

OPINION 6
BUGLE FOR
MORE REFORMS

MONEY 9
SENSEX BUILDS ON
GAINS, JUMPS 622 PTS

SPORT 12
NEUER EXTENDS
BAYERN STAY

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY MAY 21, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



RUBY ROSE
QUITS
BATWOMAN
10 VIVACITY

*Late City Vol. 30 Issue 140
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

Established 1864

Published From

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR

RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH

DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Amphan batters Bengal, Odisha Cyclone makes landfall in Digha, kills 6 in 2 States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Extremely severe cyclonic storm “Amphan” made a landfall at Digha in West Bengal on Wednesday, leaving a trail of destruction which led to the death of three persons in the State. The cyclone claimed three lives in Odisha also.

The cyclone with wind speed of 160-170 kmph, gusting to 190 kmph coupled with heavy rain hit the Digha coast in East Medinipur district around 2.30 pm, officials said.

The cyclone barreled through coastal districts of West Bengal, unleashing copious rain and windstorm, blowing away thatched houses, uprooting trees, electric poles and swamping low lying towns and villages, officials said.

High velocity wind speed up to 120 km per hour uprooted hundreds of tree, electric poles and telecom infrastructure and flattening fragile structure. Amphan reached Kolkata with wind speed up to 120 km per hour at 7 pm on Wednesday evening, damaging several buildings.

As per reports, three deaths have been reported from Balasore, Bhadrak and Kendrapara districts while three person, including two women were killed in Howrah district and Minakhan area of North 24 Parganas district due to uprooting of trees.

Reports arriving in Kolkata from North and South 24 Parganas and East Midnapore



A man covers himself with a plastic sheet and walks in the rain ahead of Cyclone Amphan landfall, at Bhadrak district in Odisha on Wednesday

AP

said roofs of thatched houses were blown away, and twisted electric poles and broken and uprooted trees bore testimony to the devastation. Streets and homes in low lying areas of Kolkata were swamped with rainwater. A wall collapsed in Howrah near Union Minister Babul Supriyo's residence and damaged several vehicle parked there.

The muddy Hooghly river

was rising under dark skies, while in the coastal resort of Digha, large waves were pounding the shore. Three coastal districts — South and North 24 Parganas and East Midnapore — will be the worst affected, besides, vast swathes of South Bengal districts such as Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, West Midnapore were the worst affected. Areas such as Sagar Island, Kakdwip and

Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas and Digha and Haldia in East Midnapore were battered by the storm, uprooting trees and electric poles and destroying many shacks.

Despite losing its force a bit since Tuesday, the storm, which was categorised as super cyclone at one point of time, has left the two States on edge as it hollered on its destructive path over the Bay of Bengal.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General Mrityunjay Mohapatra, who jointly addressed the media with NDRF director general SN Pradhan, said the eye of Amphan, which is 30 km in diameter, has made landfall at around 2.30 pm between Digha in West Bengal and Hatiya Island in Bangladesh.

Continued on Page 2

You can fly again in India from May 25

Domestic flights to resume operation in calibrated manner after 60 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In further relaxation of lockdown rules, the Ministry of Civil Aviation is all set to start domestic flight operations from May 25 in a calibrated manner.

Currently, only cargo and evacuation flight services are allowed. The Ministry will soon be announcing the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for domestic air travel.

In a tweet, Union Minister for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri said all airports and air carriers are being informed to be ready for operations from May 25. The standard operating procedures for passenger movement will be separately issued by the Ministry, Puri said.

The Minister said only a small percentage of the total number of domestic flights will be operated at first and the number of flights will be increased later, depending on the initial experience. He said the option of keeping the middle seats on flights vacant is not a viable one.

“Even if you keep the middle seat vacant, you'll still have a situation where the prescribed distance for social dis-



tancing isn't followed. If you were to do it then you'd have to hike up the price of airline tickets by 33 per cent,” Puri said.

The announcement came amid the fourth phase of the lockdown which was imposed by the Government on March 25 in order to combat the novel coronavirus outbreak in the country.

The AAI on Sunday had also issued guidelines for passengers once the flight services resume that include making mandatorily downloading of Aarogya Setu app on mobile phones for travelling by air, do a web-check in and carry a print out of their boarding pass before heading to the airport to catch a flight.

It also stated that air travelers must maintain a distance of four feet from co-passengers, wear a mask and other protective gear, wash or sanitise their hands frequently and carry a

350 ml bottle of sanitiser all the time.

The aviation sector has been hit hard by the pandemic as various countries, including India, decided to suspend commercial flights completely to curb the spread of the virus.

Since March 25, Indian airlines have taken steps like firing expat pilots, announcing pay cuts and leave without pay for employees to conserve cash.

The first, second and third phase of lockdown were between March 25-April 14, April 15-May 3 and May 4-May 17, respectively. The fourth phase started from May 18 and would end on May 31.

Cargo flights, medical evacuation flights, offshore helicopter operations and special flights approved by the aviation regulator DGCA have been allowed to operate as usual during the lockdown period.

5,531 new cases, 132 deaths on Wed Maharashtra witnesses 2,250 new Covid-19 cases and 65 deaths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Maharashtra witnessing 2,250 new Covid-19 cases and 65 deaths on Wednesday, the country registered total of 5,531 new cases 132 deaths. The total cases in India stood at 1,12,012 and 45,422 deaths with Uttar Pradesh adding 249 cases and 4 deaths on Wednesday. Mumbai city alone witnessed 1,372 more cases with 41 deaths.

Meanwhile coronavirus has infected more than 5 million people across the world.

After Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu witnessed 743 cases, followed by Delhi 534 new cases and Gujarat 398 confirmed cases. Gujarat and Delhi had 30 and 10 deaths respectively. This was the biggest single day spike for Delhi.

Apart from these States, out of the total around 5,249 new Covid-cases, 270 new cases were reported from Madhya Pradesh, 142 cases from West Bengal, 107 from Rajasthan. Andhra Pradesh witnessed 71 new cases. After registering low numbers for the last few days Kerala saw 24 new

Covid-19
TOTAL CASES: 1,12,012
DEATHS: 3,434
RECOVERED: 45,422

cases on Wednesday while Bihar reported 60 new cases.

As per the latest data out of a total of 1,11,730 confirmed cases, 62,871 are active cases and 45,422 people have recovered till date. Out of the total 3,426 deaths in India, more than 40 per cent deaths (1,390) are from Maharashtra alone. After Maharashtra, Gujarat has witnessed the maximum number of deaths with a total of 749. Madhya Pradesh has reported 267 deaths with 9 on Wednesday.

West Bengal has seen total of 253 deaths, followed by Delhi 176 deaths and Rajasthan

143 deaths and Uttar Pradesh 143 deaths. Among the double digit deaths, Tamil Nadu's tally reached 88 with three more deaths on Wednesday. Andhra Pradesh has a total death count of 53 and Telangana 38 and neighbouring Karnataka 41.

