the government to see the fallacy in going ahead with this project and to issue the necessary notifications forthwith to stop the work from going ahead,"



they said in the letter.

"The Central Vista area has been accorded Grade 1 heritage status under the extant Unified Building Bye Laws of Delhi. Construction and redesign on the scale planned in the redevelopment project will significantly affect the heritage nature of this precinct, and destroy it irrevocably. Constructing a large number of multi-storied office buildings, with basements, in this open area will create congestion and irreversibly change and damage to the environment. Delhi already suffers from enormous environmental pollution," the letter read.

"A premise on which the redevelopment of Central Vista is based, appears to be the necessity to concentrate offices of the Central Government in one place. This is against the basic tenets of the Master Plan of Delhi which stipulates that no new offices should be built in New Delhi and that efforts should

be made to decongest it. It is also out of sync with the maxim of 'less government, more governance', which the present government had in its manifesto".

The letter further states 'it is sad to note that approvals of empowered supervisory bodies like the Environmental Assessment Committee of the Ministry of Environment and the Central Vista Committee have been pushed through in great haste at meetings convened at short notice while the country is in lockdown due to the Covid 19 epidemic, and despite the absence of private members who expressed their inability to attend and advised waiting till the nation returned to normalcy'.

The open letter was written by former bureaucrats including Julio Ribeiro, Aftab Seth, Ashok Kumar Sharma, Jawahar Sircar, Madhu Bhaduri, K.P. Fabian, Sushil Dubey, Harsh Mander, Meena Gupta and Tishyarakshit Chatterjee.

Delhi Gymkhana Club terms Centre's NCLT plea mala fide

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Gymkhana Club's management has questioned the maintainability of the Centre's petition filed before the NCLT saying it "smacks of malafides". The principal bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) is presently hearing the matter. It was heard through video conferencing last week and the tribunal would continue the hearing on Monday as well.

Terming the Corporate Affairs Ministry's petition as "completely misconceived, misplaced and not maintainable," the club in its affidavit also said it was a private club formed for the use of its members and there is no element of public interest that was involved. The ministry has alleged "fraudulent and rampant mismanagement" by the club's general committee and sought to take over the management control under section 241 and 242 of the Companies Act, 2003.

"What is equally disturbing is the manner in which the petitioner has sought to move this petition, namely ex-parte, without service of an advance copy upon the answering respondent. This act itself smacks of malafides as indeed, does the petition itself," the club's petition said. It also noted that present membership is "neither heritable nor transferable" as it is a company limited by guarantee.



The Ministry has alleged "fraudulent and rampant mismanagement" by the club's general committee

In its petition, the government has alleged that the practice of hereditary succession mode of membership terming it as "parivaar-vaad" (nepotism) and "minimal adherence to the democratic ethical practice".

According to the club, "existence of public interest is a condition precedent for invoking under section 241 and in the absence of public interest the question of anything prejudicial thereto does not arise" and another condition precedent for maintaining such a petition is grounds of winding up must exist, which is also not in the present petition.

"Admittedly, there being no public interest in the present matter within the meaning of Section 241 (2) the petition must be dismissed with costs; given the apparent legal malice in the petition," it said. The club has also alleged

that complaint from a former ministry official arose as it "resisted pressure to give him membership".

Noting that the club verily believes that the person was a high-ranking member in the ministry, the petition said, "harassment that the club has been facing from the Department of Corporate Affairs harps back to that episode". "Their grievance is limited towards the revision of registration fee and not the imposition or the power to impose a registration fee. Needless to say these are facile arguments raised by disgruntled applicants," it said.

On April 24, the NCLT had issued notices to the club and its general committee managing the affairs, over the ministry's petition seeking management control of the facility. Among others, the ministry has "fraudulent and rampant mismanagement" by the general committee.

Moreover, in connection with election of membership, the club has always followed the traditional procedure as per the past practice and there is no violation of its article of association (AoA), it said in the reply affidavit.

Priyanka urges UP CM to allow her party ferry stranded labourers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday urged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to allow the party ferry migrant labourers back home in buses arranged by it and kept ready at the State border.

She made the appeal in a video message posted on Twitter, a day after 24 migrant workers were killed and 36 injured when a trailer rrammed into a stationary truck, both carrying passengers, on a highway near Auraiya in Uttar Pradesh.

"Respected chief minister, I am requesting you, this is not the time for politics. Our buses are standing at the border. Thousands of labourers and migrants are walking towards their homes without food or water and after fighting all troubles. Let us help them. Give permission to our buses," she said.

In another tweet, she said, "Our buses are standing at the border. Thousands of nation-builders workers and migrants are walking in the sun. Give permission Yogi Adityanath ji. Let us help our brothers and sisters."

She also put out a video of the buses standing at Uttar Pradesh border ready for plying.

The Congress leaders including former party chief Rahul Gandhi have been for quite some time seeking permission to ply their buses to transport migrant labourers to their homes.

SC comes up with new guidelines for hearing cases from May 18 to June 19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court will hear all cases via video and audio links between May 18 and June 19, and has scaled up its '1881' helpline to assist advocates and litigants in e-filing and virtual hearing, according to a standard operating procedure (SoP) released on Sunday amid the coronavirus-triggered lockdown.

The fresh SoP assumed significance as the apex court, which has been hearing only urgent cases through video-conferencing during the lockdown, decided on May 15 to postpone its summer vacation by five weeks and declared that it would remain functional from May 18 to June 19.

Issuing the fresh SoP, the apex court said for the first time

in the Registry, '1881' helpline number will remain functional from 10 AM to 5 PM under supervision of senior officers to provide instant solutions to query of advocate and litigants about e-filing and other issues "In order to contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), considering the prevailing situation, and taking into account the suggestions received from various quarters and the guidelines issued by the Government of India and Government of NCT of Delhi from time to time, the Chief Justice of India has been pleased to direct the constitution of the bench(es) to hear matters in the coming weeks since the Virtual Courts will be functioning from May 18, 2020 to June 19, 2020 (both days inclusive), that is, during the earlier notified summer

vacations through video conferencing/ tele-conferencing mode only," the top court said.

The communication further said, "The proceedings by video-conference should not be recorded/stored or broadcast, in any manner whatsoever, as recording/copying/storing and/or broadcasting, by any means, of the hearings and proceedings before the apex court are expressly prohibited."

The fresh matters lying in the pool which could not be listed due to the pandemic have been scheduled to be listed before the virtual court for hearing during the period, it said.

"Once the pool of fresh matters is exhausted, matters belonging to Short Categories, which are ready for listing, will

be listed before the court for hearing. In addition to the fresh matters and short category matters, such other matters shall also be listed for hearing, as may be directed," it said.

It further said that the timing of sitting of the virtual courts will be notified in the respective causelists which will be published well in advance.

"The Advocate-on-Record or the parties in person should specify as to whether he/she would link to the Bench through their own computer or would prefer to avail the facility for video-conferencing in the Supreme Court premises," the SoP said.

It, however, noted desktop, laptop, tablet computers provide stable connectivity for a

video-conference, whereas signal drop/incoming call on mobile devices can delink such devices from an ongoing video-conference disrupting such video-conferencing.

"It may be further noted that smooth functioning of the video-conference is squarely dependent upon and subject to the connectivity (signal-strength/bandwidth) available at the end of the remote user(s), and hence it is expected that any party joining a video-conference hearing shall ensure robust connectivity and bandwidth are available at their end - in this regard, parties may use broadband connection of minimum 2 mbps/dedicated 4G data connection, and may also ensure that no other device or application

is connected to or using the bandwidth when the hearing by video-conferencing is progressing on their Vidyo-enabled computer."

The parties are first required to file the petition/miscellaneous application, preferably through the e-filing mode available on the top court's website and upon completion of all the formalities, and its due registration they are permitted to send separately the signed and verified mentioning-application containing a synopsis of urgency not exceeding one page, said the apex court in its fresh SoP.

It directed the parties to remember to keep their microphone on "mute" at all times, except when the Bench requires them to make sub-

missions as there is the possibility of the microphone catching audio feed from the speakers and creating "echo/noise-disturbance" would become very high and may disturb the video-conference.

"During hearing through video-conferencing, the parties may kindly keep in mind that they are participating in court proceedings, and hence it is expected that they would not resort to any indecorous conduct or dress or comment," said the circular.

It also said that the Registry may call any party upon publication of the causelist, to test the device or its connectivity, and every such party is required to cooperate with the staff/official and abide by the instructions given, so that the hearing by video-

conference may be smoothly conducted.

The new circular has superseded the previous SoPs on e-filing and mentioning which were issued on March 23, 26 and April 17.

The apex court, since March 25, has been holding courts through video conferencing due to the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and had suspended the entry of advocates and other staff into the high security zone on the basis of their proximity cards, till further orders.

During the lockdown, the benches usually assemble at the residences of the judges and the lawyers are allowed to join the video-conferencing from their homes or offices.

ANOTHER KEY HIZBUL TERRORIST KILLED IN DODA



Army personnel take positions during an encounter with the terrorists in a village in Gundana area of Doda district on Sunday PTI

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Close on the heels of eliminating top Hizbul Mujahideen commander, Reyaz Naikoo in Pulwama, a joint team of security forces Sunday morning eliminated another dreaded terrorist Tahir Bhat in a five hour long operation in Khotra village of Doda district.

According to police, Tahir Bhat was a close associate of present Operational Commander of HM outfit Saifullah, alias, Dr Saif and was

assigned the task of ‘Revival of Terrorism’ in erstwhile Doda district by recruiting more youth from there.

Police claimed by eliminating Tahir Bhat an attempt of pro-Pakistan terror outfit to revive activities in Doda has been nipped. The designs of the HM to target SF Convoy and Camps has also been thwarted.

According to police spokesman, Tahir Bhat was an IED expert and his name had also figured in killing of RSS functionary Chanderkant Sharma and his PSO in Kishtwar in April 2019.

“Tahir had also attempted to trigger an IED blast on the Jammu Srinagar National

Highway on March 30, 2019 near Banihal to target CRPF convoy, police spokesman said in a press statement.

Tahir was close associate of Hizbul Mujahideen Commander Haroon Abbas, who was neutralised earlier this year in January.

According to Mukesh Singh, Inspector General of Police, Jammu range, “on Saturday late night a specific information was received regarding the presence of a top HM commander Tahir Ahmed Bhat of Pulwama in the village Khotra in Tehsil and district Doda”.

“An operation was launched and the village was

cordoned off by the joint teams of security forces early Sunday morning. During the ongoing search, terrorists hiding in a house opened indiscriminate fire on the security forces. In the encounter that followed, Tahir Ahmed Bhat was killed and an AK 47 Rifle and Magazine have been recovered”.

IG, Mukesh Singh said, Tahir Ahmed Bhat joined terror outfit HM early last year (2019). His name has figured in the fabrication of IED which was exploded near a CRPF convoy at Banihal in March 2019.

Singh said, he was given the task of recruiting youth and reviving HM activities in the erstwhile Doda district.

Singh confirmed reports that Tahir was also a part of group of HM terrorists who killed RSS activist Chanderkant Sharma and his PSO in April 2019. The same AK 47 Rifle which was taken away that time has been recovered after the encounter on Sunday.

Police spokesman said, “Tahir was involved in Case FIR No. 36/2020 U/S 20,38,UAPA 121 RPC P/S Kakkpora, Case FIR No 33/2019 U/S 364,302, RPC P/S Awantipora, Case FIR No 37/2019 U/S 307, RPC 7/27 A. Act, 16,18,20, ULAP Act P/S Litter and Case FIR No 45/2019 U/S 364,302, RPC 7/27 A. Act P/S Shopian”

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Maha crisis deepens, 63 more die, record 2,347 test +ve in a day

Total deaths mount to 1,198, infected cases to 33,053; Mumbai accounts for 38 deaths, 1,571 new cases

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 crisis deepened further in Maharashtra on Sunday, as 63 more persons succumbed to the pandemic and an all-time day’s record 2,347 people tested positive for Coronavirus, taking the total number of deaths to 1,198 and infected cases to 33,053 in the State.

Belying the hopes nursed by the health authorities about the early flattening of Covid-19 curve, the pandemic began to display its ferocious face, as Coronavirus claimed as many 63 persons — which is the second day’s death tally after 67

deaths were reported on Saturday — and left a staggering 2,347 infected.

Of the 63 deaths, Mumbai accounted for 38 deaths, while there were nine deaths in Pune, six in Aurangabad, three each in Solapur and Raigad and one each in Thane district, Pancel city, Latur and Aurangabad city.

Of the dead, 44 were men while 19 were women. Thirty four were aged over 60 years, 22 were from the age group 40 to 59 years and 7 were aged below 40 years. “Forty one out of 63 patients (65%) had high-risk comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease,” a

State health bulletin said.

On a day when the total number of deaths mounted to 1,198 in Maharashtra, the total number of infected cases jumped 33,053. The authorities pegged the total number of active cases in the State at 24,161.

With 38 deaths and 1,571 new cases, the total number of deaths mounted to 734 and infected cases to 20,150 in Mumbai. According to the Covid-19 portal analysis, 679 laboratory tests were conducted per day in March in the State. In the first fifteen days of May, this has increased to 8,628 lab tests per day.

It is evident that there has

been a 13-fold increase in the laboratory tests compared to March 2020. In India, 1630 laboratory tests per 10 lakh population are done currently.

In Maharashtra, 2,137 laboratory tests per 10 lakh population are being conducted.

There are 1,688 active containment zones in the state currently. Total 14,972 surveillance squads worked on Sunday across the State and surveillance of 63.83 lakh population was done. As many as 7,688 patients have been discharged till date after full recovery. Currently, 3,48,508 people are in home quarantine and 17,638 people are in institutional quarantine.

Maha extends lockdown till May 31

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having not yet arrested the continued spike in the number of deaths and infected cases in major cities like Mumbai and Pune, the Maharashtra government on Sunday extended the lockdown till May 31, with a promise to resort to phase-wise relaxations and issue orders of lifting the lockdown in certain parts of the State.

Official sources said in the evening that the state government would in likelihood issue new guidelines for the

Lockdown-4 on Monday.

Invoking the Epidemic Act, 1807, the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the orders issued by the Revenue, Disaster Management, Relief and Rehabilitation department issued on May 2, 3, 5,, 11 and 15 and the MHAs order issued on May 1 and 11, State chief Secretary Ajoy Mehta issued a new order, “providing additional human resources to the Home department for assisting police personnel towards the containment of Covid-19 in the State”.

Among other things, the Maharashtra government said

in its order that it was satisfied that the state was threatened with the spread of Covid-19 virus and “therefore to take emergency measures to prevent and contain the spread of virus” the Government felt that it was expedient to extend the lockdown in the entire state of Maharashtra “further till the midnight of May 31”.

As part of its decision to extend the lockdown till May 31, the State Government “shall strictly implement the guidelines issued earlier from to time”. “The calibrated phase wise relaxation /lifting of lock-

down orders will be notified in due course,” the State Government order said.

Going by the indications given by Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray earlier, the Maharashtra government is likely to enforce the lockdown strictly in the red zones of the state, especially the containment areas in Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Pune Metropolitan Region and areas like Aurangabad when it announces the relaxed guidelines on Monday. However, the State Government may announce more relaxations for the green

and orange zones in the state.

Indicating the plans to extend the lockdown beyond, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray had on Friday ruled the possibility of reopening of intra-district borders in the state after May 17.

After reviewing the coronavirus situation in the state with the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) colleagues in the state, the chief minister had said: “Without reopening the intra-district borders, we will have to take all precautions while preparing road map for the lockdown-4 beginning on May

18. The Coronavirus crisis is not over yet in the state. We will have to seek the help of doctors and members of Task Force in dealing with the situation in the Post-May 18 period”.

In an interaction held earlier with the divisional commissioners and district collectors across the state through video conferencing, Uddhav had said: “We will have to draw a delicate balance between the health emergency and the economic emergency. That’s why we will have to start the industrial activities in the state. We will have to extreme care in areas where we

will resume industrial activities. In Green Zones, movement of vehicles can start within districts even while taking necessary precautions”. “Come what may, the district collectors will have to enforce lockdown norms strictly in containment zones across the state so as to ensure that the pandemic does not spread outside these zones,” the CM said.