Meanwhile situation in North Eastern region is in control with new 13 cases in Assam and 11 new patients in Manipur. Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have 12 and 11 new patients on Wednesday. Jammu & Kashmir also have 73 new patients tested as positive with one death, taking the total death tally to 18.

Noida-Delhi border to remain sealed

Noida: The Noida-Delhi border will remain sealed except for movement of people associated with exempted services, the Gautam Buddh Nagar administration said on Wednesday in new guidelines issued for the lockdown till May 31. More details for movement between Noida and Delhi have been sought from the UP Government and till then the status quo shall be in place,” the guidelines stated.

MHA grants exemption to conduct CBSE Board exams for Class X, XII

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking into consideration the academic interest of large number of students, the Centre has decided to grant lockdown exemption to conduct Board Examinations for Classes 10th and 12th.

Home Minister Amit Shah said that the pending CBSE Class 10 and Class 12 board exams can be conducted during the nationwide lockdown in place to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Two days ago, the HRD Ministry announced the schedule of pending examination of the CBSE board exams for Class 10 and 12. The examinations will be conducted between July 1 to July 15 for 29 major subjects — including six exams for Class 10 students for North-East Delhi and 12 subjects for students of Class 12 to be held across the country.

While wearing of face masks by teachers, staff and students will be mandatory, there shall be provision of

thermal screening and sanitizer at the centres and social distancing in all the examination centres.

Taking to Twitter, Shah also said that the examination process has been exempted from the lockdown measures with few conditions like social distancing, wearing of face mask among others for the safety of the students and teachers.

UPSC to decide on June 5 date of civil services prelims exam

New Delhi: The date for this year's civil services preliminary examination is likely to be decided on June 5, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has said. The test, which was scheduled to be held on May 31, has been deferred due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

Corona coming from India ‘more lethal’ than those from China: Nepal PM Oli

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has said the coronavirus coming from India is “more lethal” than those from China and Italy and blamed the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the Himalayan nation on those sneaking into the country from India, as the total number of Covid-19 cases jumped to 427 on Wednesday.

Speaking about the pandemic in Parliament on Tuesday, Oli said it has become very difficult for Nepal to contain the spread of the deadly virus due to the flow of people from outside.

“Many coronavirus infected patients have entered Nepal. The virus came from outside, as we did not have here before. We could not stop infiltration of people from outside the border,” he said.

Oli said that the biggest challenge facing the country today is the rising number of coronavirus cases and blamed the rising number of coron-



avirus cases on individuals breaking the nationwide lockdown, especially those sneaking into Nepal from India.

“The coronavirus coming from India are more lethal than those from China and Italy,” he said.

“Those who are coming from India through illegal channels are spreading the virus in the country and some local representatives and party leaders are responsible for bringing in people from India without proper testing,” Oli was quoted as saying by the Kathmandu Post.

CAPSULE

2 BSF JAWANS MARTYRED IN TERRORIST ATTACK

Srinagar: Two BSF personnel were killed when terrorists fired upon them in Ganderbal district of J&K on Wednesday, officials said. Motorcycle-borne terrorists fired upon the BSF jawans at a picket in Pandach area.

CABINET OK'S ₹10K CR FOR MICRO FOOD UNITS

New Delhi: The Union Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday gave approval for a new central scheme with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore for providing credit-linked subsidy to 2 lakh micro food processing units.

US-BASED FIRM LEADS COVID-19 VACCINE RACE

New Delhi: As scientists across the world work frantically to find a vaccine against Covid-19, which continues its rapid global spread, all eyes are on US-based company Moderna's encouraging early results on a small group of volunteers.

Cong recalls its buses, slams BJP for fiasco

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Locked in a bitter war of words with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the issue of running buses to ferry migrants home, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday recalled the buses she had arranged for migrants after the Congress waited till 4 pm for Uttar Pradesh to allow them in.

The Congress said it had lined up hundreds of buses at Delhi's border since morning. However, the UP Government found fault in the list of buses as many were found to be autos and ambulances.

“If you want to use it then please do so and use the BJP flags, otherwise, they will be sent back but the Congress and its workers will continue to help the migrants with food and all possible help,” she said, speak-



ing shortly before the “4 pm deadline”.

Terming as “shameless” the politics of the BJP and Yogi Adityanath over the issue of providing buses for ferrying migrants to the State, Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi alleged the “Ajay Bisht Government” is creating hurdles in the Congress help reaching migrants in terms of buses for ferrying them home as they walk on the roads without food and water in the summer heat of May. Ajay Bisht is the real name of Yogi Adityanath.

India, China commanders in talks to defuse LAC tension

Chinese start bringing more troops in area near Galwan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Local commanders of Indian Land Chinese Armies are holding talks to defuse simmering tension in some pockets of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. While the face-off on the “Finger Five” area of Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh on May 5 and 6 leading to a brawl between troops of both sides has more or less ended with personnel moving back, the Chinese have now started bringing in more troops in an area near Galwan river.

The Chinese have pitched tents some distance away from the Indian positions leading to tension. This region in Ladakh has seen stand-offs in the past besides the two armies fighting the 1962 war there too.

Not willing to take any chances and getting caught off-guard, the Indian side too has bolstered its troops and is maintaining a close vigil on the Chinese activities. However, the Chinese, so far, have not tried to transgress into the Indian territory, sources said here on Wednesday.

Sources here said the Chinese enhanced their activities by bringing in more troops and pitching tents almost ten days back in the strategically important Galwan valley. This build up leading to more construction activities, including roads and permanent structure,

may also start in the disputed region, sources said. However, the Chinese claim the Indians entered its territory and built fortifications.

Continued on Page 2

China's behaviour on all borders disturbing: US

New Delhi: The US on Tuesday said border disputes with China — be it in Ladakh or in the South China Sea — are a “reminder of the threat by China”. The strong statement by Alice Wells, outgoing Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, came days after several instances of Chinese incursion by land and air, one of which led to a face-off between Indian and Chinese troops.

5 Haryana cops hurt in stone pelting near Kapashera border

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Police have continued to bear the brunt of lockdown. In a new case on Wednesday, five Haryana police personnel were injured when some people from Delhi's Kapashera allegedly pelted stones at them after trying to forcibly enter the State's territory, officials said.

There were reports that some people, stated to be workers, wanted to travel to Udyog Vihar in Gurugram but were stopped by the Haryana Police at the Delhi-Gurugram border.

However, some of them tried to force their way despite strict measures put in place by Haryana on its borders and clashed with the police. In the

incident, five policemen were injured, the officials said.

Haryana's Home Minister Anil Vij said there has been a stone pelting incident at Delhi's Kapashera border with Haryana. He said some people tried to enter the border into Haryana but were stopped.

“They wanted the borders to be opened for them to cross into Haryana. They pelted stones at Haryana police personnel,” Vij said.

“I said under no circumstances will we open the border. The Delhi High Court had given us directions to allow inter-state movement for certain categories like doctors, drivers of vehicles with essentials, Delhi municipal committee worker staff, medical staff etc,” he said.

Screening of migrant workers begins

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the movement of migrant labourers, who wish to go at their native homes, the Delhi Police on Wednesday said that the Screening Centres for migrant labourers have started full scale operations tall over Delhi for speedy facilitation of transit of migrant labourers going through trains.

According to police, the

Government planned 25 Shramik Trains departing from three different railway stations (New Delhi, Old Delhi and Anand Vihar Railway Station). Thirteen (13) trains are leaving for UP and eleven (11) for Bihar apart from those for Trivandrum and other places. "To ease migrants distress, the government further created 30 screening centres for proper screening of migrant labourers in all the 11 Revenue

Districts of Delhi Government. This gave a systematic platform for speedy screening of passengers for different destinations," said police.

"All these Screening Centres for migrant labourers have started full scale operations all over Delhi for speedy facilitation of transit of migrant labourers. Migrant labourers already registered are being called for screening at the centers," said a seniors police offi-

cial.

"Adequate police arrangement has been made at each screening centre which is being supervised by senior officers including Addl. DCsP and ACsP. Few centres were inspected by Joint CP/Ranges to ensure that the entire process is smooth and proper care is being provided. It is being ensured that the entire process is completed in an orderly manner with least hardship to the migrant labourers. Proper queue management and social distancing is being ensured at all these centres," said the senior police official.

"Adequate facilities like food and water have been provided. After proper screening, the migrants are being taken to dedicated buses in terms of destinations and further transported to railway station. Local police alongwith staff of DCP/Railways are assisting the entire process" he added.

"Delhi Police has also taken



a positive step to facilitate the entire process. Those who have not been able to register have been provided with relief at various schools, complexes identified by the administration. The local police has taken the help of various groups like corona volunteers, police mitras and representatives of

associations in helping the migrants to register themselves," said the senior police official further added.

"The majority of the migrants belong to Bihar & Uttar Pradesh while some belong to Rajasthan, West Bengal, Kerala and Jammu & Kashmir," said police.

Sisodia seeks 262 trains in 4 days to send back migrants

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday wrote to the Ministry of Railways to provide 262 trains in the next four days to send migrants back to their hometowns.

According to the Delhi Government' data, most of the migrants registering are residents of Bihar (1,95,746) and Uttar Pradesh (1,84,997).

"Today, around 37,500 migrants were sent back to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other states," said Sisodia.

Around 4 lakh people have registered on the Delhi government's e-portal to go back to their native states from Delhi. Around 25 trains left

from Delhi for different states today to carry 37500 migrants back to their hometowns, with 11 trains each being sent to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

An order had been issued by the Delhi government directing for publicizing the web link <https://epass.jantamamavad.org> among stranded migrants. More than four lakh people have registered at the Delhi government portal for going back home, and transportation has been arranged for around 65,000 migrants until now.

Earlier , Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had also requested the center to increase the number of trains from Delhi to send maximum migrants back to their native states.

Registrations have been received from migrants belonging to different across the country, with around 14836 people registering for Darbhanga in Bihar, 14355 migrants registering for Madhubani, 11156 registering for Sitamarhi, 11707 migrants registering for Muzaffarpur and 10247 migrants registering for Katihar.

Similarly, 14914 migrants have registered on the Delhi government portal to go back to Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh, 13279 migrants have registered for Gorakhpur, 11554 migrants have registered for Jaunpur, 8103 migrants have registered for Ambedkarnagar and 7770 migrants have registered for Basti.

Cops taking Ayurvedic mixtures, medicines to boost immunity

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To prevent its personnel from the Covid-19 infections, the Delhi Police other than taking necessary precautions is also taking ayurvedic mixtures and medicine to boost up the immunity system of police personnel deployed across the National Capital to maintain law and order.

According to police, it has taken adequate measures to prevent spread of Covid-19 among its personnel. Staff posted at frontline has been directed to follow simple precautions like social distancing, wearing of mask, frequent washing of hands with soap or sanitizer and they have also been provided PPE kits during sensitive duties. Apart from taking these precautions, the Ayush Kadha is also being distributed to all staff to boost their immunity.

"It is prepared with mixture of small & big cardamom, cloves, ginger, turmeric, cumin seeds, liquorice & cinnamon every day & distributed twice among the staff. It has worked efficaciously," said police.

"It is noteworthy that one-third cases of Covid-19 surfaced in North District have been reported from the area of Police Station Sadar Bazar. However, despite being declared a containment zone, none of personnel of Police Station Sadar Bazar have been diagnosed for Covid-19 till date, because of following suggested practices," said a senior police official.

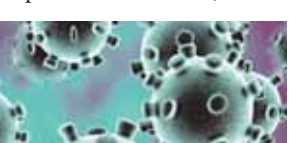
"Likewise, a special drive was undertaken in East district as per the guidelines issued by Ministry of Ayush and the whole of the staff of the district was administered homeopathic medicine "Arsenicum Album 30" to boost their immunity, from April 28 for one week. Apart from this, Vitamin C tablets, lemon water and citrus fruits were also distributed amongst the staff. As a result, none of the police personnel of East District have been infected with the virus since May 8," he said.

"These practices are also being replicated in other Districts and Units of Delhi Police," he added.

71-year-old dies of Covid in Greater Noida, toll rises to 6

Noida (UP): A 71-year-old man died of COVID-19 in Greater Noida on Wednesday, taking the death toll due to the disease in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar to six, a hospital official said.

The man, from Sikandrabad in the adjoining Bulandshahr district, was admitted to the Government Institute of Medical Sciences on Tuesday night with severe acute respiratory infection with sepsis (a life-threatening condition caused by the body's response to an infection), GIMS said.



Director Brig (retired) Rakesh Gupta said.

"He was put on ventilator support, antibiotics and supportive therapy. He expired on May 20 at 4.30 pm. His COVID-19 positive report came on May 20 at 9 pm," Gupta said in a statement. "The cause of death is COVID-19 positive with pneumonia and severe sepsis," he added. District authorities in Bulandshahr have been informed, the doctor said.

Earlier, five men — two of them aged 62, one 60, one 65 and another 71 — have died due to coronavirus in Gautam Buddh Nagar, according to officials.

PTI

Trains to run from June 1 to have AC, non-AC coaches; booking starts today: Rlys

New Delhi: The Railways on Wednesday issued a list of 100 pairs of trains that it will operate from June 1, putting in operation popular trains such as Durontos, Sampark Krantis, Jan Shatabdis and Poorva Express.

While in a statement issued earlier, the Railways had said that these trains will be fully non-air conditioned, on Wednesday it said that these will have both AC and non-AC classes and fully reserved coaches.

It said the general (GS) coaches shall also have reserved seats for sitting, meaning there will be no unreserved coach in these trains.

Fare shall be as normal, it said. But second seating (2S) fare shall be charged for General (GS) coaches being reserved.

Seats will be provided to

all passengers, the Railways said, adding these trains shall run from June 1 and booking will commence at 10 am on May 21.