The CM had advised the officers on ground that while relaxing lockdown, they would take care to see that they would not open the intra-district borders in the state. “This is essential because that a lot of migra-

tion is taking place and you have to take medical precautions to ensure against the spread of the pandemic,” Uddhav had told the revenue heads across the state.

“We have succeeded in containing the spread of pandemic during April. But, now in May, we have been told that the number of infected cases will increase in a big way. It is extremely essential that we break the chain of the spread of Covid-19. At the same, we will have to deal with monsoon-related epidemics and ailments,” he said.

J&K ahead of K’taka, 62 fresh cases reported

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Sunday marched ahead of Karnataka as it recorded 62 fresh cases of coronavirus and reported one more death, taking the total tally of cases to 1,183. So far 13 deaths due to covid-19 have been reported across Jammu and Kashmir.

The sudden spike in fresh cases have been attributed to aggressive testing of stranded passengers arriving from different destinations via rail route and road link. So far 54,866 stranded passengers have entered Jammu and Kashmir via Lakhampur road link. Besides, 11,456 passengers have reached through Covid special trains at Jammu and Udhampur railway stations.

According to media bulletin on Novel Coronavirus, “62 new positive cases were detected on Sunday, 16 from Jammu division and 46 from Kashmir division”. 33 patients were discharged from different hospitals taking the total tally of recovered cases to 575.

“Out of 1183 cases, 595 are active positive. 509 cases are active positive in Kashmir and 86 in Jammu division”. According to the media bulletin, the highest number of 28 cases were reported from Kulgam followed by 15 from Anantnag. Deputy commissioner, Anantnag, Bashir Ahmad Dar said, “as many as 600 samples of pregnant ladies were taken, out of which 12 patients turned out to be positive on Saturday. He added, so far 5,000 tests were conducted across 11 Red Zones of the district to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Nirmala ‘yojana’ aims at doing business, not relief: TMC

101 NEW CASES IN BENGAL

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman’s ‘economic package 5.0’ seems to have failed to fascinate the Bengal political circle, including the Trinamool Congress and the Left, which slammed the Centre’s strategy of “making money out of a calamity,”

Hitting New Delhi hard for refusing to transfer cash to State Governments who are at the

forefront of fighting the corona crisis senior Trinamool Congress leader and MP Saugato Roy on Sunday said “the States were expecting to get some money in their hands or at least into the hands of the common people who are suffering... but the Union Government refused to do so.

“Instead of giving grants the Centre is expanding the scope of loans by announcing loan worth Rs 4.4 lakh crore which will further increase the burden of debt on the States.

“Let alone the State Governments which are fight-

ing the pandemic from the forefront we did not even hear anything from the Government about increasing the purchasing power of the poor and people who are migrating back to their villages hungry and impoverished. We expected cash transfer directly into their pockets which too did not happen...”

“For the street vendors too, the Centre has announced loan schemes instead of reaching relief directly into their hands. In the present situation who will risk taking loan and starting a business when there is no

buyer in sight?” he said adding “the announcements made by the Finance Minister are nothing new. These schemes had already been discussed earlier.

“In the present context we can only say that the Government is not providing relief but it is doing business in the difficult times.”

CPI(M)’s Md Salim too slammed the Centre for remaining “insensitive to the people’s plight of the people. “We needed immediate relief for those lakhs of poor people displaced and starving under the impact of the corona pan-

Low-cost ventilators to save Indian lives

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Even before the indigenous-ly designed and developed Light Combat Aircraft (TEJAS) became fully operational and proved its capability, a spin off technology derived from the fighter aircraft has started saving many lives in India. This has come at a time when the country was facing shortage of quality critical care medical ventilators in Intensive Care Units in its hospitals.

An air delivery system (ADS) developed by the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) for the pilots of the LCA turned out to be the life saver for thousands of coronavirus patients. But the end result is the culmination of years long painstaking research undertaken by various institutions like PSG College of Technology, Pricol (a Coimbatore based engineering manufacturer) and Skanray, a Bangalore based healthcare technology company.



Dr Jagadish J Hiremath, a medical doctor with dreams of making CCMV available to the poor section of the society played a crucial role of the bridge between the engineering and medical fraternities and the end result turned out to be a win-win situation for all.

An ordinary CCMV would cost anything between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 15 lakh. Then there is the high maintenance cost of the instrument which could be done only by professional engineers. “But the CCMV designed and built by Skanray

making use of the Bharat Electricals Ltd (BEL) technology succeeded in bringing down the cost considerably. This ventilator costs less than a lakh rupees. It’s a robust ventilator system and the post-production clinical trials are underway. The initial results are encouraging and we will soon transform the same into a super intelligent ventilator,” said Dr Hiremath speaking to The Pioneer over telephone even as he was evaluating the performance of the machine in the ICU of his research clinic.

He said India was 100 years behind the technology of the CCMV when the research in the field began in 2010. “Now we have narrowed down the technical difference to just 20 years. In another five years, we will have our own super intelligent ventilator,” said Dr Hiremath, a MD in anesthesiology with specialisation in cardiac transplant anesthesias.

The success story of the indigenously developed CCMV comes immediately after the offer by US President Trump that he would offer ventilators to India in this hour of crisis. “Skanray has the capability to manufacture 30,000 CCMV per month as on date. Though the system is not a complete one like the products manufactured in foreign countries, these ventilators meet all our requirements and in the course of time, we can equip all primary health centres in the country with these easy to operate and maintain CCMVs,” said Dr Hiremath.



A woman sits in a tyre-ring as she waits to collect free ration in Prayagraj on Sunday PTI



Migrant workers from Bihar arrive to board a special train for their home-State at Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district on Sunday PTI



Migrants board a truck to reach their native places on Agra-Delhi National Highway in Mathura on Sunday PTI



Traffic jam is seen at Lucknow-Kanpur highway near Jainnau bridge in Kanpur, on Sunday PTI

Moving out of lockdown

Delhi Govt proposes a doable and safe resumption of public transport, adapting from templates in virus-hit nations



It is by now clear that a post-COVID world is bound to undergo drastic changes and life will never be the same as before. It will have to be more need-based, mindful, resource-conscious and, therefore, balanced. And in the absence of a vaccine or cure, a behavioural and hygiene discipline like never before is the only preventive. With nations across the world contemplating the best ways to outline a safe exit plan, India's challenge for lockdown 4 with easing of protocols is even bigger. For despite one of the world's severest containment drills, the density of our population and our clustered existence have meant that cases have been spiking with a wildfire rapidity and we may end up being one of the worst virus-hit nations. Yet given our size, our economy is gasping because of the lockdown and the reverse migration of labour back to the villages has meant that a human tragedy has taken over public health exigencies. So India's exit plan has to balance both crises besides grading and scaling both the outbreak and the economy. This is where the Delhi Government has taken the lead by emphasising the need for a safe resumption of the public transport system among other things as it is the lifeblood of an economy; people need to move to their place of work. But it is also a fact that modes of mass transport in India till now have been mostly overloaded and unhygienic given general public habits. Closed spaces inside metros and buses would mean limited ventilation and could pose a risk to passengers and even frontline workers — drivers, cleaning staff and security personnel. As a matter of fact, buses, local trains and metros were all designed to operate at high densities. Before COVID-19, the Delhi Metro alone used to ferry 1.5 million passengers and the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) about 20-25 lakh commuters per day. So imagine the extent of livelihoods affected in the absence of such systems. The Delhi Government proposes to limit the number of passengers on buses to 20 and run cluster fleet buses during peak hours. Metros, too, would run with at least one-third capacity with social distancing norms in place. Cleaning and sanitisation of the Metros and buses after they complete one full trip is to be made mandatory. All this means a digitally robust passenger information system and a 24x7 control room so that people know at what time and what ride they can avail, instead of queuing up and waiting in despair. Once this is proven safe enough, one could consider the next level. But the new measures would also push up input costs. For example, most operators would not be able to disinfect their vehicles, say, even three times a day. Cleaning habits, too, need to be inculcated as a work ethic rather than an unfair imposition. To do this, the authorities could organise "rapid response" cleaners at terminals. Besides, traffic on the roads could push up pollution again and necessitate the odd-even formula. But now that the odd-even drill is spilling over into shops and malls, Delhiites must get used to rotational living standards. Transport may not be the only sector, mall visits and park outings would now have to be planned.

The need to maintain physical distancing, masked and gloved, while travelling would be of utmost importance to minimise the risk of the virus. Some lessons can be learnt from China, which has mostly passed the serious phase of the infection. Initially, it resumed bus services with 30 per cent capacity and surveillance cameras to monitor compliance. Post this experiment, bus capacity in some places has been increased to provide more options to decrease rider density at specific times. It is encouraging its prevailing culture of walking and cycling. In severely-hit cities like Milan and New York, ambitious plans have been announced to reconfigure roads in such a way as to make more space for cyclists and pedestrians. In the UK, the Government has asked people to avoid public transport and walk, cycle or drive instead. At the same time, with people preferring cycling as a safer and free option, on-demand taxis have taken a hit. With the lack of designated pathways for pedestrians and cyclists, this won't be a practical option here. In Hong Kong, the rail operator MTR is using robots to disinfect trains and stations. In Europe, many public transport agencies have closed the front door to reduce infection risk among drivers. Passengers now use the rear door (all-door boarding has been common practice). In Istanbul, there is a rotational lockdown on certain days of the week to control the traffic volume in public spaces. The human species also has a huge capacity to adapt and we need to devise clever workarounds to carry on with the business of living and sidestep the virus.

Walls will go up

If the US goes rabidly protectionist, and others follow, then our Make in India project could suffer a body blow



That the Coronavirus has had a major negative impact on world economies is an undisputed fact. Now, the next assault on economies will be the wall of protectionism that will come up across the globe as leaders struggle to provide jobs to their citizens and the world wakes up to the economic dangers of being a global village with inextricably interlinked manufacturing and supply chains collapsing. The last has been partly because of prolonged disruptions caused by COVID-enforced lockdowns and partly due to a trust deficit in value chains originating in China. Japan has already announced that it is pulling out its manufacturing activities from China and the US is doing the same. And we are already seeing the first glimpse of protectionism with the US President laying down the law for companies like Apple. Donald Trump, in his usual blustering and aggressive style, has bluntly declared that he could levy new taxes on American companies that move their manufacturing bases from China to any country other than the US. He has never made any bones about his protectionist agenda and has time and again asked American firms to shift their manufacturing to the US to help create more jobs, a move that resonates with his agenda of 'Make America Great Again.' Particularly in an election year.

This protectionist attitude is going to deal a body blow to India's plans to woo firms away from China and emerge as the next manufacturing hub as many firms mull expanding their manufacturing bases to more than one country to avoid a repeat of the present disruptions. In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about making India a strong part of the global supply chain and the Government is developing a land pool double the size of Luxembourg to lure businesses moving out of China. New Delhi has even asked missions abroad to look for firms scouting for options to invest outside China. State Governments, too, are busy evolving their own programmes for bringing in FDI. If all nations begin to follow the path shown by Trump, it will be a hard and long toil for India where economic healing is concerned as it might witness a U-shaped recovery instead of the V-shaped one that we are hoping to see. If that happens, India will have no way out but to respond with protectionism of its own. So the world will be in a lockdown in more ways than one.

opinion

Ethics of technology

India, which has always believed in the philosophy of *Antyodaya* and *Sarvodaya*, should look into its own schools of thought to initiate philosophy-led technological advancements

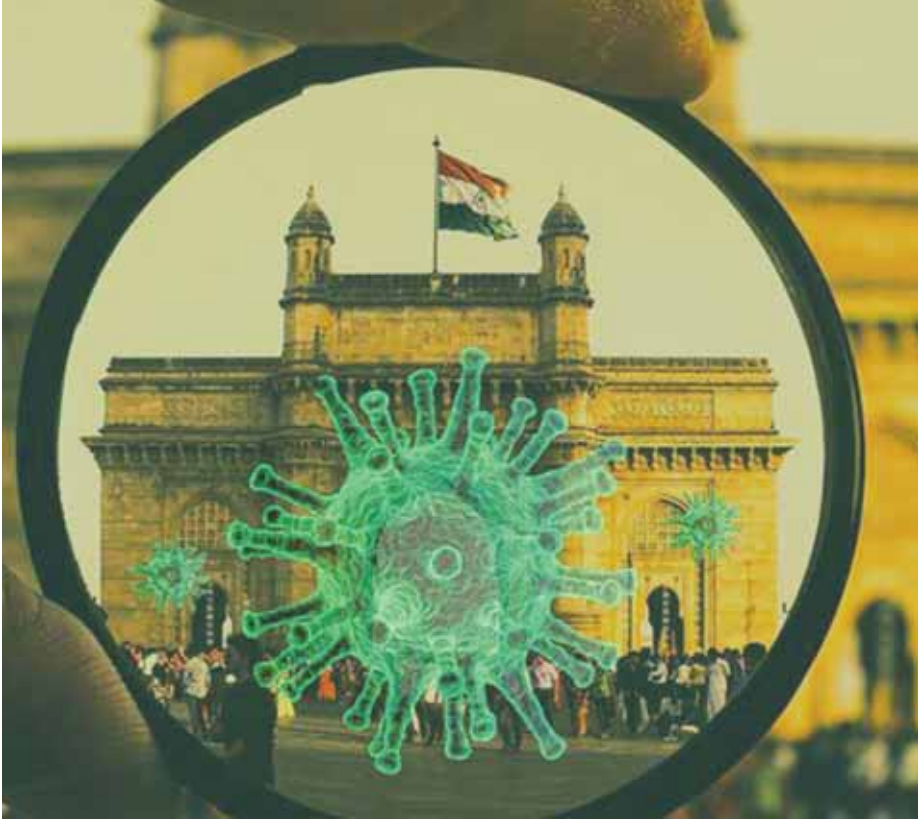


PURVA BHATT

In *Mahabharata*, when Ashwatthama learnt that Duryodhana was stricken down against all laws of chivalry, his anger swelled like the sea. He took an oath of vengeance against the Pandavas, whom he blamed for foul conduct. He killed the sons of the Pandavas by setting their tent ablaze at night. The grieving Pandavas, along with Shri Krishna, started searching for him. Ultimately, they found him hiding in Sage Vyasa's ashram. Cornered thus, Ashwatthama quietly took up a blade of grass to convert it into a deadly weapon. He charged it with the *mantra* of "destruction" and aimed the Brahmastra towards the Pandavas. In retaliation, Arjun used his Brahmastra. Meanwhile, Rishi Vyasa was asked by Shri Krishna to stop this collision as he was aware of the apocalyptic capacities of these weapons for humanity. He ordered both to bring back their armoury. Arjun obeyed. Not knowing how to "bring back" the weapon to its source, Ashwatthama expressed his inability to control it. Swayed by vengeance, he decided to destroy the race of the Pandavas by diverting his Brahmastra to the womb of Uttara, who was pregnant with the son of Abhimanyu. This later brought him the curse of Shri Krishna, who hollowed his forehead and cursed him with immortality.

Technology and its dilemmas aren't new to India. The aforementioned instance is one such which explains the strong philosophical synergies between technology and its user. Technology in the hand of a user lacking wisdom and moral perseverance has resulted in the destruction of humanity. In India, it has always been imagined as a tool for the betterment of humankind. China's attempt to contain the novel Coronavirus through an app was lauded whereas a group of neo-Luddites cast aspersions when India developed the Aarogya Setu app for the same purpose. Ironically, many cast aspersions on the most vulnerable platforms such as Zoom and Facebook, conveniently forgetting about Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's public apology and, of course, algorithm manipulations done by Cambridge Analytica.

While both China and India developed an app, the fundamental philosophy of both nations was different. One cannot, however, ignore the syncretism between technology and philosophy. Whether man or algorithm, it all condenses to the "philosophical choices", especially in times of crisis. In a post-COVID society, we will not only witness an ever-increasing authority of algorithms but also a rising confrontation between man and machine, all based on philosophical dilemmas. Last month, *The Guardian* reported a report titled, "Hertfordshire hospital forced to consider who should be refused oxygen." The decision taken by healthcare professionals must have been based on the philosophical discourse of that nation. A few years from now, with the ever-increasing scope of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning, imagine a robot designed by technocrats. How will it be programmed? Who would it refuse to provide oxygen to? What will be the moral grounding of technology?