Only online e-ticketing will be done through IRCTC website or through Mobile App, and no tickets will be booked across the reservation counter on any railway station, the Railways said.

The ARP (advance reservation period) shall be maximum 30 days and RAC and wait list will be generated as per extant rules, however, waiting list ticket-holders shall not be permitted to board the train, it said.

No unreserved (UTS) tickets will be issued and no tickets will be issued onboard from Odisha, a large number of trees and electric poles have been uprooted, while many thatched and mud houses were flattened due to the cyclonic storm. Intense rainfall was recorded in several areas of Puri, Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Ganjam, Ganjam, Bhadrak and Balasore districts.

Besides, Bhubaneswar-New Delhi Special Express train had to be run on a diverted route, skipping the Bhadrak-Kharagpur line due to the

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has instructed conductors, bus marshals and drivers to not have more than 20 passengers in a bus. Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said Government is very serious about maintains social distancing in buses.

Earlier, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has announced that Delhi Transportation Corporation (DTC) will resume its operation.

"Extra passengers boarding the buses will be requested to deboard, and a police complaint at 100 will be registered if any passenger refuses to deboard; if there is any violation of these instructions then stringent action will be taken against the driver, conductor and marshal," Gehlot said. Gahlot explained that extra passengers boarding the buses will be requested to deboard, and a police complaint at 100 will be registered if any passenger refuses

CITY BRIEF

SOUTH,NORTH COVIC BODIES CREMATE 531 BODIES

South and north Delhi Municipal Corporation has cremated 531 bodies between April 12 and May 16 who suspected to have died of Coronavirus. According to sources in corporation, there were 301 bodies cremated by SDMC while north Corporation cremated 230 bodies. Although, it was not clear whether all these persons died of Corona or not, the sources said. The revelation came after health department of the Delhi Government asked municipal Corporations to submit details of cremation in last few months.

NDMC ANNOUNCES TO OPEN PARKS

New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) announced to open Lodhi Garden, Nehru Park, Talkatora Garden for walking and jogging only between 7am to 10 am in morning and 3.30 pm to 6.30 pm in evening from Friday. The civic body closed all its parks following the nationwide lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

CONG PAYS FOR TRAVEL OF STRANDED KERALA STUDENTS

Delhi Congress sponsored tickets for 300 stranded Kerala students to travel from Delhi to Kerala by the Shramik Express. Delhi Congress president Chaudhary Anil Kumar said that at the direction of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, the Delhi Congress facilitate the journey of over 300 students from Delhi to Kerala, who were stranded in Delhi due to lockdown.

DDA SPORTS COMPLEXES TO OPEN FROM MAY 21

In compliance with Government guidelines for partial lifting of lockdown, Delhi Development Authority has decided to open its sports complexes and Golf Courses from May 21 with restrictions and social distancing norms in view of Covid-19 pandemic. The DDA sports complexes will adhere to the laid down protocol. Persons above 65 years of age, children below 10 years of age and persons with co-morbidity and suffering from chronic disease will be prohibited entry.



DMs were also directed to take some of the actions in these areas including testing of all cases as per the sampling guidelines, contact tracing, identification of local community volunteers to help in surveillance, contact tracing

and risk communication, extensive inter-personal and community based communication, strict social distancing, advocacy on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, environmental sanitation and wearing of masks/face-covers.

Bus drivers directed not to drive with over 20 passengers onboard

to deboard.

"If there is any violation of these instructions then stringent action will be taken against the driver, conductor and marshals," the minister added.

This may be noted , around 3,400 buses , including special hired buses operated across while out of the total buses, around 2,000 buses were of the Delhi government and 1,400 buses were specially hired.

"On Tuesday,nearly 1000 DTC buses were deployed to ensure safe passage of migrant labourers to railway station from various shelters. Around 1,200 DTC buses will be operating today for the movement of migrants in Delhi. The whole situation will be under control within 3-4 days," said Gahlot .

He added that more cluster buses are on the roads today as the drivers who were stuck in UP or Haryana have reached Delhi Tuesday and they will drive buses today.

Gahlot said, "The Delhi government is very serious about maintenance of social distancing in buses. Bus drivers, conductors and bus marshals have been strictly instructed by us, to not have more than 20 passengers in a single bus. Extra passengers boarding the buses will be requested to deboard, and a police complaint at 100 will be registered if any passenger refuses to deboard. If there is any violation of these instructions then stringent action will be taken against the driver, conductor, and marshal."

He also said, "To ensure that these norms are being followed, we also need cooperation from people. The people ensure that they will not violate the rules in autos, buses, or bikes. But if such violation take place then action will be taken." The Government started screening at some key terminals and bus stops. We have also ordered more thermal checkup instruments.

Amphan batters Bengal...

From Page 1

Amphan batters Bengal, Odisha"The intensity of the cyclone near its centre as the landfall process started was recorded at 160-170 kmph, gusting to 190 kmph. It is likely to weaken and move through Nadia and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal as a cyclonic storm and then into Bangladesh as a deep depression on Thursday morning.

The intensity near the centre of the storm was 170 to 180 kmph gusting to 200kmph, it said."Tidal surge of up to five metres could occur in North and South 24 Parganas and East Midnapore districts that could submerge areas in a radius of 15 km.

The strong winds and rain could continue till tomorrow in West Bengal", Mohapatra said. The Eastern Railway (ER) has cancelled the departure of Howrah-New Delhi AC Special

Express for Wednesday. Kolkata airport has been closed till Thursday.

TV footage showed gigantic tidal waves crashing into a seawall in Digha, close to the landfall site. Thick sheets of rain blurred the vast coastline in the two States and surging waters engulfed mud-and-thatch houses, flattening them in a trice.As per initial reports from Odisha, a large number of trees and electric poles have been uprooted, while many thatched and mud houses were flattened due to the cyclonic storm. Intense rainfall was recorded in several areas of Puri, Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Ganjam, Ganjam, Bhadrak and Balasore districts.

Besides, Bhubaneswar-New Delhi Special Express train had to be run on a diverted route, skipping the Bhadrak-Kharagpur line due to the

cyclone Amphan on Wednesday.

The Odisha Government has asked the district collectors to submit cyclone Amphan damage assessment reports within 48 hours.Parts of coastal Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday received rains accompanied by strong winds. The turbulence will likely extend to Assam and Meghalaya, triggering heavy to very heavy rain on Thursday.

According to NDRF Director General SN Pradhan, over 6 lakh people in WB and over 1.58 lakh people in Odisha evacuated as per data from Odisha and West Bengal.

Cargo and evacuation flight operations at the Kolkata airport have been suspended till 5 am of Thursday due to the cyclonic storm.

NDRF has deployed 20 teams for Odisha and 19 for West Bengal.

India, China commanders in talks to defuse...

From Page 1

In this backdrop, the two sides have held some rounds of parleys at the local commander level including on Tuesday, sources said.