Can this decision be taken without thoughtful deliberations on morals, ethics, philosophy of a nation? Consider the following cases on how the moral philosophy of a nation can have a direct bearing on technology.

When the Titanic sank, the poignant moment illustrated the "choice" made between the elite and the destitute. It was decided to save the lifeboats for the former and leave the latter to their fate. More recently, the "choice" made by Italy and Iran with regard to who should be provided with a ventilator was based on philosophical groundings of that nation. Whereas the US made the "choice" to delay the lockdown due to Coronavirus, India, despite being more vulnerable to socio-economic and political shocks, decided to make a "choice" in favour of society. The choice made by Mao's China during the infamous experiment in social engineering, the Great Leap Forward, came at the expense of millions of lives. On the other hand, India's "choice" to save even separatist leaders during flood relief operations in Kashmir illustrates its philosophy, which ranks all lives as equal. All "choices" are based on the strong philosophical underpinnings of the nation. While both Arjun and Ashwatthama held equally powerful technology, what made Shri Krishna curse Ashwatthama was the "choice" he made.

Nevertheless, debates around "morality" and "technology" aren't new. There have been two schools of thought. The instrumental vision of technology resulting from the neutrality thesis focusses on the ill-effects and can be attributed to its users, not technology *per se*. Thinkers such as Heidegger and critical sociologist Habermas went ahead, claiming that the function of any technology to a great capacity depends on how and why it has been conceptualised. Later, this theory embraced technology from the broader construct of political, social, economic and cultural realms. In the early 1980s, American novelist Thomas Pynchon said, "It's okay not to be a Luddite." Today, he would have wondered, "Is it even possible to be one?" A post-pandemic society will be entering a new age of disruption. Whether in healthcare, social-cultural, academia or the economic sector, unimaginable facets of technology will have to be routinised. Such a development will pave space for nations to reconsider their technological development map.

One cannot also ignore the dominance of private corporations in the current technological race. Such domination can also be put as "lack of involvement of society or state" in the technological race. But why does it become imperative to counter-balance market monopoly over technology by augmenting technological capacities of both society and State? A simple answer to this would be the philosophy that each follows. While markets usually couch their decisions based on utilitarian benefits, not always resulting in favour of humanity, social institutions primarily focus on social cohesion and development.

Consider the famous *Grimshaw vs Ford Motor Co*

case (1981). People were killed due to explosions in a Ford Pinto car, the reason for which was attributed to a defective car design. What was shocking was that Ford had prior knowledge about the defect but remained inert as the cost of recalling and repairing the car would have been much more than the amount likely to be spent by it in lawsuits and accidents. The "choice" made by Ford converted a human life as a mere statistical tool. The "choice" was based on the cost-benefit analysis grounded on the famous "utilitarian" philosophy given by Jeremy Bentham. This brings forth three questions. First, despite the altruistic use of technology by many private corporations, isn't there a need to counter-balance institutions that use "technology for society?" Second, for how long can technology and philosophy be placed in watertight compartments? Third, if we attempt to create such synergies, will we again ape the West for insights on technological dilemmas or reflect on indigenous schools of thought to resolve conflicts?

Amid the COVID pandemic, when the entire world has embraced Indian philosophical constructs, we can lead in thoughtful technological advancements. While philosophers, sages, ascetics in our country deliberated on such dilemmas for centuries, the engineers, technocrats and tech giants are looking for immediate answers. Thus, philosophy for technology has become more important than ever. Yet, the education system today is slow to

augment technical education with philosophical reflections. In fact, the easy imitation of the West has usurped the space for philosophical discussions, which once were intrinsic to the indigenous educational system in India. Post-colonial interventions, the Indian education system, which initially was run by society, was usurped by the market as an extension. The result of such annexation has defined technology as a product of markets and not society. The world is undergoing the biggest social experiment right now. Unaware of the controlled variables, we are trying to graph patterns amid chaos. Years of technological artefacts are lying almost dormant. Only within a span of 15 days, countries, which used to take pride in cutting-edge healthcare technologies, gasped out of exasperation. It just took 15 days of a microbe-ridden pandemic to hammer our egos. Modern man may boast about his admirable success in communication technologies and brag about Tesla's cyber trucks or the plans to colonise Mars but it will just take a radioactive leak with a subsequent power outage to make even our Neanderthal brothers laugh at us.

While primitive technologies such as wheel, needle or scissors were based on belief and philosophy of human progress, modern technological advancements lack social validation. What reasons can be contributed to such technological redundancy? Somewhere from primitive to modern man, our philosophical underpinnings have changed; the dissonance between technology, man, society and nature has become cacophonous. Social institutions are working in vacuum and silos, leading to technological advancement without philosophical moorings. IITs, NITs and IIMs have risen to the occasion during the pandemic but these elite institutes just comprise a mere three per cent of our students. Therefore, post-COVID-19 questions, such as how the application of technology will influence social justice and equality, should come to the fore. Technical education confronts "the real acid test" of how knowledge can handle technological disruptions, social issues and other problems. Technocrats should consider asking: Can technology help achieve social justice? Can it help a tribal family get its ration? Can it help forest dwellers conserve the forests better? Can it ensure the security of a Scheduled Caste girl living at a remote location? This can be done by formalising interlinkages between technology and philosophy.

(The writer is a research scholar, Malaviya National Institute of Technology)

SOUND BITE

As a citizen, my disappointment is the (₹20 lakh crore) package should not be of loans but for giving money in their hands. The Government should not be a *sahukar*.



Congress leader
—Rahul Gandhi

I am a human being and I do feel bad. But after feeling bad, I bounce back. I feel these people who are writing bad (things) about me are nothing but jealous people.



Singer
—Neha Kakkar

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.



US President
—Donald Trump

PM Modi's idea of self-reliant India does not mean that we will seek self-centered or isolationist arrangements. Rather, a self-reliant India will be a more internationalist India.



Foreign Secretary
—Harsh V Shringla

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To grow, think small

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Swadeshi vs Make In India" (May 15). In our premise of a high potential for domestic consumption by a large middle class, Indian exports receive attention only in bursts.

Competitive exports alone give the impetus for quality, cost reduction and innovation to embellish brand India. China's predominance in exports was entirely due to a dedicated and holistic policy — be it finance, skill development, worker housing or welfare.

While MSMEs account for over 50 per cent of all transactions, we have failed to address their primary concern over fund flows. Financial infrastructure support continues to be conservative. We tend to tailor our stimulus to the big industries without ensuring a trickle-down effect to the last in the chain, the MSMEs.

Deviating from its faultless "big leap" and by thinking small, China focussed on industrial growth. It adopted an industry-led module that suited polynomial growth for the small and medi-

Shun experiments that could backfire

The Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh would have us believe that the ordinance to freeze labour laws and, thus, free capital, is intended to attract more "investments" in a post-COVID era. For example, the "Uttar Pradesh Temporary Exemption from Certain Labour Laws Ordinance, 2020" proposes to exempt all establishments, factories and businesses from the purview of labour laws for a period of three years. It seeks to deactivate 35 of the 38 crucial laws. From now, capital would be all-powerful and labour its obedient chattel. Perhaps, the next target would be the other primary factor of production, land. It wouldn't be surprising if the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, too, is laid on the chopping block. Land grabbing in the guise of land acquisition for new projects will be the new norm.

Businesses can easily achieve targets and earn profits with minimum workforce and heavy workload. Industries, which used to operate in three shifts earlier, can still meet their production targets by working two shifts of 12 hours each. Thankfully, the courts have prevented such a move. Managements might be tempted to issue pink slips to the surplus one-third of their workforce in the course of time. In short, this ordinance nullifies everything — rights, dignity and security — of the

um enterprise. Such foresight played a critical role in China's astonishing leap in industrial development within two decades. We must be pragmatic, too.

R Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

workers. Truth be told, these changes in the law are meant to guard the capital already deployed as also the wealth of a few. Moreover, it is a little naive to imagine that a State with a large discontented workforce would be an ideal destination for investment. It is too optimistic as well to expect investments to flow into a State where literacy is not a subject seriously discussed, where the caste-divide runs deeper and where engineered religious bigotry pits humans against humans. All of this with the invisible pathogen, Corona, visibly active everywhere.

Haridasan Rajan
Kozhikode

Clear roadblocks

Sir — The Government's proposal for a "One nation, one ration" card is a well-conceived idea that is worth implementation. But the

scope of this idea has to be expanded beyond just the migrant workers and even for the period beyond the COVID crisis. One of the critical factors that would impact the countrywide rollout of this initiative is studying, recording and reg-

ularly updating labour migration patterns. As contemplated, all other States/Union Territories must integrate to ensure inter-State portability. Further, the ration card must be trilingual and not bilingual because all those who know Hindi may not be knowing English and vice versa. The problem may also arise with a gap in demand and supply. This needs to be addressed. A suitable mechanism must be devised to ensure supply does not fall short of demand.

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan

Huge dilemma

Sir — It is heartbreaking that patients with serious illnesses other than COVID-19 are having a tough time getting treated during the pandemic. How do we ensure that everyone gets attention? This is one of the key concerns that the Centre and the State Governments must address together.

Sritoma Mukherjee
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Go vocal for local

The pandemic has shown that in crisis, we have to take care of ourselves with no help coming. It is time to build a new, self-reliant India



LALIT KUMAR

One of the earliest proponents of the Swadeshi movement in modern India was Bhartendu Harishchandra. In his widely-celebrated 1884 speech “*Bharatvarsh ki unnati kaise ho sakti hai* (how can India make progress)”, Bhartendu rebuked his countrymen for their dependence on foreign-made products. “As the thousand streams of the Ganga flow into the ocean, so, the wealth produced in our country flows in a thousand ways to England, France, Germany and America,” he pointed out. Under the colonial rule, Indians couldn’t manufacture even a small item like a matchbox. They had to import combs from France, ready-made clothes from England and lamps from Germany. An eminent social reformer, playwright and the father of modern Hindi literature, Bhartendu reckoned that the key to the country’s prosperity lay in promoting Indian products and languages.

The economic exploitation of India owing to the drain of wealth and emphasis on the production of goods locally were recurring tropes in Bhartendu’s works and in those of Dadabhai Naoroji and RC Dutt, too. Naoroji had discussed this in his paper *England’s Debt to India* in 1867 before the East India Association in London. Naoroji in his book *Poverty and un-British Rule in India* (1901) and Dutt in *The Economic History of India* (1902) argued that the unchecked transfer of Indian resources to Britain was a major cause of poverty in India. What Bhartendu, Naoroji and Dutt were concerned about continues to haunt us even after Independence. It has persisted despite the espousal of swadeshi by Mahatma Gandhi and several other luminaries and the present Government’s initiative of ‘Make in India.’

The ongoing economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has raised the spectre of economic mayhem in the country as the fiscal situation was in the doldrums even before it got a broadside hit by the lockdowns. In a bid to raise demand and subsequently the economy, we need to manufacture and consume locally. It impelled Prime Minister Narendra Modi to appeal to all citizens to go “vocal for local” and buy and endorse products made in the country. In his speech, Modi underlined the significance of local traders, craftsmen and brands. Close on the heels of Modi’s call for self-reliance, the Home Ministry announced that only ‘Made in India’ products would be sold in all Central Armed Police Forces canteens from June 1. But the question arises, do we always need the external threats of colonialism, war, famine, fiscal deficit, empty exchequer and now a pandemic, to renew our resolve of strengthening and adopting swadeshi as a way of life? It is understandable that in modern times no country can afford to remain completely self-reliant. With the onset of the deadly virus, even the developed nations began to scramble for foreign-made ventilators, masks and kits. However, when we see horrors of a dystopian film coming alive in mask-clad people and PPE-clad healthcare workers, we know that the old rules won’t apply anymore. When we notice China supplying faulty PPE and test kits to several countries, including India, we reckon that in the times of a global crisis we are left to fend for ourselves. As we observe millions of jobless workers struggling to return to their villages in States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the painful realisation dawns upon us that the city cannot sustain them in trying times. But unfortunately, the health infrastructure in villages and the small towns they have returned to is already in shambles. There is an acute shortage of basic health facilities let alone ventilators and kits. For instance, years of misrule and mismanagement have made Bihar one of the worst performers on the health index. While the national average of number of beds available in Government hospitals is 0.55 per 1,000 population, Bihar is the worst off, with just 0.11 beds. The Chief Minister of Bihar had 15 years to turn the fortunes of an ailing State around. But, except for imposing prohibition and improving law and order, and the quality of roads, the performance of the Bihar Government in sectors such as health, education and employment has been dismal. It has wasted a golden chance to tap its vast human resources, strengthen the agrarian sector and establish agriculture-based industries in rural areas on a massive scale. This could have at least given employment and much-needed dignity to millions of labourers and small farmers who are forced to migrate to cities.

Calamities provide an opportunity to reflect, retrospect and address the existing lacunae. We still don’t have an adequate answer to our over-dependence on China for procuring Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients to make medicines. We must learn from our past mistakes and revisit the earliest proponents of swadeshi, including Bhartendu and Mahatma Gandhi to build a new, self-reliant India. There is a strong cultural and economic similarity between their vision and that of the ruling political dispensation. Bhartendu advised young students to become self-reliant, to focus on education and skill development instead of running after scholarships and jobs. His vision of economic nationalism is interlinked with socio-religious harmony and moral regeneration of a decadent and complacent society under colonial misrule. The Mahatma, too, was a proponent of the values of dignity of labour and organic economic growth. Let us delve deep into our roots and make India a manufacturing hub. Let us be Indian, buy Indian.

(The writer teaches English at the University of Delhi)

I HOPE FOR THE SAKE OF BENGALI WORKERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY THAT WEST BENGAL WILL ACCEPT THEM BACK WITH OPEN ARMS.

—UNION RAILWAY MINISTER
PIYUSH GOYAL

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



SALUTING THE TOIL FACED BY OUR BRETHREN, THE STATE WILL BEAR THE ENTIRE COST OF MOVEMENT OF OUR MIGRANT WORKERS BY SPECIAL TRAINS.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE

Adopt structural reforms

The present crisis could not be thwarted because of structural deficiencies in health governance systems and overall public management



SANDEEP KUMAR DUBEY

The world is now in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic. The last most dangerous outbreak that occurred was the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic, almost 100 years ago, that reportedly originated in the US and which coincided with World War-I. According to a report prepared by America’s National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, entitled *Global Health and the Future Role of the United States*, the influenza outbreak took place in three waves. It infected one-third of the global population and claimed 50-70 million lives. The situation at that time was unmanageable partly because of the devastation caused by World War-I. However, this time, the contagion did not precede, coincide with or follow any war. Even so, the world has lost 3,09,047 lives and the numbers are expected to grow in times to come. However, the panic and economic devastation caused by the pandemic are unprecedented and the very legitimacy of the State has been put to test. In one line, the world is forced to face an uncertain future.

What is evident in all of this is that the crisis could not be thwarted due to structural deficiencies in the health governance systems and overall public management. And, as it appears, no serious thought was given by policymakers around the world, including India, to deal with pandemics, even as in the beginning of the 21st century itself, just in the last 20 years, the world has seen the occurrence of many outbreaks, such as SARS, H1N1, Ebola and the Zika virus. They claimed lives at an unprecedented scale and led to enormous economic losses.

Urbanisation, pandemics and risk society: Pandemics or “crowd diseases” are likely to grow in number and impact, with more urbanisation, choked urban slum settlements, narrow streets and roads, loss in biodiversity and heedless exploitation of natural resources, especially water. In his book *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Jared Diamond argues that a small population size does not help epidemic diseases evolve of their own. He stresses, “In contrast, the crowd diseases... could have arisen only with the build-up of large, dense human populations. That build-up began with the rise of agriculture, starting about 10,000 years ago and then accelerated with the rise of cities starting several thousand years ago.” With the increase in urbanisation and populations, more cities will be added to the existing ones, opening up the possibility of more pandemic outbreaks. The United Nations’ revised *World Urbanisation Prospects, 2018* report, projects that by 2050, a whopping 68 per cent of the world’s population would live in urban areas. By 2030 alone, the world is projected to have 43 megacities, most of them in developing regions. These projections show that the urbanisation juggernaut is unstoppable and in turn is likely to act as a catalyst in the spread of pandemics.