The talks held as per the mutually agreed mechanism may be held at the more senior levels in the coming days, they said.Meanwhile, China has blamed the Indian Army for coming into its territory and "blocking" its patrols and "attempting to unilaterally change the status" on the LAC between the two countries in Sikkim and Ladakh.

The official statement by the Chinese foreign ministry on Tuesday about the recent stand-offy in Naku La in

Sikkim which saw exchange of blows said the "the Indian Army has crossed the line across the western section of the Sino-Indian border and the Sikkim section to enter Chinese territory".

The statement also said the Chinese side had taken up the matter with India, asking the Indian side to "immediately withdraw the personnel across the line, restore the status quo of the relevant areas, strictly restrict the frontline troops, observe the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and the agreements signed by the two sides, and jointly maintain peace and stability in the border areas."

‘**NYAY**’ for Farmers

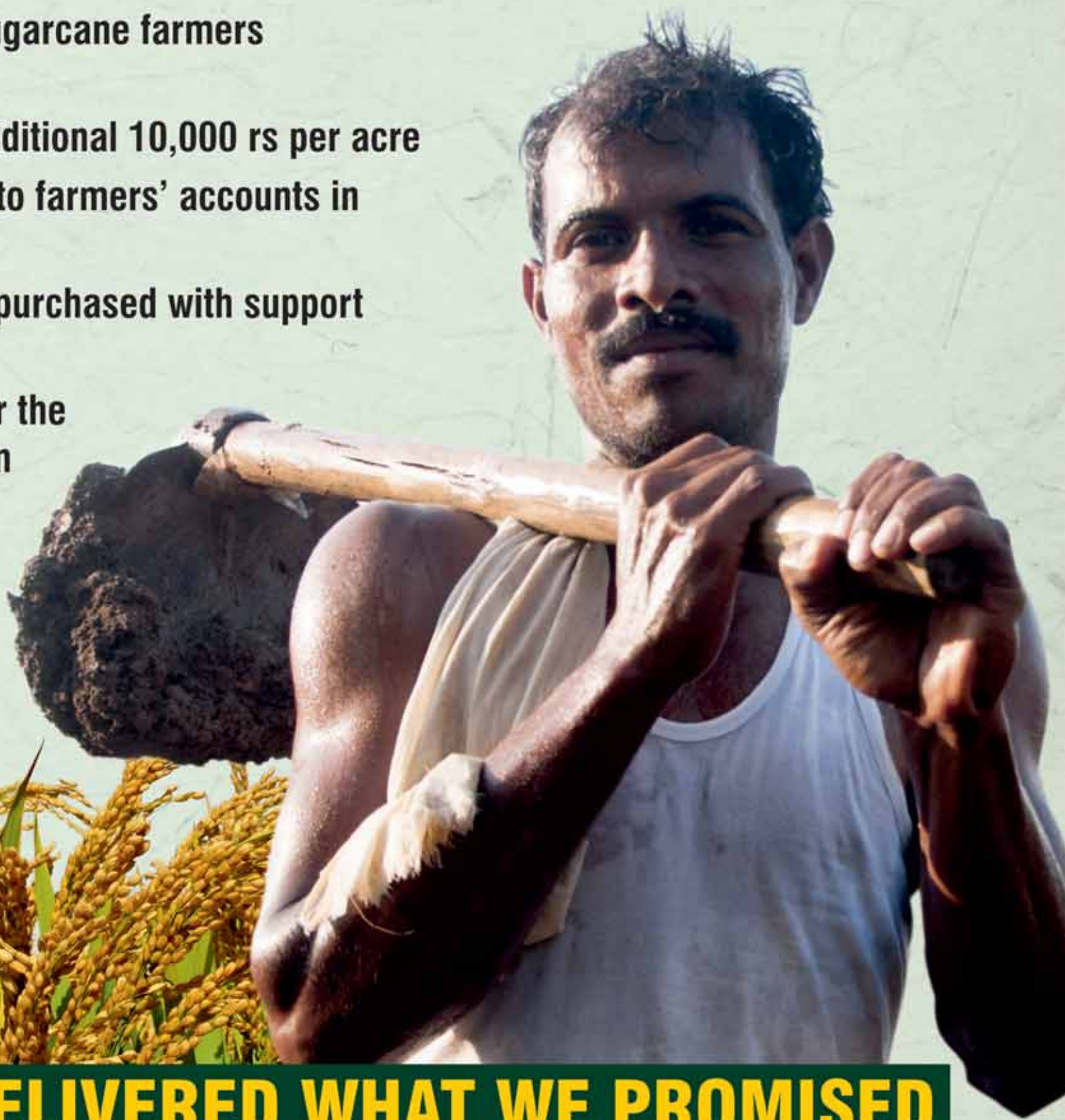
Launching from Chhattisgarh



RAJIV GANDHI KISAN NYAY YOJNA

Commencing from 21st May to Commemorate the Martyrdom of Rajiv Gandhi

- ❖ 19 lakh paddy, maize and sugarcane farmers to get the benefit
- ❖ Paddy farmers to receive additional 10,000 rs per acre
- ❖ Direct transfer of 5700 cr into farmers' accounts in 4 installments
- ❖ Rs 250 cr worth sugarcane purchased with support price of 355 rs
- ❖ Rs 15,231cr already paid for the purchase of 83.67 metric ton paddy



DELIVERED WHAT WE PROMISED

- ❖ Immediately on forming the govt, 8,755 cr loan waiver benefiting 17.87 lakh farmers
- ❖ Rs 20,095 cr with bonus paid to paddy farmers
- ❖ Rs 1,000 cr assistance under Kharif Insurance/RBC
- ❖ Rs 260 cr outstanding irrigation taxes waived off



Bhupesh Baghel
Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh

Smt. Sonia Gandhi & Shri Rahul Gandhi to Inaugurate the Scheme

Clinical management protocols adopted by India effective: Health Min



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With over 1,08,000 Covid-19 cases, India is the 11th worst-affected country in the world. But since more than 39.6 per cent of the confirmed infection cases have recovered, the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday said it shows that clinical management protocols adopted by the country are effective.

Compared to the global scale, where there are 62.3 cases per one lakh population, India still has only 7.9 cases/lakh population. Similarly, for mortality rate per lakh population, while the global average is 4.2, India's figure is pegged at 0.2, said the Ministry.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan addressing the Non-Aligned Movement Health Ministers' meeting on Wednesday, said India's



response of “micro-identification, mass isolation and quick treatment” prevented “large scale deaths and spread of Covid-19.”

Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary at the Health Ministry at a Press conference

here, said Covid-19 recovery rate has been on continuous upwards climb and is more than 39.62 per cent.

“When the first phase of lockdown started, the recovery rate was around 7.1 per cent. During the second phase of

lockdown, it was 11.42 per cent and rose to 26.59 per cent. Today, the recovery rate is 39.62 per cent.”

The efforts for early identification of Covid-19 cases had helped in having a better recovery rate, he said.