With the future prospects of pandemics and health risks being high, we have no option but to reorganise ourselves and learn to deal with the unfolding “risk society”, a natural offshoot of the so-called modernity-propelled development and production processes. The renowned German sociologist Ulrich Beck has called this phenomenon “reflexive modernisation.”

In his book, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Beck writes, “In the overlap and competition between the problems of class, industrial and market society on one side and those of the risk society on the other, the logic of wealth production

“ IF WE HAVE UBI, THE NEED FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO MIGRATE IN SEARCH OF WORK WILL GET REDUCED. IN THE WAKE OF PANDEMICS, PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY MIGRANT LABOURERS AND WITHIN THAT BRACKET, WOMEN AND CHILDREN, WILL NOT HAVE TO MARCH, HUNGRY, THIRSTY AND BAREFOOT, HUNDREDS OF KILOMETRES TOWARDS THEIR HOME STATES, AS HAPPENED RECENTLY SOON AFTER THE LOCKDOWN WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THEY WILL HAVE A FIGHTING CHANCE AT A LIFE OF DIGNITY AND INDEPENDENCE ”



always wins...and for that very reason the risk society is ultimately victorious.” He further adds, “The race between perceptible wealth and imperceptible risks cannot be won by the latter. The visible cannot compete with the invisible. Paradox decrees that for that very reason the invisible risks win the race.”

The emergence of risk society is inescapable, thanks to reflexive modernisation. To face it, there has to be a shift in policy focus from a wealth distribution society to a risk society. Beck apprises us, “We do not yet live in a risk society, but we also no longer live only within the distribution conflicts of scarcity societies. To the extent that this transition occurs, there will be a real transformation of society which will lead us out of the previous modes of thought and action.”

Poverty and pandemics: Shift in policy focus from a wealth distribution society to a risk society is not that easy in India, a former British colony, which retains its colonial legacy to a large extent. The typical syndrome that most of the former European colonies still suffer from. German sociologist Robert Michels has termed this syndrome “iron law of oligarchy.” In their book, *Why Nations Fail*, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson summarise the iron law of oligarchy saying that in essence “new leaders overthrowing old ones with promises of radical changes bring nothing but more of the same.”

Another syndrome that India suffers from is the new absolutism — that is, communism. In its post-Independence avatar, India tilted towards the communist Soviet system, thus allowing structural space to the communist ideals in the governance system. The authors of *Why Nations Fail* have rightly pointed out, “It is impossible to understand many of the poorest regions

of the world at the end of the 20th century without understanding the new absolutism of the 20th century: Communism...Beyond the human suffering and carnage, the communist regimes all set up various types of extractive institutions...”

The syndromes of the iron law of oligarchy and new absolutism tend to create extractive institutions begetting the vicious circle of poverty and prove counter-productive to the efforts to push the policy focus towards risk society. For economic justice and poverty reduction by redistribution of the nation’s wealth take centrestage in policy priorities. This is not to suggest that there exists a binary opposition between the wealth redistribution society and risk society. What is intended here is that the process of transition from a wealth redistribution society to a risk society needs to be expedited by eliminating poverty and making society just and egalitarian.

Thus, the challenge before the new leadership in India is to do away with the new absolutism thought process and the prevalence of the iron law of oligarchy ingrained in our political and economic system. The extractive institutions need to be weeded out.

Universal Basic Income: Poverty reduction still remains a Herculean task for policymakers in India. Although since Independence, a slew of policy measures has been undertaken by various Governments to reform the economy and enhance its outcome with an aim to take more people out of the poverty trap, it is still miles to go. So what do we do in such a scenario? What are the choices we are left with? Though there cannot be a substitute for a poverty-free society in absolute terms, increase in social security net and implementation of Universal

Basic Income (UBI) can provide a kind of a defensive wall in the fight against pandemics, natural hazards and any other unwarranted risks.

A whole chapter was dedicated on UBI in the Economic Survey, 2016-17 which states, “...UBI is a powerful idea whose time even if not ripe for implementation is ripe for serious discussion.” But since this was given a miss in the Union Budget that followed the Economic Survey, the idea failed to generate “serious” discussion on its utility and practicality. Clearly, the UBI at least ensures a minimum income guarantee for beneficiaries. The implementation of UBI will place extra burden on the exchequer but there are definitely ways to implement it in a limited manner just to begin with. Given the tight fiscal space that India has, it may not be prudent to commit the UBI to everyone, just to prove its universality. In his article, *Out of my mind: Income for everyone*, economist Meghnad Desai suggested: “The allowance (UBI) should be paid to women only. They constitute almost half the population. Many cannot earn as they have to look after their families. When they work for wages, they are underpaid. The criterion cannot be gamed. It would revolutionise Indian society.”

If we have UBI, the need for women and children to migrate in search of work will get reduced. In the wake of pandemics, people, especially migrant labourers and within that bracket, women and children, will not have to march, hungry, thirsty and barefoot, hundreds of kilometres towards their home States, as happened recently soon after the lockdown was announced by the Government. They will have a fighting chance at a life of dignity and independence.

(The writer is a policy commentator)

The wrath of God or natural science?

Muslim scholars have a host of explanations for their followers about the causes of natural catastrophes like the present pandemic



NADEEM PARACHA

Last month, Tariq Jamil, a prominent evangelist, was roundly criticised for insinuating that the deadly COVID-19 pandemic was because of the misdeeds of “immodest women.” Over the years, Jamil has gathered a significant following among segments of the country’s urban middle classes and also Pakistan’s sporting and showbiz circles. He had been invited by Prime Minister Imran Khan to speak during a telethon raising money to address the economic challenges posed by the pandemic in Pakistan. The event was broadcast live by a private TV channel.

Many of Jamil’s middle-class fans find his soft-spoken demeanour

endearing, even though, of and on, some of his statements do raise a few eyebrows. Nevertheless, as a commentator on Twitter said: “It was only a matter of time when this likeable preacher would end up sounding like any other self-appointed scion of morality.” What I understand from this is that the nearer one gets to certain points of power, the more likely it is for him/her to lose their bearings in a bid to please patrons. Especially if these points of power include a Government that seemingly measures loyalty with varied degrees of sycophancy exhibited by its patrons or a fickle media that is as quick to kick one off the pedestal as it is to put them there.

Jamil himself understands well where his traction lies. It is in the way he has positioned himself: As someone who does not unsettle middle-class sensibilities and ideas of morality, unlike preachers such as Khadim Hussain Rizvi. That’s why, within days of making his controversial statement, Jamil offered an apology. Many of his fans belonging to the entertainment industry and some TV anchors almost immediately launched an attack

on those who criticised him. Even Shireen Mazari, the current Federal Minister of Human Rights wasn’t spared; she had denounced Jamil for blaming female immodesty for the outbreak of the Coronavirus. The irony is that Mazari belongs to the same Government whose PM not only invited Jamil to his telethon, but remained silent during his tirade.

Another interesting bit to come out of the debate was a sudden realisation of a somewhat not-so-sudden phenomenon: There is an increasing number of show business personalities from India and Pakistan who are often quick to defend decisions or statements which — in another little ironic twist — do not bode well for their professions.

In this is a terrific opportunity for anthropologists or even psychologists to study a phenomenon which some believe is pregnant with concepts such as the ‘cult mindset’ and the so-called Stockholm Syndrome. Nevertheless, Jamil is wise enough to realise that many of his less excitable, or less knee-jerk, middle-class admirers were taken aback by what he said;

they thought he was “different”. Therefore, an apology became necessary and, no matter what the motive behind it, it should be commended.

So what is a preacher to say in times of natural calamities and pandemics? The best they can do is lead a collective prayer and ask the Almighty to give relief to those who are suffering. It is a comforting exercise that is entirely spiritual in nature.

But as often happens, a majority of preachers make it their job to explain the reasons behind natural calamities. Be it an earthquake, a flood or a pandemic, the reasons provided are always centred around obscenity, immodesty and so on. And women remain a constant.

According to a report in a July 1967 edition of *Dawn*, a group of preachers was quoted as saying that the damaging monsoon rains in Karachi that year were due to the Ayub Khan regime’s ‘secular policies’ and “rampant sale of alcoholic beverages in the city.” From then on, until 1977, when newspapers again carried similar quotes during that year’s devastating monsoon rains in the city, the fact is,

such “explanations” got very little column space.

The practice of inviting clerics on TV and asking them to explain the cause of a natural calamity was first introduced in the 1980s during the Zia dictatorship. This practice then continued unabated. After the 2005 earthquake in the country’s northern regions, private TV channels were flooded with preachers blaming the earthquake on “the culture of obscenity that Pervaz Musharraf’s Government had been promoting”.

Preachers who are asked why a natural calamity took place often feel pressured to say something that is populist in tone. Just praying for safety and relief, they believe, will not get them any traction. However, there is a lesser-known concept in Islamic theology through which they can still stand out, without sounding misogynistic, reactionary or ill-informed.

Islamic scholar Javed Ahmad Ghamidi used this concept recently when he was asked to comment on Jamil’s statement. Ghamidi, a respected theologian who, interestingly, has a following within the same socio-econ-

omic class that Jamil derives his admirers from, said that it was silly to attribute social causes to natural calamities. He then added that floods, earthquakes and pandemics were all natural occurrences of a system that God has engineered. Scientists, too, understand these calamities as natural events due to the manner in which the universe operates.

By saying this, Ghamidi was reinventing an idea that was first conceptualised by the great 19th-century Muslim scholar Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who is often appreciated as being the pioneer of “Muslim modernism” in South Asia. Like his contemporaries in Egypt, Turkey and Iran, Khan produced scholarship which attempted to find a place for Islam in the context of modernity and science that was sweeping the world at the time. He was of the view that, since Islam was inherently progressive and rational, it was highly compatible with science. One way he tried to demonstrate this was through a concept he called “*naicari*.” He coined this Urdu term from the English word nature. In an essay for the 2019

Cambridge anthology on Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Professor of History David Lelyveld writes that, “To Khan, the universe and our world were run by an ingenious system constructed by God and that natural phenomenon, both benign or otherwise, is part of God’s creation.”

To Khan, biology, physics and chemistry were the best ways to understand how nature works and, thus, fully appreciate the genius of God’s creation. In one of his essays on *Naicari*, Khan writes that anything which contradicts the laws of nature cannot be part of Islam’s sacred texts, because these laws were designed by God. Therefore, according to him, the cause and explanation of a natural phenomenon need to be compatible with the laws of nature set in motion by God.

So what Ghamidi did was indirectly suggest that pandemics and other calamities were part and parcel of how nature works, and nature is what God created. Therefore, an explanation that is outside this context should be taken with a pinch of salt.

(Courtesy: *Dawn*)

Around the Globe

- A new life-threatening inflammatory syndrome associated with COVID-19 has affected 230 children in Europe and killed two so far this year, a regional health body said on Friday, as medics worldwide were told to be on alert. The Swedish-based European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said in a risk report that two children had died due to condition: one in Britain and one in France.
- Peru said it will construct a fast-build hospital in the Amazon as it seeks to respond to a growing COVID-19 emergency sweeping through the indigenous population. State social security body EsSalud said it expects the 100-bed hospital in Pucallpa, capital of the remote Ucayali region on the border with Brazil, to be operational within three weeks.
- Spain has registered its first daily death toll of fewer than 100 confirmed fatalities since declaring a state of emergency to fight the coronavirus two months ago. Spain's health minister says regional authorities have reported 87 new deaths, the lowest daily count since March 16.
- South Korea has reported 13 new cases of the coronavirus over a 24-hour period, raising hopes that a new outbreak linked to nightclubs in Seoul may be waning. The additional figures released Sunday by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention brought the national tally to 11,050 with 262 deaths. The agency says 9,888 of them have recovered and that 17,660 were under tests to determine whether they've contracted the virus.
- Venezuela is reporting its biggest one-day increase in confirmed coronavirus cases since the pandemic hit the South American nation. Vice President Delcy Rodríguez said Saturday that the 45 new cases bring Venezuela's total to 504 illnesses, with 10 resulting in death. Officials have reported a relatively low number of cases since the first were discovered in mid-March.
- China on Sunday reported five new cases of coronavirus, as the commercial hub of Shanghai announced the restart of classes for kindergarteners, first-, second- and third-graders from June 2.
- Outdoor exhibits along a one-way flow for visitors at Zoo Atlanta opened Saturday for the first time since mid-March, but indoor habitats, rides, playgrounds and other attractions remain closed because of Covid-19.
- Eight more sailors aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt have tested positive a second time for the new coronavirus, raising to 13 the number who appear to have become infected again while serving aboard the sidelined aircraft carrier.
- The number of deaths in Washington state because of coronavirus has reached 1,000.
- Sudan's Health Ministry has reported the country's highest one-day tally of coronavirus infections, with 325 new Covid-19 patients and six deaths.

Spraying disinfectants can be ‘harmful’: WHO

AFP ■ GENEVA

Spraying disinfectant on the streets, as practised in some countries, does not eliminate the coronavirus and even poses a health risk, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Saturday.

In a document on cleaning and disinfecting surfaces as part of the response to the virus, the WHO says spraying can be ineffective. "Spraying or fumigation of outdoor spaces, such as streets or marketplaces,

- In a document on cleaning and disinfecting surfaces as part of the response to the virus, the WHO says spraying can be ineffective
- Spraying or fumigation of outdoor spaces, such as streets or marketplaces, is... Not recommended to kill the Covid-19 virus or other pathogens because disinfectant is inactivated by dirt and debris," explains the WHO

is... Not recommended to kill the Covid-19 virus or other pathogens because disinfectant is inactivated by dirt and debris," explains the WHO. "Even in the absence of organic matter, chemical spray-

- The WHO said that streets and pavements are not considered as "reservoirs of infection" of Covid-19, adding that spraying disinfectants, even outside, can be "dangerous for human health"
- The document also stresses that spraying individuals with disinfectants is "not recommended under any circumstances"

ing is unlikely to adequately cover all surfaces for the duration of the required contact time needed to inactivate pathogens." The WHO said that streets and pavements are not considered as "reservoirs of

infection" of Covid-19, adding that spraying disinfectants, even outside, can be "dangerous for human health".

The document also stresses that spraying individuals with disinfectants is "not recommended under any circumstances"

ommended under any circumstances."

"This could be physically and psychologically harmful and would not reduce an infected person's ability to spread the virus through droplets or contact," said the document.

Spraying chlorine or other toxic chemicals on people can cause eye and skin irritation, bronchospasm and gastrointestinal effects, it adds.

The organisation is also warning against the systematic

spraying and fumigating of disinfectants on to surfaces in indoor spaces, citing a study that has shown it to be ineffective outside direct spraying areas.

"If disinfectants are to be applied, this should be done with a cloth or wipe that has been soaked in disinfectant," it said.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus, the cause of the pandemic that has killed more than 3,00,000 people worldwide since its appearance in late December in China, can attach itself to sur-

faces and objects.

However, no precise information is currently available for the period during which the viruses remain infectious on the various surfaces.

Studies have shown that the virus can stay on several types of surfaces for several days. However, these maximum durations are only theoretical because they are recorded under laboratory conditions and should be "interpreted with caution" in the real-world environment.

Tests on hamster show masks can reduce Covid-19 spread: Study

AFP ■ HONG KONG

Tests on hamsters reveal the widespread use of face-masks reduces transmission of the deadly coronavirus, a team of leading experts in Hong Kong said on Sunday.

The research by the University of Hong Kong is some of the first to specifically investigate whether masks can stop symptomatic and asymptomatic COVID-19 carriers from infecting others.

Led by Professor Yuen Kwok-yung, one of the world's top coronavirus experts, the team placed hamsters that were artificially infected with the disease next to healthy animals.

Surgical masks were placed between the two cages with air flow travelling from the infected animals to the healthy ones. The researchers found non-contact transmission of the virus could be reduced by more than 60 percent when the masks were used.

Two thirds of the healthy hamsters were infected within a week if no masks were applied.