“The focus on clinical management and recovery has resulted in the improvement in the recovery rate. More than 39.6 per cent of the confirmed cases have recovered, bringing the total to 42,298 recoveries as of today. This is a reminder that the disease is curable and the clinical management protocols adopted by India are effective.”

Only 6.39 per cent Covid-19 cases need hospitalisation, which includes oxygen, ventilator or ICU support, he said.

Giving a breakup, he said that 2.9 per cent of all the active cases under treatment require

oxygen support, about 3 per cent of the active cases require ICU support and 0.45 per cent of the active cases require ventilator support.

India has been concurrently focusing on upgrading

HARSH VARDHAN TO TAKE CHARGE AS WHO EXECUTIVE BOARD CHAIRMAN

New Delhi: Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan is set to take charge as the chairman of the World Health Organization (WHO) Executive Board on May 22. He would succeed Dr Hiroki Nakatani of Japan, currently the Chairman. The proposal to appoint India's nominee to the 34-member Executive Board was signed by the 194-nation World Health Assembly on Tuesday. **PNS**

Desi tech to identify virus +ve cases

Kerala-based SCTIMST develops RNA from swab samples

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a 'Make-in-India' initiative, Kerala-based Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), an institute of national importance under the Union Science and Technology Ministry, has developed an innovative technology to isolate RNA from swab samples and enhance the chances of identifying Covid-19 positive cases.

Presently, a majority of RNA isolation kits is being imported.

The Thiruvananthapuram based institute has filed for patent for this technology which is simpler than imported ones. Developed by Dr Anoop Thekkuvettil and his team, the kit Known as “Chitra Magna”, uses magnetic nano-particle to capture and concentrate the ribo-nucleic acid (RNA) from the patient's swab sample and can be deployed for both PCR and Chitra Gene LAMP-N, the much cheaper and faster diagnostic kit developed by the institute recently, for tests to detect the virus.



The same team had developed Chitra Gene LAMP-N, said a scientist in a statement here.

The SARS-COV-2, the causative virus of coronavirus pandemic, is a virus that uses RNA, a long single stranded polymeric substance present in all living cells and carries the genetic information of the organism necessary for life, explained the scientist.

One of the critical steps in detecting this virus is by confirming the presence of the RNA of the virus in the sample taken from the throat or nose.

In the lab, the RNA of Covid-19 is extracted, converted into DNA and amplified using the PCR technique or LAMP technique.

“Chitra Magna” would give a significant advantage in the extraction as even if some viral RNA disintegrates

during storage and transportation of the samples, all of it is captured by the magnetic bead-based extraction technology, said the scientist.

The magnetic nano-particle beads bind to the viral RNA and when exposed to a magnetic field gives a highly purified and concentrated level of RNA. As the yield of PCR or LAMP test is dependent on getting adequate quantity of viral RNA, this innovation enhances the chances of identifying positive cases, the scientist added.

“Chitra Magna” can be used to extract high purity RNA from patient samples not only for LAMP testing, but also for RT-PCR test, he said.

The technology of 'Chitra Magna' has already been transferred to a private firm, Agappe Diagnostics Ltd at Kochi. The company has already taken the Chitra GeneLamp for identification of the N gene of SARS-COV-2, a potential confirmatory test with accuracy matching RT-PCR in its initial validation at National Institute of Virology by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Robot to take care of patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A scientist from Tripura University has developed a robot from locally available and scrap materials to take care of the Covid-19 infected patients from a distant place, an innovation which would come handy for the frontline healthcare professionals working in the highly contagious environment.

The remote-controlled robot 'Covid-19 Warbot' can carry 10-15 kilograms of materials, has an operational range of 15-20 metres, and can deliver food, medicines and other essential items to the viral infected patients.

The robot, regulated by a transmitter and a receiver, can work for around 90 minutes after the lead acid rechargeable battery is given five hour's charge.

“I have just spent Rs 25,000 and took a week's time to make the robot. Due to the ongoing lockdown, I could not collect the latest and modern devices and tools from outside Tripura, hence I have to depend on the local and scrap materials. I used the vital receiver of



the robot from an old toy of the son of my relative,” said scientist Harjeet Nath, holder of the prestigious young scientist award in 2018.

He said that the robot can be of enormous help to the doctors, nurses and other health workers to deal with the patients of the highly contagious novel coronavirus.

In the robot, Nath has installed a two-way communication device of a Wi-Fi-controlled camera with inbuilt microphone and speaker to help both the doctors or nurses and patients to communicate directly

with each other maintaining a safest distance.

Presently, frontline health workers including the doctors and nurses are at the risk of getting infected with the highly infectious virus as they have to closely take care of the Covid-19 patients.

Nath plans to add many more skills including thermal screening of suspected patients, sanitising the hospital floors to the existing robot to make the machine many more other health related jobs besides purposeful.

Centre approves financial measures, policy decisions for revival of economy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a series of financial measures and policy decisions, including the changes in coal allocation methods, announced in the Prime Minister's 20-lakh-crore package for the revival of economy hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave post-facto approval to 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' package on allocation of food grains to the migrant and stranded migrants, special liquidity schemes to non-banking financial and housing finance, packages on fisheries sector, additional funding of three lakh crore through emergency credit line guarantee scheme, which were recently announced by the Finance Minister in connection with Rs 20 lakh crore package.

The Cabinet meeting also approved the second set of laws in tune with Jammu & Kashmir Re-Organization Act in relation to the recruitment rules for various services.

“The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA),

- Cabinet meeting gave post-facto approval to 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' package on allocation of food grains to migrants and stranded migrants, special liquidity schemes to non-banking financial and housing finance, packages on fisheries sector, additional funding of three lakh crore through emergency credit line guarantee scheme, which were recently announced by the Finance Minister in connection with Rs 20 lakh crore package
- Cabinet meeting also approved the second set of laws in tune with J&K Re-Organization Act in relation to the recruitment rules for various services

chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given its ex-post facto approval for waiver of interest of Rs 7.59 crore on Government of India loans of Hindustan Organic Chemicals Limited (HOCL), as on March 31, 2005 in addition to the 'Waiver of penal interest and interest on interest up to March 31, 2005' that was earlier approved by the CCEA in March, 2006 under the rehabilitation package for HOCL,” said Government in a statement.

The CCEA also approved the methodology for auction of

coal and lignite mines/blocks for sale of coal/lignite on revenue sharing basis and increasing the tenure of coking coal linkage.

This methodology provides that bid parameter will be revenue share. The bidders would be required to bid for a percentage share of revenue payable to the Government.

“The floor price shall be 4 per cent of the revenue share. Bids would be accepted in multiples of 0.5 per cent of the revenue share till the percentage of revenue share is up to 10 per cent and thereafter bids would be accepted in multiples of 0.25 per cent of the revenue share. There shall be no restriction on the sale and/or utilisation of coal from the coal mine.

“The methodology is oriented to make maximum coal available in the market at the earliest and it also enables adequate competition which will allow discovery of market prices for the blocks and faster development of coal blocks. Higher investment will create direct and indirect employment in coal bearing areas especially in mining sector and will have an impact on economic development of these regions,” Government said.