The infection rate plunged to just over 15 per cent when surgical masks were put on the cage of the infected animals and by about 35 per cent when

placed on the cage with the healthy hamsters.

Those that did become infected were also found to have less of the virus within their bodies than those infected without a mask.

"It's very clear that the effect of masking the infected, especially when they are asymptomatic — or symptomatic — it's much more important than anything else," Yuen told reporters on Sunday.

"It also explained why universal masking is important because we now have known that a large number of those infected have no symptom."

Yuen was one of the microbiologists who discovered the SARS virus — a predecessor of the current coronavirus - when it emerged in 2003, killing some 300 people in Hong Kong.

Armed with knowledge from that fight, he advised Hong Kongers early in the current pandemic to adopt universal masking, something embraced by the city's residents.

At the time the World Health Organisation and many other foreign health authorities dismissed using masks widely among the public, saying they should instead go to frontline medical workers.

Four months after its first

COVID-19 case was detected, Hong Kong has largely managed to contain the disease with just over 1,000 infections and four deaths.

Experts have credited widespread mask use as well as efficient testing, tracing and treatment in the city of 7.5 million for the relatively low numbers.

Beijing announces wearing masks outdoors not necessary

PTI ■ BEIJING

Beijing has done away with the guideline that residents should wear masks while on outdoors, the first city in China and perhaps in the world to do so in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, signalling that the coronavirus is under control in the Chinese capital.

After months of wearing masks to prevent virus infection risks, people can now breathe freely outside without a mask in Beijing, state-run *China Daily* reported, citing the new guidelines announced by the Beijing Centre for Disease Prevention and Control on Sunday.

As mosques reopen in West Africa, Covid-19 fears grow

AP ■ DAKAR, SENEGAL

It's been a Ramadan unlike any other for Abdourahmane Sall, far from the mosque during the Muslim holy month as coronavirus cases mount. With only a little over a week left, he decided joining thousands of others in tradition was worth the risk after authorities allowed prayers to resume.

Men formed orderly lines outside the Massalikul Jinaan mosque in Dakar as they waited to receive hand sanitizer before entering while uniformed police watched on nearby. Inside, some 2,000 men set their prayer mats 1.5 meters apart while 3,000 others spread out into the courtyard of West Africa's largest mosque.

"We are being careful but to be honest we cannot escape the

virus," said Sall, a 58-year-old tailor in a flowing orange tunic and face mask made of thick fabric. "If we abide by the precautions that health officials tell us, then God will protect us."

The WHO has warned that as many as 190,000 Africans could die from the coronavirus in the first year of the pandemic, and countless more from other diseases as the continent's limited medical resources are stretched even further.

But across West Africa, countries are finding it increasingly difficult to keep mosques closed during Ramadan even as confirmed virus cases mount and testing remains limited. The holy month is already a time of heightened spiritual devotion for Muslims, and many say prayer is now more important than ever.

Obama criticises Trump administration's response to pandemic crisis

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

For the second time in a week, former US President Barack Obama has made a veiled attack on his successor Donald Trump's handling of the coronavirus crisis, saying the pandemic that had shown that many officials "aren't even pretending to be in charge."

Obama criticised the handling of the coronavirus pandemic without mentioning President Trump, a Republican, by name, just a week after privately criticising the administration's response to the Covid-19.

The total death toll in the US due to the coronavirus now stands at over 88,000,

which is the highest anywhere in the world.

The country has over 1.46 million cases of confirmed Covid-19 infections.

In his speech to graduates from several dozen historically black colleges and universities, Obama said the COVID-19 outbreak had exposed failings in the country's leadership.

"This pandemic has fully, finally torn back the curtain on the idea that so many of the folks in charge know what they're doing. A lot of them aren't even pretending to be in charge," Obama, a Democrat, said during a virtual commencement address for historically black colleges and universities.

New Govt will be sworn-in with pledge of Israeli sovereignty over West Bank: Netanyahu

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday announced that a new government led by him will be sworn-in with a pledge of Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank to "write another glorified chapter in the history of Zionism".

On Wednesday, Netanyahu, 70, announced that he has succeeded in forming a unity Government in letters sent to President Reuven Rivlin, and Blue and White party Chairman Benny Gantz, who was temporarily serving as the speaker of Knesset (Israeli Parliament).

"It's time to apply the Israeli law and write another glorified chapter in the history of Zionism," Netanyahu, who last year in July became Israel's longest serving Prime Minister surpassing David Ben-Gurion, said ahead of the swearing-in.

The Government was to be sworn-in on Thursday but internal squabbles in the ruling Likud party over ministerial claims postponed it. The new Government, which according to the coalition agreement, will see Gantz replace Netanyahu as Prime Minister after 18 months on November 17, 2021, as the per power-sharing deal.

Netanyahu would then acquire the title of "Alternate Prime Minister", something that Gantz would now enjoy while also being the Defence Minister.

China's ambassador to Israel found dead in Tel Aviv home: Police

Jerusalem: China's ambassador to Israel, Du Wei, was found dead at his residence on the outskirts of Tel Aviv on Sunday, the police said.

The 57-year-old envoy, who had arrived in Israel in mid-February, was found dead in his home in Herzliya, north of the city, spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP, adding that police were investigating.

Du's wife and son were not with him in Israel. The Chinese Foreign Ministry said it would only comment when it had "solid" information.

Israeli police and forensics teams could be seen at the residence, a property guarded by a low wall and shaded by a leafy garden, AFP reporters said.

Du had previously served as ambassador to Ukraine, according to his biography on the embassy's website.

The Haaretz daily said initial reports said staff had found Du dead in his bed and that there were no signs of violence.

It quoted Israel's emergency medical service Magen David Adom as saying the cause of death appeared to be a cardiac incident. A spokesman for the medical

service would not provide any official information. Du had undergone a 14-day home quarantine on arrival in Israel because of the new coronavirus outbreak, according to an interview with local media in May.

On April 2, Israel Hayom, the top-circulation Hebrew newspaper, published an editorial by Du on the theme that "Collaboration is the Cure for the Virus". China and Israel, a strong US ally, have boosted cooperation in the high-tech and other sectors, leading Washington to urge Israel to limit Chinese investment in its strategic sectors. Chinese embassy spokesman Wang Yongjun in a recent Jerusalem Post commentary rejected the claim and called Sino-Israeli cooperation a "win-win" situation. **AFP**

AROUND THE WORLD IN PICTURES



People stroll at Trocadero square next to the Eiffel Tower in Paris on Sunday AP



People queue for ice cream after the introduction of measures to bring the country out of the lockdown amid the coronavirus pandemic, in Cambridge, England on Sunday AP



An Italian Army specialist talks with a priest in a moment of rest during the signification of a church in Rome on Sunday AP



People walk and exercise in Hyde Park in London, as the country is in lockdown to help stop the spread of coronavirus on Sunday AP

Af President, rival announce power sharing agreement

AP ■ KABUL



Ghani spokesman Sediq Sediqqi tweeted Sunday that a political deal between Ghani and Abdullah had been signed in which Ghani would remain president of the war-torn nation. The deal calls for Abdullah to lead the country's National Reconciliation High Council and some members of Abdullah's team would be included in Ghani's Cabinet.

The Reconciliation Council has been given the authority to handle and approve all affairs related to Afghanistan's peace process.

Omed Maisam, a spokesman for Abdullah's team, confirmed an agreement had been signed at the presidential palace. "A technical team will work on the implementation of the agreement and details will be shared later," he said.

Afghanistan has been in political disarray since the country's election commission in December announced Ghani

Biden's VP search puts spotlight on how long he'll serve

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Joe Biden has longed to win the White House for more than three decades. If he finally makes it there after November's election, he's already talking about leaving.

In an effort to ease concerns about his age, the 77-year-old presumptive Democratic nominee has said he wouldn't seek reelection if his mental or physical health declined. He has also referred to himself as a "transition candidate," acting as a bridge to a younger generation of leadership.

Biden is rarely known for sticking to a script, and the comments are evidence of his candid style. But they're also contributing to intense speculation about who is best positioned to lead the party after him.

"We do have a longer bench as Democrats, a younger bench in terms of elected leadership all across the country," said Democratic strategist L.

Joy Williams, chairwoman of Higher Heights PAC, which is dedicated to electing more women to national and statewide offices.

Biden has not ruled out running for a second term, in part because such an explicit pledge would immediately render him a lame duck in Washington, where political capital will be needed to manage the coronavirus recovery.

But the question of his long-term prospects looms over his candidacy, especially as he considers his options for vice president.

While someone like Elizabeth Warren could broaden Biden's appeal among progressives, the 70-year-old Massachusetts senator wouldn't be the face of a new generation many in the party are seeking. That might be an advantage for younger contenders, such as California Sen. Kamala Harris, 55, or Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, 59.

Govt outgo on eco stimulus package just ₹2.02 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Modi Government may have touted a mega ₹21 lakh crore stimulus package to deal with the fallout of COVID-19 outbreak on the economy but the actual budgetary outgo is just ₹2.02 lakh crore or less than 10 per cent of the total package, experts said on Sunday.

“The overall stimulus package amounted to ₹20,97,053 crore, that is, nearly 10 per cent of FY21 GDP. However, it is to be financed only to a limited extent by additional budgetary resources which amount to 10 per cent of

the overall package,” EY said in its comment on the package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

It said about 5 per cent of the package was already provided in the budget for 2020-21 fiscal. The balance of 85 per cent relates primarily to liquidity easing measures by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), credit line by banks and support to shadow banks.

EY said out of the nearly ₹21 lakh crore package, ₹8.01 lakh crore is on account of liquidity enhancing measures taken by the RBI since February.

Additional outgo for the

Centre from dole out of free foodgrain and cooking gas to poor and some cash to senior citizens, disabled and poor women, as per announcement in March, would be ₹80,000 crore, it said.

The five tranches of stimulus that Sitharaman announced since May 13 totalled an additional outgo of ₹1.22 lakh crore on plans such as enhanced outlay for employment guarantee scheme and free foodgrain and subsidised housing for migrant workers.

The other items on stimulus were for banks and financial institutions to lend more to small businesses and provide

support to shadow banks and electricity distribution companies.

DK Srivastava, Chief Policy Advisor, EY India said: “The final picture of central government’s COVID-related stimulus package at the conclusion of the fifth tranche of Finance Minister’s announcement sums to ₹20.97 lakh crores, which amounts to 9.8 per cent of FY21 GDP.” “Only about 10 per cent of this stimulus can be traced as direct additional budgetary cost to the central exchequer,” he said. “Nearly 5 per cent of the stimulus relates to already budgeted expenditures. The rest of the stimulus pri-

marily pertains to RBI’s liquidity enhancement measures, government’s credit guarantee programs and insurance schemes.”

In addition to the stimulus amount, a number of structural reforms have also been announced which may have a far-reaching efficiency-augmenting impact. Most of these relate to the supply side of the economy, EY said.

“However, one important demand component was brought in by the enhancement of the budgeted MGNREGA allocation of ₹61,500 crores in FY21 by ₹40,000 crores. Together, these add to about

0.5% of GDP which is a substantive amount to support rural demand and agricultural prices,” he said.

EY said State Governments would welcome the enhancement of their borrowing limit from 3 per cent to 5 per cent of their respective state GDPs.

“But not many of them may avail of the entire incremental amount due to the likelihood of a tangible increase in the borrowing cost because of the large gap that appears to be emerging between the total public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) and the

available resources,” Srivastava said. With the enhanced borrowing programme of the centre and states and the borrowing requirement of the public sector enterprises, the total public sector borrowing requirement is considered to be about 14 % of GDP in FY21.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

Less penalties for small cos, startups

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Furthering the agenda of ease of doing business in the country, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced a slew of relaxation measures, including lower penalties for all defaults for small companies, one-person companies, producer companies and start-ups.

The Government will also take steps towards creating additional and specialised benches of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). This has been under consideration for some time now.

In yet another move towards fuller capital account convertibility, the Government has thrown open the doors for the Indian public companies to directly list their shares abroad and access a larger pool of capital.

Energy experts laud Govt’s move to privatise discoms in UTs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government’s announcement of privatising discoms in UTs will build confidence among larger states to take similar move, experts have said.

Unveiling the fourth tranche of the ₹20 lakh crore stimulus package, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday announced a slew of measures for the power sector, which included privatisation of power distribution companies (discoms) in UTs, a tariff policy, installation of smart meters, among others.

Sambitosh Mohapatra, Partner – Power and Utilities, PwC India said “Power distribution in UTs to be privatised is an exciting step ahead. It will assist in generating private sector appetite amongst Indian and international investors, various PPP models will be tested and it will also provide confidence to larger states and utilities to undertake privatisation based on improvements

achieved here”.

Imaan Javan, Director, Suntuity Renewable Energy India, said the measures will benefit consumers directly. The standard of service will now have to be maintained by discoms or they will face penalty.

“Smart prepaid meters will allow transparency for consumers and also help DISCOMs reduce AT&C losses and ensures billing accuracy which leaves no scope for human errors. These measures should be implemented at the earliest,” Javan said.

Rajesh Ivaturi, Partner – Power & Utilities sector, EY India, said, “The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of subsidies to consumers by the State Government would relieve some of the financial burden on the DISCOMs and privatisation of distribution sector would bring in significant efficiency gains, the states too must take a cue and extend this to all key metros so that the quality of power supply goes up significantly”.

Tomar hails increase in MGNREGS allocation

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar on Sunday welcomed the 65 per cent increase in MGNREGS allocations to provide jobs to migrant labourers returning to their homes in rural areas amid the coronavirus crisis.

He also expressed his gratitude in this regard to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who had earlier announced an additional Rs 40,000 crore under

the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

“₹61,500 crore has been allocated under the MGNREGS in the 2020-21 fiscal. The new allocation is additional.”

“The Narendra Modi Government is taking full care of villages, poor and farmers.

The additional allocation will help the rural labourers by generating 300 crore man days of work. The migrants returning home will thus benefit,” Tomar said.

RELIANCE STRIKES 4TH DEAL

Sells 1.34% in Jio Platforms for ₹6,598.38 cr to General Atlantic

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries on Sunday announced the sale of 1.34 per cent stake in its digital unit to global equity firm General Atlantic for ₹6,598.38 crore, the fourth deal in less than four weeks that will inject a combined ₹67,194.75 crore in the oil-to-telecom conglomerate to help it pare debt.

“This investment values Jio Platforms at an equity value of ₹4.91 lakh crore and an enterprise value of ₹5.16 lakh crore. General Atlantic’s investment will translate into a 1.34 per cent equity stake in Jio Platforms on a fully diluted basis,” the company said in a statement.

The deal follows Facebook picking up a 9.99 per cent stake in the firm that houses India’s youngest but largest telecom firm on April 22 for ₹43,574 crore. Within days of that deal, Silver Lake - the world’s largest tech investor - bought a 1.15 per cent stake in Jio Platforms for ₹5,665.75 crore. On May 8, US-based Vista Equity Partners bought 2.32 per cent stake in

Jio Platforms for ₹11,367 crore.

“With this investment, Jio Platforms has raised ₹67,194.75 crore from leading technology investors, including Facebook, Silver Lake, Vista Equity Partners and General Atlantic in less than four weeks,” the statement said. Strategic and financial investors are to form 20 per cent of Jio Platforms. Between the four deals, Reliance has sold 14.8 per cent of Jio Platforms and more such investments are likely in near future.

Ambani, 63, chairman and managing director of Reliance, had in August last year set a target of March 2021, to make his conglomerate net debt-free. But thanks to the Facebook deal, a ₹53,125 crore rights issue, private equity investments, and more stake sale to companies such as Saudi Aramco, the target is likely to be achieved by December.

At the end of March quarter, Reliance had an outstanding debt of ₹3,36,294 crore and cash in hand of ₹1,75,259 crore. After adjusting cash, the net debt came to ₹1,61,035 crore.



Of the outstanding debt, ₹2,62,000 cr is on Reliance books and ₹23,000 cr is with Jio. Jio Platforms, a wholly-owned subsidiary of RIL, is a next-generation technology company. Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd, with 388 million mobile subscribers, will continue to be a wholly-owned subsidiary of Jio Platforms. General Atlantic is a leading global growth equity firm with a 40-year track record of investing in the technology, consumer, financial services and healthcare sectors. It has a longstanding tradition of backing disruptive entrepreneurs and companies around the world, including Airbnb, Alibaba, Ant Financial, Block, ByteDance, Facebook, Slack, Snapchat, Uber and other global technology leaders.

Mukesh Ambani, Chairman and Managing Director of Reliance Industries, said, “I have known General Atlantic for several decades

and greatly admired it for its belief in India’s huge growth potential. We are excited to leverage General Atlantic’s proven global expertise and strategic insights across 40 years of technology investing for the benefit of Jio”.

Bill Ford, Chief Executive Officer of General Atlantic, said that as long-term backers of global technology leaders and visionary entrepreneurs, GA could not be more excited about investing in Jio.

“We share Mukesh’s conviction that digital connectivity has the potential to significantly accelerate the Indian economy and drive growth across the country. General Atlantic has a long track record working alongside founders to scale disruptive businesses, as Jio is doing at the forefront of the digital revolution in India,” Ford said.

Akash Ambani, Director of Reliance Jio, said: “We are delighted that a renowned global investor like General Atlantic is partnering with us in our journey to digitally empower India and Indians”.

Retailers’ association miffed at eco package

EMERGENT ISSUES FACING RETAILERS NOT ADDRESSED

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Retailers’ Association of India (RAI) on Sunday expressed disappointment with the ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ economic stimulus saying emergent issues facing retailers have not been addressed.

The retail industry body also said that with ‘no income and zero support from the

government”, retailers are starting at closure of businesses that would jeopardise livelihoods and jobs of 46 million direct employees, out of which 20 million work in non-essential retail. “The steps taken under the Atmanirbhar Bharat economic stimulus will help the country in the long term but the emergent issues facing the retail industry have not been addressed,” RAI Chief Executive Officer Kumar Rajagopalan said in a statement.

The retail industry, which contributes around 40 per cent to India’s consumption and 10

per cent to India’s gross domestic product, is severely stressed, he added.” What retailers needed was wage support; moratorium for payment of principal and interests and support in the form of working capital. This is critical for retail to survive,” Rajagopalan said.

He asserted that some earlier measures announced as part of the ₹20-lakh crore economic package by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, such as reduction in TDS rates for payments or 2 per cent reduction each in the EPF contribution of both the employer and employee.

Total fiscal impact of ‘₹20L cr package’ to be ₹1.50 lakh cr: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

New stimulus measures unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday will cost ₹40,000 crore, taking the actual fiscal impact of all the steps announced over the past few days to ₹1.50 lakh crore or 0.75 per cent of the GDP, a report said.

PM Narendra Modi had announced a relief package of ₹20 lakh crore or about 10 per cent of GDP last week. However, many of the measures unveiled have been in the form of moves like loan guarantees which do not entail an immediate fiscal cost. Earlier on Sun, Sitharaman announced the fifth and final tranche of the Govt’s stimulus package to revive the coronavirus-hit economy. She said the stimulus package includes the ₹8.01 lakh crore of liquidity being made available by the RBI.

“We estimate that the actual fiscal impact on the budget will be only ₹1.5 lakh crore (0.75 per cent of GDP), based on our calculations and assumptions made during the series of announcements,” Barclays’ Chief India Economist Rahul Bajoria said. The Centre will be able to keep

its fiscal deficit at 6 per cent of GDP for FY21 after implementing the stimulus announcements, as against the budgeted 3.5 per cent, he said. The only measure with a fiscal impact among those announced on Sunday was a ₹40,000 crore hit due to the moves on upping the works to be carried out under the employee guarantee scheme, Bajoria said in a note. The other move to allow bond raising activities by states up to 5 per cent of the respective GSDP will lead to additional issuances of ₹4.28 lakh crore.

“This increase is linked to states adhering to material reforms in public distribution systems, ease of doing business, power distribution and urban body revenue sharing,” it said. The States’ increase in borrowing will be the same as the one announced by the Centre a fortnight ago, it added.

However, the consolidated fiscal deficit, which includes both the Centre and states, will rise to 12 per cent of GDP as against the earlier expectation of 8 per cent. Apart from this, there is a possibility that states may resort to off balance sheet borrowings to reduce their fiscal deficit of up to 1 per cent of the national GDP, it said.

₹3 lakh crore credit guarantee scheme may be launched this week

To offer attractive rate of 9.25%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Credit Guarantee Scheme worth ₹3-lakh crore for MSMEs, announced as part of ₹20 lakh crore economic package, is likely to become operational later this week.

The ₹3 lakh crore collateral-free loans for small businesses will be offered by banks at attractive rate of 9.25 per cent, a senior official of a public sector bank told PTI.

Currently, rate of interest on loans given by banks to MSME sector varies from ₹9.5 per cent to 17 per cent, depending on the risk perception.

At the same time, the official said, interest rate will be capped at 14 per cent for the loans provided by non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).

After approval from the government, the scheme is expected to be launched later during the week.

To provide relief to the small business, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on May 13 as part of first

tranche of ₹20 lakh crore comprehensive economic package announced an additional working capital finance of 20 per cent of the outstanding credit as on February 29, 2020, in the form of a term loan at a concessional rate of interest will be provided.

This will be available to units with up to ₹25 crore outstanding and turnover of up to ₹100 crore whose accounts are standard.

The units will not have to provide any guarantee or collateral of their own, she had said, adding the amount will be 100 per cent guaranteed by the central Government providing a total liquidity of ₹3 lakh crore to more than 45 lakh micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Under the scheme, loans will have a 4 year tenor with moratorium of 12 months on the principal repayment.

The last date for availing the scheme has been fixed as October 31, 2020.

MSME sector is considered as the backbone of country’s economy as the sector contributes over 28 per cent of the GDP and more than 40 per cent of exports, while creating employment for about 11 crore people, second highest after agriculture.

STIMULUS PACKAGE

New MSME definition to give huge boost to industry: Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The stimulus package announced by the Government for different sectors and the new definition for MSMEs will give huge boost to industry, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Sunday.

Addressing a meeting with representatives of Business Network International and MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications via video conferencing, the Minister for MSME and Road Transport and Highways sought suggestions for effective implementation of the Fund of Funds announced as part of the package for MSMEs. There is need to explore agro and fishing MSME sector, Gadkari said in a statement. He said that all the stakeholders, including government, are facing challenges due to COVID-19. He urged the industry to maintain a positive attitude during these difficult times to tide over the present crisis as negativity is not in anybody’s interest. Recalling that Japan government has offered special package to its industries for taking

out Japanese investments from China and move elsewhere, the minister opined that it is an good opportunity for India, which should be grabbed.

He also said that work has already started on New Delhi - Mumbai Green Expressway, which passes through rural, tribal and backward areas. This, he stressed, is an opportunity for industry to make future investments in industrial clusters, logistics parks equipped with state-of-art technology along the way passing through rural, tribal and less developed areas.

Stating that there is a need to work on decentralisation of industries from metro/big cities, he said focus should be on rural, tribal and backward areas of the country.

The Minister outlined that special focus towards export enhancement is the need of the hour and necessary practices should be adopted to reduce power, logistics and production costs to become competitive in the global market.

He cited an example that by introducing vehicle scrap-age policy, production cost can be reduced.

Covid trend, lockdown 4.0 details, Q4 earnings to decide market course: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian equity market’s movement this week will hinge on coronavirus-related developments such as lockdown 4.0 specifics and new infections trend, besides quarterly earnings, analysts said.

In addition, experts said, domestic bourses will take cues from global peers which have been reeling from fears of a second wave of COVID-19 in some countries. Market will also assess the effectiveness of the Govt’s mega ₹20-lakh crore stimulus package that, analysts believe, would be critical for the revival of the economy.

The first of the five tranches of the mega stimulus, unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last Wednesday, had failed to enthuse the market on Thursday.

“Government has made it clear that it will introduce the measures in tranches, but execution is key and that will be followed by the markets. Markets will also be driven by the rate of infections, lockdown 4.0 norms and any stock specific earnings commentary in the ongoing results season,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Ajit Mishra, VP-Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said, “It seems like markets are awaiting further details (of stimulus package) before making any reaction and we may see the possible response on Monday i.e. May 18.”

The Government in its first four tranches of the stimulus package focussed on credit line to small businesses and new fund creations to be shouldered by banks and financial institutions with very little extra budget spending.

In the last set of measures, the finance minister on Sunday announced plans to privatise PSUs in non-strategic sectors and suspend loan default-triggered bankruptcy filings for one year, and also gave a ₹40,000 crore hike in allocation for the rural employment guarantee scheme to provide jobs to migrant workers.

“Now market would again focus on global cues, may continue to remain under pressure. There is also fear of a second wave of pandemic spread and extended period of economic slowdown. Further, the earnings season so far suggest more volatility and disruption,” Siddhartha Khemka, Head — Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Trend

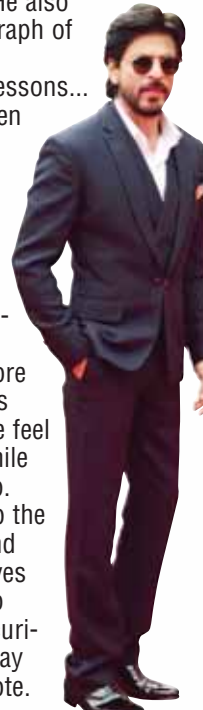
Blazer


SRK reveals his lockdown lessons

Superstar **SHAH RUKH KHAN** has revealed the lessons he has learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

The actor took to social media to share his realisations while being at home. He also shared a photograph of himself.

“Lockdown lessons... That we have been living far beyond our exigencies, most of which don’t really matter as much as we thought they did. That we really don’t need (emotionally) more people around us than the ones we feel like talking to while we are locked up. That we can stop the clock for a bit and reimagine our lives when the rush to acquire false securities is peeled away from us,” he wrote.





‘I cannot believe that some people are not paying their house help and staff in these times of grave crisis. I pledge to support my domestic help and driver through this crisis. Please help me spread the message to more people. Put stories on social media and tag your friends, asking them to do the same. Please pledge to pay them their salaries.’
—Sayani Gupta

Actor **AKSHAY OBEROI** is waiting for a day when people are drawn to theatres hearing his name.

“One day, I would also love to have huge box-office success and see people thronging into theatres on just hearing my name. More than that, I crave respect. When I started my career all I wanted was to be a good actor and earn people’s respect. I was really not after being popular. I just wanted people to take me seriously as an actor, and I guess I have achieved that over time. I am blessed that people like my work,” Akshay said.


He will next be seen in the film, *Madam Chief Minister*.

Downey is very affable: Evans

Actor **CHRIS EVANS** finds his *Avengers: Endgame* co-star **Robert Downey Jr** a “very affable guy.”

He said, “It’s not hard with Downey. He is a very affable guy and I think he really thinks he understood the weight of the responsibility with these movies. He really understood that when one person succeeds, we all succeed.”

He added, “He really went out of his way to help us find our footing not just in the *Avengers* films but in your own individual film franchises even when he wasn’t on the set, I still felt his support.”



hitherto undetected patients walking into the common area and infecting others as the centralised AC is common. Dr PK Mangla, Senior Consultant Moolchand Medcity, Delhi, talks about a different aspect of the spread when he says, “Whether it is a hospital or a restaurant and there is an asymptomatic patient, you wouldn’t be aware that s/he is a carrier. The risk of anyone catching the virus is always there when you come in close proximity with the person as the virus is very contagious.”

To avoid that, the health measures that we have been hearing since the beginning of the outbreak are emphasised upon. Dr Jha says, “In a hospital, extra precautions are advised. Every patient walking in, irrespective of whether s/he is COVID-19 positive or not, should wear masks, maintain social distancing and wash hands.”

Singh says that central air conditioning systems used in offices and other commercial applications are well-ventilated. “A standard central air conditioning system design includes a mechanical ventilation-cum-filtration system that draws in adequate fresh air. A central air conditioning system also maintains Relative Humidity between 40 to 70 per cent which is ideal for avoiding the propagation of the COVID-19 virus,” he says.

Moreover, there are certain norms for operating centralised ACs in public areas. Dr Gupta says, “There are clear regulations, which say that the air should be changed 12 times every hour. In fact, the more frequent it is the better is the air quality. In a hot country, it is not possible to do without ACs. Our buildings too are constructed in a manner to accommodate central cooling. Good filters and frequent air changes can tide over any doubts that people might have about AC usage.”

Chen too lists out the precautions that can be taken to prevent the spread of not just COVID-19 but other viruses and bacteria in public spaces. “For public spaces with centralised ACs, in order to avoid mixing of contaminated air with fresh air, exhaust ventilation systems in restrooms should be kept operational 24x7 to avoid virus transmission. Besides, cleaning the air filters more frequently is more important than ever to contain the spread of the virus.”

So the jury verdict is that while the ACs are safe — they are so, only with adequate precautions in place.

CLEARING THE AIR

The Coronavirus pandemic has called into question many things that we took for granted, including the use of air conditioners. SAIMI SATTAR speaks to the experts to dispel myths and changing patterns of use

Imagine a contemporary office or a modern home, and what comes to mind, immediately, are steel and chrome facades, the application of AI so that the lights are switched on and dimmed automatically and the ACs are turned up and down according to the number of people, temperature and time of the day. Did you say ACs? That is one appliance that we have begun to take for granted over the years. But then like all aspects of our lives, this too is bound to be affected by the Coronavirus. There have been assertions floating around that it assists the spread fuelled by the fact that in Wuhan, one family visiting a restaurant spread it to two more who happened to be at the place at the same time.

Dr Rajesh Kumar Gupta, Additional director, Pulmonology and Critical Care, Fortis, Noida, says, “If you look back eight to 10 years, we used to get viral infections in winter. But now they can be seen throughout the year. Doctors believe that this spike is due to the recirculated air in public spaces. If there aren’t adequate filters, the possibility of infection goes up. In a smaller space, like a bus or an aircraft, the problem is likely to multiply.”

And it is not just some doctors who are ringing the alarm bells. Himanshu Agarwal, Founder and CEO, Magneto CleanTech, a company, which develops advanced technologies to tackle the problem of poor indoor air quality in developing nations, says, “One of the most common misconceptions is that

air conditioners purify the air while cooling it. However, existing ones are not equipped to do so. They only recycle the air in the room by absorbing it and releasing cooler air. Centralised ACs in large indoor spaces are not sufficient to eliminate viruses or other air pollutants. In fact, they only increase the risk of transmission as several people breathe in the same air that is being recirculated in an enclosed space. A majority of these air conditioning units might be old and contain insufficient filtration to eliminate microbes in the air.”

Gurmeet Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, Johnson Controls-Hitachi Air Conditioning India Ltd, debunks the assertion and says, “The studies till date are not suggesting that

the virus is airborne. It is propagated through coughing, sneezing and at times, speaking to an infected person, as the droplets travel a distance of two metres and settle on the surface. Hence, room air conditioners do not pose any additional risk of virus spread.”

Mike Chen, General Manager, TCL India, concurs with him. He says contrary to contributing to the spread, ACs can be beneficial at times. “When it comes to maintaining balanced room temperature, relative humidity and ventilation, ACs can further strengthen human resistance to infections.” He, however, does add certain guidelines while using both residential and centralised ACs to be doubly sure. These include setting the temperature between

Like a boomerang

Filmmaker PRASHANT NAIR keeps coming back to exploring the theme of social hierarchy in his films, the recent example being *Tryst With Destiny*, which revolves around caste and wealth discrimination in society. He tells CHAHAK MITTAL that it might be because the extent of inequality is outrageous

Success certainly finds a way to S enter our lives irrespective of the circumstances. Well, filmmaker Prashant Nair, who directed two episodes of Amazon Prime Original series *Made in Heaven*, found it again with his recent film, *Tryst With Destiny*. Though the film couldn’t be premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival 2020 in April, as scheduled, due to COVID-19 outbreak, it was judged by an online jury and won the award for Best Screenplay.

Wondering what’s the story? Well, for Prashant, it was not even an official project. He says, “I wanted to work on something that was a bit bolder and allowed me to explore some of the things that frustrated me about the country at the time. I actually wrote it for myself. I never thought anyone would produce it. Before tossing it in the back of a drawer, I thought I’d send it to Manish Mundra (producer), so that I had no regrets.” Well, two days later, Prashant received a call from him, saying, “Let’s do it!” and off they went. “Manish tends to make huge decisions like that very much on instinct,” he adds.