A girl eats while waiting with her migrant family beneath a flyover after being stopped by police, during the ongoing Covid-19 nationwide lockdown, at Delhi UP border in New Delhi on Wednesday **PTI**



CISF cancels all transfers till March next year

New Delhi: All due transfers in the 1.62 lakh personnel-strong Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) have been cancelled till March next year in view of the Covid-19 outbreak, an order issued by the paramilitary force said on Wednesday.

The measure will affect about 12,000-13,000 personnel and is aimed at “minimising

their “hardship” and saving transfer allowance worth a few crore of rupees that is given to the under-transfer staffers to join the new place of their posting. An order issued by the force has been accessed by PTI. It said, “Director General CISF has issued the direction in order to minimise the hardship of personnel and to control the financial commitment on

account of transfer allowance.”

It added that all transfers due this year have been “deferred till March 31 next year”. The force had earlier postponed all transfer orders and movements for its personnel, issued till March this year, in view of the ongoing nationwide lockdown and the coronavirus pandemic.

A final decision has now

been taken.

CISF chief Rajesh Ranjan confirmed the move, saying the decision has been taken “keeping in mind all administrative, operational and personnel welfare requirements in the times of coronavirus outbreak”.

The order said the only exception to the latest directive will be a transfer done on the grounds of “genuine individual

grievance, medical, operational and administrative requirement with clear recommendation and specific justification” by the supervisory authorities.

A senior official explained that going on transfer entails a lot of human and administrative work and it was decided by the DG that it was important to keep the troops safe from the Covid-19 point of view. **PTI**

Plea in SC seeks check on fake contents on Twitter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a mechanism to check Twitter content and advertisements spreading hatred through fake news and instigative messages via bogus accounts.

The petition, filed by BJP leader Vinit Goenka, also a member of the Governing Council (CRIS), said that there are hundreds of fake Twitter handles and bogus Facebook accounts in the name of eminent people and high dignitaries.

“These fake Twitter handles and Facebook accounts use real photo of constitutional authorities and eminent citizens. “Therefore, common man relies upon the messages published from these Twitter handles and Facebook accounts,” said the plea filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey.

The PIL said that fake news is the root cause of many riots, including the one in Delhi earlier this year, and bogus accounts are used to promote casteism and communalism which endangers

fraternity and unity of the country.

“It is submitted that presently total number of twitter handles in India are around 35 million and total number of Facebook accounts are 350 million and experts says that around 10 per cent twitter handles (3.5 million) and 10 per cent Facebook accounts (35 million) are duplicate/bogus/fake,” the plea said.

Political parties use fake social media accounts for self-promotion and image building and to tarnish the image of opponents and contesting candidates, especially during the elections, the plea said. The plea has also sought directions to make a law as per which an action can be initiated against Twitter and their representatives in India for willfully abetting and promoting anti India tweets and penalize them.

The petition further said that a representation to the concerned authority to act in accordance with the law for the country against social media giant Twitter was filed but no action has been taken so far by the concerned authorities.

SC issues notice on fresh pleas against CAA, tags them with pending petitions

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued a notice to the Central government on five fresh pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 on various grounds including that the “specific exclusion” of Muslims was against the right to equality and secularism under the Constitution.

The CAA, which was notified on January 10, grants Indian citizenship to non-Muslim minorities — Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian — who migrated to India from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh till December 31, 2014, following persecution over their faith.

The top court, on December 18 last year, had decided to examine the constitutional validity of the CAA while refusing to stay its operation. A Bench

comprising Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and Hrishiksh Roy, in the proceedings held through video-conferencing, issued the notice on the pleas filed by Tamil Nadu Thoweed Jamath, Shalim, All Assam Law Students Union, Muslim Students Federation (Assam) and Sachin Yadav and ordered their tagging with the earlier batch of PILs filed on the issue.

Indian Union Muslim League is the lead petitioner in the case. Tamil Nadu Thoweed Jamath, in its PIL, said it was raising a “seminal important questions related to the promulgation of CAA, wherein first time religion is introduced as a reference point/condition for acquisition of Indian Citizenship for illegal/undocumented migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.”

Citizenship is being extend-

ed to certain a class of migrants belonging to religion of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians and such classification violates Article 14 (right to equality) and 21 (right to equality) of the Constitution.

“Moreover, the classification based on the religious identity of the individual offends the fundamental principle of ‘Secularism’, which is enshrined as basic structure of the Constitution,” it said, adding that the benefit was specifically denied to “Muslims by specific exclusion”. Other fresh PILs also raised similar objections to the CAA.

Prior to this, Centre on March 17 had filed its response to the over 100 PILs against the CAA and had asserted that the law does not violate any fundamental right or affect the legal, democratic and secular rights of any Indian citizens. **PTI**

Hizbul terrorist involved in killing of J&K BJP Secy arrested by NIA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has arrested the key conspirator Rustam Ali of Kishtwar, Jammu & Kashmir in the case relating to murder of BJP State Secretary Anil Parihar and his brother Ajeet.

Ali, 56, is an accused in the Parihar brothers killing case. Parihar brothers were killed at Kishtwar on November 1, 2018, by Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists.

“Accused Rustam Ali was also wanted in another terror case of Kishtwar registered by NIA which related to robbery of Insas rifle from PSO of Advocate Nasir Hussain.

The Parihars murder cases was taken over by NIA ON November 28, 2018. The agency chargesheeted seven accused persons including three killed terrorists Osama bin Javid, Haroon

Abbas Wani and Zahid Hussain besides three arrested accused –Nisar Ahmed Sheikh, Nishad hmed Butt and Azad Hussain. Ali was also named in the charge sheet filed at a designated court at Jammu on May 15 this year

“Investigation of both the cases unearthed the larger conspiracy of these terrorists and three over ground workers (OGWs) of Hizbul Mujahideen who attempting to revive terrorism in the region of Chenab valley i.e. districts of Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban,” the NIA said in a statement

Accused Rustam Ali had been absconding since long and investigation revealed that Rustam Ali had constructed a hideout in the house of accused Nishad Ahmed Buttfor safe hiding of accused pesons, the agency added.

2 BSF jawans killed in J&K ultra ‘hit & run’

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In yet another case of ‘hit and run’ three motorbike borne terrorists on Wednesday killed two jawans of Border Security Force (BSF) near Pandach area of Central Kashmir’s Ganderbal district.

The BSF jawans were targeted less than 24 hours after the elimination of youngest son of Hurriyat Chairman and top commander of Hizbul Mujahideen, Junaid Ashraf Sehrai in Nawakadal area of Srinagar.

According to police, the BSF jawans were deployed on duty to assist CRPF jawans in the area.

This is the second major incident of ‘hit and run’ on paramilitary forces in Kashmir valley this month.

On May 4, three CRPF

jawans were killed near Wangam stop in Qaziabad area of Handwara by Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorists.