Named after and inspired by the landmark Independence Day speech by country’s first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the film is a triptych, which narrates three different stories of inequality in society — wealth, caste and gender. It presents three characters who struggle to find a control over their destinies in contemporary India — a billionaire who learns money can’t buy everything; a lower-caste couple in pursuit of building a new life; and a corrupt cop who finds himself far

outside the pale of law attempting to secure the apartment of his partner’s needs. It’s conceptualised on the lines of Nehru’s words, “There is no resting for any of us until we make all the citizens of India what destiny intended them to be.” Talking about why he chose the theme and the title, he says, “In the speech, Nehru talked about the goals for the newly-formed nation. And hence, the film explores how far we have come as a society vis-à-vis those goals but in a playful way.”

So how far have we as a country actually come to realising our “Tryst with Destiny” as a nation since 1947? “I think this is something I’d ideally like the viewers to question at the end of the film. To each his or her own answer. And for me, the idea of India has never been more in jeopardy than it is today,” he laments.

A fun fact? Incidentally, Prashant’s first child was born on November 14, (Nehru’s birthday), while he was working on the film.

The triptych, he says, was originally conceived as four stories but found its way to three, which, to Prashant, “felt right” as each one lightly emphasises a particular colour of our national flag — saffron, white, green — and also deals with the three “classes” — upper, middle and lower.

Discrimination and inequality aren’t a new subject around which films revolve. So what is the new thing that this film offers? For him, “this isn’t a heavy narration,” rather it conveys its message through dark humour and sarcasm woven with some loving stories, car crashes, robberies, arson, fist fights and dancing. “And the way everything is connected is a bit unusual. I feel, the Tribeca jury awarded the screenplay because of its originality, so we’re hoping that the audience feels the same,” adds he.

Continuing with the discussion, the filmmaker feels that shut-down due to COVID-19 is certainly a great disadvantage for films this year, however, the Tribeca award turned it around for him by giving it the recognition it would have otherwise gained. He says, “Everything has come to a halt. There are a lot of films that finished shoots or production or were close to being finished but now their future is uncertain. We don’t know how the theatrical market will be like when things resume. Perhaps, only the OTTs are doing well and are hungry for new content. I feel, the Tribeca award was a huge blessing for our film as it has generated interest in it. Now we hope we can have an actual physical premiere of the film soon.”

Manish says, “This year has been tough on everyone, hence, this positive news means a lot for people like us whose passion lies in art and cinema. We’re happy *Tryst with Destiny* is getting recognised on an international platform.”

This isn’t the first time Prashant’s films have received an international accolade. His 2015 directorial,

Umrika (translated as America) won the World Cinema Dramatic Audience Award at 2015 Sundance Film Festival. The film showcased how a small village in India hears tales of life in America through letters sent home by one of its residents. Given that Prashant has resided in various countries across the world, it would have certainly taken inspiration from some of his life’s instances. He agrees and says, “Yes, very much! As an Indian kid growing up abroad, I had always been confronted by ridiculous stereotypes and questions about ‘exotic’ India. I wanted to turn that around and portray America through stereotypes and clichés as a place equally exotic. I mean, what is more exotic — Thanksgiving or Holi? In some ways, I made *Umrika* for the international audience, especially European and American, which is ironic because it ended up releasing, getting a lot of recognition there but never had a proper release in India.”

Prashant’s other works like *Delhi in a Day* and the episode of *Made in Heaven* (A Marriage of Convenience), which showcased the marriage of an NRI guy with a local girl in Ludhiana — have revolved around social hierarchy, gender and individuals from different walks of life struggling to secure a better future for themselves. And so it seems to be a subject that Prashant has explored extensively in various ways. He agrees and says, “Yes, it’s a theme I keep coming back to somehow. I guess I just find the extent of the inequality outrageous. The pursuit of wealth at the expense of others bothers me. If there’s anything this outbreak should’ve shown us is that a society is best judged by how it treats its least fortunate.”

Well, having said that, there’s a new theme climbing into his portfolio of films — historic drama. The filmmaker is currently working on a web series that revolves around the 1997 Uphaar Cinema tragedy — *Trial by Fire*. So what led to this new venture? He tells us that it was his friend, “Sidharth Jain of Story Ink,” who introduced him to the eponymous book written by Neelam and Shekhar Krishnamoorthy — *Trial by Fire: The Tragic Tale of the Uphaar Fire Tragedy* — who lost their two children in the fire. He says, “I was quite moved by it. Apart from being a harrowing story of their personal loss, I also felt it was quite important as it dealt with subjects I feel are integral to progress. We are in the early stages of research but I am very excited to tell this story.”

WEBBED

BEN PLATT LIVE FROM RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL

Backed by a full band and a ready wit, actor Ben Platt opens up a very personal songbook onstage — numbers from his debut LP, *Sing to Me Instead*. The Netflix documentary releases on May 20.

HANNAH GADSBY: DOUGLAS

Hannah Gadsby returns for her second special and digs deep into the complexities of popularity, identity and her most unusual dog park encounter. The Netflix comedy special releases on May 26.

SPACE FORCE

A four-star general begrudgingly teams up with an eccentric scientist to get the US military’s newest agency — Space Force — ready for lift-off. Starring Steve Carell, John Malkovich and Ben Schwartz, the thriller series releases on Netflix on May 29.

LOCKED ON AN ISLAND

While the labourers on mainland could walk back home, howsoever excruciating the option, the lockdown posed a different kind of challenge to the ones working on the Andaman and Nicobar Island, says DENIS GILES

On March 24, the government announced a 21-day nation-wide lockdown in order to combat COVID-19 which was extended thrice subsequently. This unprecedented move left migrant workers across the states suddenly unemployed, creating fear and panic among them. So they started walking towards their villages carrying luggage overhead and children in their arms. According to a World Bank Report, the lockdown impacted the livelihoods of nearly 40 million internal migrants of the country.

Among the affected, there are many who were stuck away from the mainland on the Island of Andaman and Nicobar. A native of 24 Paragana district in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal, Jakir Hussain Pasha alias Rasheed has been working as a daily wage labourer on the island for the last couple of years. The 45-year-old had travelled thousands of miles in search of livelihood opportunities to support a family of three in his hometown. Skilled in masonry, Rasheed was able to earn approximately `1,000 daily, which was enough to support his stay in the island and sustain his family members.

The announcement of the complete lockdown changed his life and also of thousands of other migrant labourers, in the Andaman Islands, who were solely dependent on a daily wage.

The very first week saw migrant workers walking towards their houses, but for the ones like Rasheed, surrounded by the sea all around — even that was not an option.

With bare minimum ration at home, the labourers somehow managed a week without any income. Most of them used diesel for cooking but the closure of petrol pumps in the islands made their condition even more miserable. Helpless and hungry, the labourers were forced to beg. They started venturing out to the nearby colonies with their children and would ask for any help that the residents could provide. Many had tears in their eyes, as this was the first time that instead of work, they were asking for food. “We have never begged in our lives,” said Rasheed in a wavering voice.

It was here that eight young vol-



unteers came to the rescue of migrants and proved to be a blessing for the helpless and hungry. Hundreds lined up with their faces covered, adhering to the government's instructions of using masks to collect food from them. “The volunteers have come as angels to support us” said labourers with folded hands, adding, “When these youngsters saw us begging, they decided to collect provisions from people and serve cooked food to us. They are continuing to do so twice a day. We have no words to thank them.”

After the report on the situation of migrant labourers was published in newspapers, government officials led by the Member of Parliament of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Kuldeep Rai Sharma had rushed to the spot to take a stock of the situation. Ration was donated by him while the names and other details of the labourers were collected by the officials. But after the initial support,



the ration supply dried up. However, the youth volunteers did not flag and continued to support the stranded workers through individual contri-

butions from the society while the labourers eagerly waited to return home.

After almost a month, on May

1, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration announced that they would arrange special ships between Port Blair and Chennai to ferry stranded migrant workers, students, pilgrims and tourists. However, no ships or aircrafts materialised till May 14. While the migrants continue to remain on the islands, there are hundreds of islanders who are stranded in Chennai, Kolkata and other states, since the lockdown, waiting for the Andaman Administration to take a call. There have been several requests made by the public, political leaders, students and migrant workers to arrange for transportation but nothing has materialised as yet. In the name of transportation, only medicines, PPE, few critically ill patients and some dead bodies were the only lucky ones to be transported.

(The author is the editor of Andaman Chronicle.)

(Charkha Features)



Heal the world

Man's relationship with nature changed when he was influenced by lust, anger, greed and ego, says Rajyogi Brahmakumar Nikunj Ji

A lot has been spoken about Earth's energy imbalance in the last few years. However, with the climate change phenomena becoming increasingly apparent in the rising temperatures, melting of the Arctic sea ice, extreme weather events, heat waves, floods, droughts, storms, hurricanes and so on, it can be clearly said that the earth has been thrown out of balance. In layman's language, it can be said that earth is sick, but it's not clear as to how bad the fever is. Like a patient in a hospital, the earth's vital parameters are being closely monitored by climate scientists. Satellites track the shrinking of glaciers, weather stations maintain rainfall readings, buoys measure deep ocean temperatures while aircrafts monitor the levels of atmospheric gases.

Climate change and global warming are sometimes thought of as things that will happen in the future. But scientists are finding increasing evidence that the planet is transforming now — and that people must take a large share of the blame for this phenomena. They further explain that excessive carbon emissions through industrial, vehicular pollution, use of CFCs and plundering of forests and natural resources have depleted the ozone layer. This has trapped more and more of solar radiations inside the earth's atmosphere. As a result, the earth is heating up which has begun to trigger a chain of natural upheavals like floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and land slides in the recent times.

We are aware that nature has served man from the beginning of human life on this planet. Hence, one cannot imagine human existence without the support of nature. Like a caring mother, nature gives us food that nourishes and sustains our bodies as also water that cleanses and gives us life. It provides fresh air to supply us with oxygen, which is vital to keep bodily functions going. It provides materials too — from hay, firewood and timber to rubber, gum, minerals and countless other things— that have made our lives so easier.

When one thinks about how much humanity is still served by nature inspite of man's degradation that has brought about the phenomenon of climate change, one begins to wonder how marvellous nature must have been in its original, unpolluted state. Descriptions made in scriptures about the Golden Age speak of time when the land yielded food without the peasants having to toil as today. Trees yielded abundant fruits while crop disease and famine were unheard of. Agriculture at that time did not require heavy investment in terms of labour or inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides or herbicides. Nor was it dependent on irrigation systems, since the soil



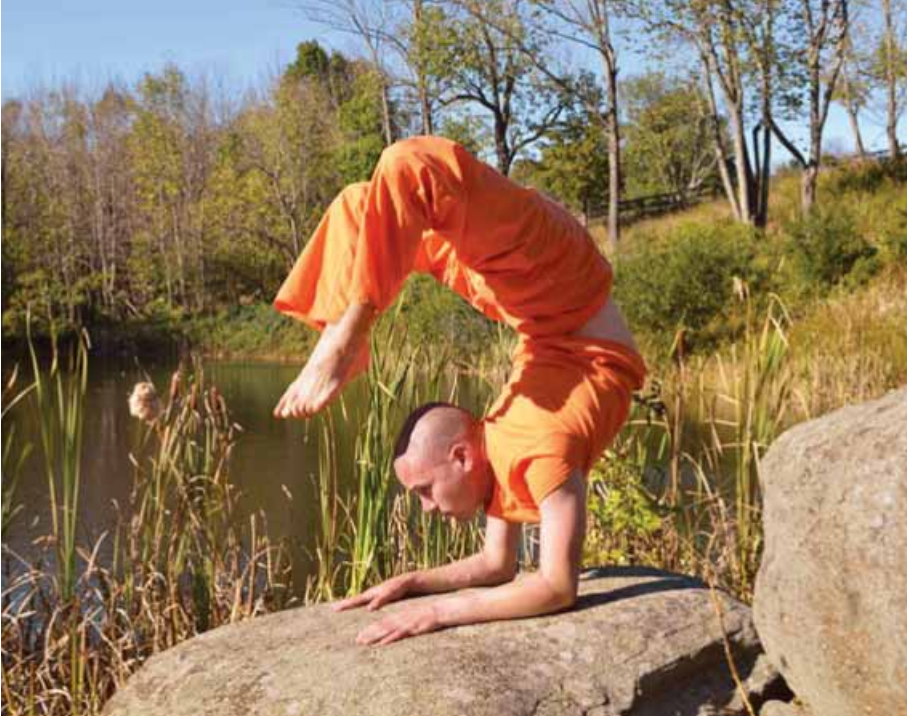
was fertile and produced bountiful harvests, and all the water required was provided by rains, which never failed. Even human bodies, which are made of the five elements, were perfect in that age and hence, disease, deformity and debility were unknown to humans of that time. So then, what caused man to descend from such a period of bliss to the present times of natural chaos? When man fell from divine virtues and came under the influence of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego, his relationship with himself, with others and with nature changed. Instead of revering her as an ever bestowing mother, he started to exploit her to meet his insatiable desires. Now, when she can take no more, nature is revolting through such calamities causing massive loss to life and property resulting in great human suffering.

Years of research by environmental scientists have proven that human consciousness plays a very vital role in shaping the environment. The point to be noted here is that human nature influences and creates external nature or the environment. The environmental pollution that we see today is actually seeded in mental pollution. This also means that if humans return to their original nature of peace, purity and love, the environment would automatically get restored to its original harmony. But for this transition to take place, a great cleansing process needs to be set in motion. Taking cue from the world scenario, it is high time that humans endeavour to connect themselves to their original nature of purity and peace. This would help them in treating others and the environment with love and dignity and make them obedient to natural laws. However, if humans continue with their present ways, nature will take it upon itself to set things right and restore the planet's ecological balance. It will bring earth back to its original, pure and bountiful state, once again ushering in the Golden Age, where man and nature will exist in complete harmony. But do we really need mother nature to turn so furious? Can't we show some affection towards our mother who has given us so much? Just think about it.

While shooting his film, *Yoga for Health & Global Harmony*, filmmaker, art historian and photographer **BENOY K BEHL** realised that yoga helps us find ourselves

Yoga takes away each perception of the ever-changing material world while helping us find peace and bliss deep within us. Across the world, the concepts of Indian philosophy are being accepted by people, through yoga. It is the path towards knowledge, which begins with the physical dimension. A lot of people in different countries have found it easier to go back to the Indian roots, through yoga. It is like a wedge which introduces deep knowledge beginning with the physical dimensions of *asanas*. We gain control over our body, breath, emotions and mind to gradually

DISCOVER YOURSELF



awaken our knowledge of unity (the meaning of yoga is to unify).

There are four paths of

yoga: karma yoga, the path of selfless actions in the world; *bhakti* yoga, the path of losing one's ego by surrendering

and devoting oneself; *raja* yoga, the path of *pranayama* and the *asanas*, leading to meditation; and *gnana* yoga,

the path to salvation through knowledge.

Tulku Sherdor, New York, Director, Blazing Wisdom Institute says in an interview: “Whether you are a Tibetan or an Indian or an American or from some other place, everyone's mind functions in a similar manner. We all seek happiness and avoid suffering, this is universal. Therefore, anything which is universal discovers the actual, reliable, scientifically-verifiable sources of happiness and suffering.

This is where Buddha and other saints proved themselves to be great scientists as they understood the universal feelings in such a way that they transmitted and shared their knowledge with others so that everyone realised the same things.

We still hope that at the end of this road there would be some final and perfect payoff. For instance, if we have delicious food whether its nutritious or not, at the end you will be satisfied. But the problem here is, we

haven't figured out how to stop or when to stop or look in a different direction and this is what yoga is here for.”

In another interview in the film, Dr Ananda Balayogi who is a yoga expert and doctor from Puducherry says: “If you start becoming content with whatever you have in life, you will suddenly realise that you have the best partner, children and home. You become the best version of yourself and your life will be amazing.”

In the next interview Padma Bhushan awardee Dr David Frawley, Santa Fe, USA, yoga and Ayurveda expert says, “Yoga helps us discover ourselves. It wants us to know ourselves in such a way that we do not rely upon the interpretations or opinions of others but can know our realities ourselves.

The Vedic philosophy teaches us that the entire creation is born out of *ananda* or bliss. The overflowing of bliss, peace, delight and the power of consciousness, manifests itself as the universe.

It also teaches us to awaken happiness so that we find it in our own self and everything around us and not look for it externally.”

Creativity is seeing the same thing but thinking differently.
—APJ Abdul Kalam

BINGE DRINKING CAN LEAD TO DRUNKOREXIA

Whether it is mojito or a simple glass of fizz, if you find yourself bingeing on more than a few, you could be putting your physical and mental health at risk because binge drinking can contribute to drunkorexia, say researchers in a study that involved young women.

Drunkorexia is a damaging and dangerous behaviour where disordered patterns of eating are used to offset negative effects of consuming excess alcohol, such as gaining weight.

After examining the drinking patterns of 479 female Australian university students aged 18-24 years, researchers found that a staggering 82.7 per cent of students surveyed had engaged in drunkorexic behaviours over the past three months.

Excess alcohol consumption combined with restrictive and disordered eating patterns is extremely dangerous and can dramatically increase the risk of developing serious physical and psychological consequences.



PERITONEAL DIALYSIS BOON FOR KIDNEY PATIENTS

For 60-year-old Fatima, (name changed) who is a kidney patient, her nightmare of contracting Coronavirus turned a reality recently.

A resident of Safdarjung enclave told, “Two to three visits to the hospital for a four hour long sessions per dialysis were already quite painful, the pandemic situation had instilled a sense of fear in me that I might contract the virus, and that really happened.” The virus has thrown unique challenges, particularly Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) patients, who are under haemodialysis.

“As a solution to the current situation, Peritoneal Dialysis (PD) offers dialysis which can be done at home by the patient. There are multiple benefits of PD, most notably, it enables to maintain lifestyle and independence while offering potentially better clinical outcomes at a substantially minimal cost,” said Dr AK Bhalla, co-chairperson, Department of Nephrology of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.



STRONG RELATIONSHIPS HELP ADULTS STAY ACTIVE

Strong relationships can help adults stay active in older age, say researchers, suggesting that relationships are key to influencing positive health and should not be forgotten during the social distancing times.

The results, published in the Journal of Aging and Physical Activity, show that participants with higher educational attainment, a strong relationship with a life partner or a network of close friends were significantly more likely to engage in regular physical activity.

“We wanted to better understand how adults' levels of physical activity are affected by other aspects of their lives,” said lead author Chevelle Davis from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the US.

“Older adults who experience social isolation are at greater risk of depression, cognitive decline and other poor health outcomes. We must find innovative ways to maintain connectedness and physical activity, while also following public health guidelines,” said study co-author Catherine Pirkle.



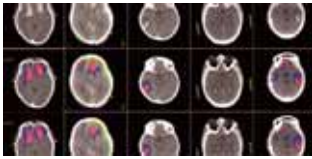
AI ALGORITHM TO SPOT BRAIN INJURIES

Researchers claim they have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm that can detect different types of brain injuries.

The research team from the University of Cambridge and Imperial College London, have clinically validated and tested the AI on large sets of CT scans and found that it was successfully able to detect, segment, quantify and differentiate different types of brain lesions.

The results, published in the journal ‘The Lancet Digital Health’, could be useful in large-scale research studies, for developing more personalised treatments for head injuries and, with further validation, could be useful in certain clinical scenarios, such as those where radiological expertise is at a premium.

“CT is an incredibly important diagnostic tool, but it's rarely used quantitatively,” said study co-senior author David Menon, Professor at Cambridge University in the UK.



DOGS GO THROUGH PUBERTY JUST LIKE HUMANS

Typical teenage behaviour doesn't just occur in humans, it happens in dogs too, say researchers, adding that adolescent dogs can have changes in their mood just like teenagers can be moody or unpredictable.

The study, published in the Biology Letters, found that dogs were more likely to ignore commands given by their caregiver and were harder to train at the age of eight months when they are going through puberty. This behaviour was more pronounced in dogs who were insecure about their owners.

“This is a very important time in a dog's life. This is when dogs are often re-homed because they are no longer a cute little puppy and suddenly, their owners find they are more challenging and they can no longer control them or train them,” said study researcher Lucy Asher from the Newcastle University in the UK.





GLAD TO BE BACK

Plea, Thuram take Borussia Mönchengladbach to third in Bundesliga table

AGENCIES ■ FRANKFURT

Borussia Mönchengladbach resumed their Bundesliga campaign in impressive fashion, Alassane Plea and Marcus Thuram inspiring a 3-1 win at Eintracht Frankfurt that lifts them above RB Leipzig.

Earlier on the Bundesliga's first day back following the coronavirus-enforced hiatus, Julian Nagelsmann's Leipzig were held to a 1-1 draw by Freiburg - and Gladbach took full advantage, looking every bit Champions League hopefuls.

The hosts failed to even keep Gladbach at bay for a full minute as Plea put the visitors in front, while Thuram - a key player before the suspension in proceedings - knocked in his seventh in the league this season soon after.

Substitute Andre Silva pulled one back for the hosts late one, but Ramy Bensebaini had already effectively secured a comfortable win for Marco Rose's side with a penalty.

Frankfurt had suffered three successive Bundesliga defeats prior to the break, and within 34 seconds of

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kick-off that run looked destined to continue - Plea finding the bottom-left corner despite being unbalanced after a one-two with Jonas Hofmann.

It was 2-0 just six minutes later as Bensebaini turned cleverly in the box and squeezed the ball across the face of goal for Thuram to tap in.

Filip Kostic appeared the Frankfurt player most likely to instigate a revival, but his wicked 24th-minute free-kick was pushed away by Yann Sommer, whose only other first-half save kept out Almamy Toure's tame effort from a tight angle just before the interval.

Adi Hutter introduced Silva for the ineffective Djibril Sow at half-time and Frankfurt had a little more presence in attack as a result, though not to the extent that Gladbach's lead ever looked under threat.

The visitors added a third through the lively Bensebaini, who converted from the spot after Brel Embolo was barged over by Evan Ndicka.

Silva grabbed a well-taken consolation with nine minutes to go, though it failed to inspire a comeback.



RCB will be ready whenever IPL happens : Hesson

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mike Hesson, Royal Challengers Bangalore's director of cricket operations, is still hopeful of the IPL taking place this year despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and said his franchise will be ready when it happens.

The IPL, which was originally scheduled to be held from March 29 to May 24, was indefinitely postponed by the BCCI due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in India and subsequent lockdown announced by the government.

"We're still really hopeful that things will evolve and there will be an IPL this year

and if it happens, then I can assure you that RCB will be ready," an optimistic Hesson said on Star Sports show 'Cricket Connected'.

Hesson, who has formerly coached New Zealand, said that things were rightly put on hold in view of the unprecedented health crisis.

"We were obviously a week away from coming into camp, like everybody else, feeling well advanced in terms of our planning.

"Quite rightfully, everything has been put on hold and everybody is going about their work. There are obviously other priorities at the moment that people are focussing on," added the 45-year-old.



T20 WC delay will open door for IPL

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia captain Mark Taylor feels eventually this year's ICC T20 World Cup would be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, opening the doors for BCCI to host lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) in that time slot.

The ICC T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in Australia from October 18 to November 15, is shrouded in uncertainty even as some sporting action has begun with strict guidelines in place. Taylor said if postponed IPL is held, the travel will be a player's individual responsibility and not his national Board's.

"I think that's the most likely scenario (postponement of T20 World Cup) because 15 teams planning to come to Australia between October and November, 45 matches over a proposed seven venues, national travel is going to be extremely difficult in the world we are living in," Taylor said.

"14 days isolation before that makes it even harder. More than likely that event is not going ahead. So if the ICC decides to postpone the event that will open the door for the BCCI to say that we will have our IPL is India which actually puts the onus back on individuals then rather than nations moving whole teams over to a certain country."

The 55-year-old former opener said if the IPL is favoured over T20 World Cup, it opens up serious negotiation opportunities for Cricket Australia with BCCI for the already-planned series Down Under.

"So that is certainly a possibility or probability. Cricket Australia will obviously want the T20 World Cup but at the same time will be working hard with India that if their players go there for IPL, they will want India to come to Australia for our summer of cricket next year," Taylor said.

"Cricket in a way is fortunate with the timing. They have now got some time to do some planning. I have no doubt that CA will now be thinking about IPL and not T20 World Cup. They want India in this country. That's what they want and they are already talking about Adelaide Oval as a hub."

Asked if it's feasible to host the entire series in one venue, he said: "I think it is, if you have to pick one state you probably pick Adelaide. They have got a hotel attached to the ground."

The Indian cricket team is scheduled to tour Australia from October 2020 to January 2021 for a full series that includes four Test matches as part of the World Test Championships besides three ODIs and as many T20Is.

Adapt, play in empty stadiums: Neesham

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

With cricket's finances taking a hit due to the COVID-19 pandemic, New Zealand all-rounder Jimmy Neesham says they will have to "adapt" to playing before empty stadiums to save the sport from financial ruin.

Cricket boards of England and Australia, which drive the sport's economy along with India, are fearing they could face a severe financial crisis due to postponement of events leading

to slashing of revenues.

Elite-level cricketing action looks unlikely to resume anytime soon and the T20 World Cup, scheduled for October and November, is under a cloud of uncertainty.

"If the situation is that the only way to play cricket is behind closed doors then I think it is something that we have to adapt to as players," Neesham told ESPNcricinfo.

Both Cricket Australia and England & Wales Cricket Board have felt the strain after the pan-



demical brought all cricket activities to a grinding halt.

Considering the extraordinary situation, the 29-year-old Neesham said, "The reality is that it is a huge financial challenge for a lot of cricket boards to still run without any revenue coming in from games.

"So obviously we want to try and keep the sport in as good a state as it can be in. If that means playing games behind closed doors, the guys just need to suck it up and get it done."

The New Zealander, however,

added nothing can beat playing in front of fans.

"Certainly all things considered you would rather have fans in the ground. It adds a lot to the game and to the spectacle. But you want to adapt to the situation that is given to you," he said.

The pandemic, which originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in Hubei province, has led to either cancellation or postponement of all sporting events worldwide, including the Tokyo Olympics.

Pak agrees to tour Eng in July

PTI ■ KARACHI

The Pakistan Cricket Board has agreed to a Test and T20 tour of the coronavirus-ravaged England in July but will not force players to agree for the assignment should they have reservations owing to the pandemic.

PCB chief executive Wasim Khan told a news channel that Pakistan has agreed "in principle" to the tour comprising three Tests and three T20 Internationals.

"We had a very detailed and comprehensive discussion with the ECB on Friday regarding the tour and PCB has now agreed in principle to send our cricket team to England in July," Wasim said.

During the discussions with the English board held via video link on Friday, it was agreed that Pakistan would play the matches behind closed doors at grounds which have hotels inside the ground. But players won't be made to go against their wishes.

"If a player doesn't want to go, we



will accept their decision and take no disciplinary action," Khan said, adding, however, that based on his information,

every player wants to join the tour.

Khan said 25 players will travel to England on four chartered flights in the

first week of July and the players will be put in quarantine.

"Manchester and Southampton will be the likely venues for the Test series and the ECB will announce a third venue soon," Khan said.

"Bio-secure arrangements will be made by the host country and medical staff will remain with our team throughout the tour. We will test all our players and regular temperature checks will be ensured. It's very important that cricket is revived during these challenging times," he added.

Khan said he will brief Test captain Azhar Ali and ODI and T20 captain Babar Azam on the tour next week, adding that all players will be briefed fully on England's preparations for the tour.

He also said clearance would be sought from the government before going on tour.

The England and Wales Cricket Board is struggling to overcome a financial crisis with the cricket season on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Too early to compare Azam & Kohli: Khan

IANS ■ KARACHI

Former Pakistan captain Younis Khan feels Babar Azam cannot be compared to Virat Kohli just yet as he still has a long way to go. Babar, 25, was recently appointed as Pakistan ODI captain. He was already the T20 skipper of the side.

While 31-year-old Kohli is widely regarded as the current best batsmen in the world across formats, Babar has been hailed by commentators and experts as the next big thing in batting.

"You see, Kohli - who is now 31 and at the peak of his career - has been in international cricket for over a decade and has proved himself in all conditions. The 70 international centuries that he has scored is a testimony to his class and abilities," Younis was quoted as saying by Gulf News.

"Babar, on the other hand, made his international debut barely five years back. He already has 16 centuries under his belt and shows very good averages in both Tests and ODIs, but it will be unfair to start comparing the two right now. If you have to, compare Babar five years (from now) with the dominance that Kohli is showing in his game today," he added.

Younis further said Babar's eagerness to learn will take him far.

"Babar made his debut during the last two to three years of my career and I was really impressed by his humility. I have always felt that the more humble you are, you can achieve bigger goals in your life," he said.

"It's a young team that he has to lead, though there could be a few players senior in age to him. He has to be protective about the team and take it forward," he advised.



I will probably start with coaching going forward: Yuvraj

IANS ■ MUMBAI

Ace former India batsman Yuvraj Singh on Sunday expressed his desire to coach, saying he can work on players' mindset especially in limited-overs cricket which he has bossed for close to decades.

"I will probably start with that (coaching). I am more keen on coaching than doing commentary," Yuvraj told former England batsman Kevin Pietersen during an Instagram Live chat.

"I have more insight in limited-overs cricket and I can share my knowledge with players coming to bat at No.4, 5, 6 as to what sort of mindset they should have," said the 38-year-old who has helped India win the 2007 T20 and 2011 ODI World Cups with stellar performances.

Yuvraj called time on his illustrious career last year. The dashing left-hander had previously said the current Indian team needs a psychologist who can take care of the mental side of players.

"I will probably start by being a



mentor and then if it goes well maybe full time coaching," said Yuvraj.

Pietersen, who is now into commentary, asked Yuvraj to join him.

"I thought I will take a break for a year. Play certain tournaments which makes sense. I will join you guys and learn commentary first. Not sure how I will do as a commen-

tator. So I will learn from you guys," said Yuvraj, smiling.

He said he is happily spending time with family at the moment and hopefully will become a father soon.

"I am now spending time with family. I spent a lot of time on the park. Hopefully become a father and then come back on the park (coaching or commentary)."

Ankita, Sharan nominated for Arjuna award

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian Games medal winners Ankita Raina and Divij Sharan are set to be nominated for the Arjuna award by the national tennis federation, which plans to send former Davis Cup coach Nandan Bal's name for the Dhyan Chand honour.

The 27-year-old Ankita had won a women's singles Bronze medal at the 2018 edition of the Asian Games and also dished out a strong performance in the Fed Cup, where she played a key role in India's qualification to the World Group play-offs for the first time.

Delhi-lad Sharan had won gold medal in the men's doubles event in Jakarta along with compatriot Rohan Bopanna. He also became India's top doubles player in October 2019 before Bopanna took back the position.

The 34-year-old also won two ATP titles in the 2019 season — Tata Open Maharashtra in Pune with Bopanna and at St. Petersburg with Igor Zelenay.

"They are eligible and most deserving this year for the Arjuna honour. We will recommend their nomination," All India Tennis Association (AITA) Secretary General Hironmoy Chatterjee told PTI.

Ankita grabbed the spotlight with her gritty performance during the 2018 Fed Cup where she remained unbeaten in singles.

Since then she has become India's best singles player on the WTA and ITF circuit, winning six USD 25k level titles and also achieved a career-best singles rank of 160 in March this year.



At this year's Fed Cup, Ankita played eight matches in five days, winning two singles and three crucial doubles games with the seasoned Sania Mirza to help India qualify for the play-offs for the first time.

Bopanna was the last tennis player to get the Arjuna award in 2018.

The AITA is still deliberating whether Bal's application be sent for Dronacharya award or Dhyan Chand award, which is meant to honour lifetime contributions.

"We are contemplating which category is better-suited for Nandan," said Chatterjee.

However, reliable sources in the All India Tennis Association (AITA) told PTI that Bal's application will be sent for the Dhyan Chand honour.