Inspector General of Police Kashmir range, Vijay Kumar, told reporters, “two BSF jawans on deployment duty on 90-Ft Soura Road had gone to a nearby shop to purchase something when three motorbike borne terrorists opened indiscriminate firing, killing one of the BSF jawans on the spot while another was shifted to a nearby hospital where he too succumbed due to fatal injuries”.

IG, Kashmir said, the terrorists decamped with the service weapons of both the BSF jawans from the spot. He said, we have cordoned off the entire area to track down the footprints of terrorists behind the attack.

Meanwhile, situation along the line of control in Poonch remained tense as Pakistani army resorted to unprovoked ceasefire violation at different intervals in Kirni, Qasba and Deegwar sectors of Poonch.

According to Lt-Col Devender Anand, Defence PRO in Jammu, “the first incident of ceasefire violation was reported in Kirni and Deegwar sectors of Poonch at around 9.30 a.m. and after few hours the Pakistani Army trained their guns towards Kirni and Qasba sectors around 1.50 p.m”. At both the locations, Indian army gave befitting reply to Pakistan army. Ground reports claimed, heavy shelling was going on in the area since morning and it was intensified during day time forcing the local residents to stay indoors to secure their lives.

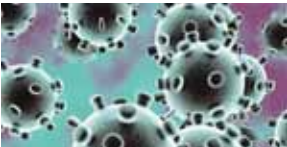
Tamil Nadu corona count over 13k now

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Total number of coronavirus cases in Tamil Nadu jumped from Tuesday’s 12,448 to 13,191 on Wednesday, a steep hike.

On Wednesday 743 persons which includes 83 who returned from Maharashtra tested positive for coronavirus in Tamil Nadu. This took the total number of persons tested positive till date in the State to 13,191. The number of persons tested positive in the State on Tuesday were 688 which means that there is no let up in the number of afflicted persons in Tamil Nadu.

Number of persons who succumbed to the pandemic reached 87 in the State with three more breathing their last on Wednesday. The only news which offered some solace was the number of persons discharged from hospitals on Wednesday. The day saw 987



fully cured persons getting discharged from hospitals, the highest ever figure till date. This means that 5,882 persons have been discharged from hospitals till date.

The media release issued by the directorate of public health and preventive medicine said that 3, 43, 793 persons have been tested till date. Out of the 743 persons tested positive on Wednesday, 557 were from Chennai. The metropolis has 8,228 coronavirus patients as on Wednesday, the highest in Tamil Nadu.

Dharmapuri (5), Krishnagiri (21), Nilgiris (14), Pudukottai (13) Sivagangai (26) continued to be less problematic compared to other districts.

Holding ‘black flag’ stir an insult to corona warriors: Cong-NCP to BJP

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The ruling Congress and NCP on Wednesday castigated the State BJP leaders for its “lack of commitment” to Maharashtra and said that the “black flag” agitation resorted to by it was an “insult” to corona warriors and people of the State.

Slamming the BJP for politicising the Coronavirus situation in the state, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) president and senior State Minister Balasaheb Thorat said: “The State BJP leaders are not committed to Maharashtra, their commitment lies with their leaders in Delhi. The protest called by Maharashtra BJP is not a save Maharashtra protest but a save the party in the State”.

Deputy chief minister and senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar did not also mince words when it came to criticising the BJP leaders. “At a time when doc-

tors, nurses, para-medical staff, sanitary workers, police and citizens of the state are fighting against Covid-19, the State BJP leaders – instead of being a part of the war against the pandemic – have resorted to black flag agitation which is an insult to both the Corona warriors and the people of the state”.

“The black flag agitation called by the State BJP is untimely and it will not do any good for the Opposition party in the state. I am surprised as to how anyone in the BJP can think of a black flag agitation at this juncture,” Pawar said.

Singling out former chief minister and current leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Devendra Fadnavis, Thorat said: “Fadnavis had said recently that during these difficult times we shouldn’t engage in politics and rather work unitedly. But, his actions are not matching his words....Rather than donating to the chief minister’s relief fund, he donat-

ed to the PM’s relief fund. He should have actually fought with his leaders in Delhi for the benefit of Maharashtra”.

Alluding to the BJP leaders’ meeting with Maharashtra Governor Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari on Tuesday at which they complained against the Uddhav Thackeray about the “ineffective handling” of the Covid-19 situation in the state, Thorat said: “We would have appreciated him immensely if he had got an economic package approved from Delhi for Maharashtra. But, Fadnavis and his colleagues in the state BJP are not interested in speaking to the government but are more interested in going to the Raj Bhavan and talking to the Governor”.

“We are ready to listen to them, if they point out any flaw we are willing to rectify it, but rather than that, they are more interested in creating confusion in the state,” the Congress leader said.

Need to accept corona as part of life: Pawar

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A reconciled NCP chief Sharad Pawar said here on Wednesday that the Covid-19 would not be eradicated completely in the near future and it was necessary for policy makers to accept the corona as a part of life and create awareness among the masses about healthcare.

In a series of tweets put out after he held a discussion with Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on the Covid-19 situation in the state, Pawar said that he had deliberated with Uddhav on the Coronavirus situation in the state, the challenges faced by the administration and the preventive measures that needed to be taken to provide relief to various sections of people.

“Corona disease will not be completely eradicated shortly. It is necessary to accept the corona as a part of life, beware of it

and create awareness among the masses about health care. In Japan, people wear masks, look after personal hygiene as part of their routine social life,” Pawar said.

“I urge people to wear gloves, use masks, sanitizers, wash their hands with soap from time to time to prevent corona infection. It is my appeal to the Information Department to spread social awareness among the masses about the preventive measures for #Corona,” the NCP chief said.

“The situation in the state will have to be restored by relaxing some of the conditions of lockdown. Arrangements should be made to convey the information about the level of relaxation to the public at a fixed time every day by the State Government,” the NCP chief said.

“Shops, offices, establishments in the private sector should be opened in a staggered manner

with complete caution,” he said.

Advising the State Government to restore the disrupted transported services gradually, Pawar said: “The lockdown has disrupted transport services. We need to take the right steps to gradually restore road transport within the state and plan for the resumption of air and rail services”

“The pace of work in public and private ports seems to have slowed down. To increase imports, exports and inland shipping, consultations should be held with industrialist, entrepreneurs and expert officials in the field,” he said.

“Earlier several incentive schemes were operational for industries in backward and underdeveloped areas. In the same vein, new policies for encouraging industrial growth should be released to attract new investment in the state,” the NCP chief said.

Uddhav richest among all MLCs elected last week

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray with assets worth ₹143.26 crore is the richest among the nine MLCs elected unopposed to the Upper House of the Maharashtra Legislature last week.

According to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) released here on Wednesday, Uddhav has movable assets worth ₹61,89,57,443 and immovable assets worth ₹81,37,17,320 which amounts to a total of ₹1,43,26,74,763. Uddhav has declared highest liabilities worth ₹15.50 Crore.

Among the 9 MLCs elected last week, the Opposition BJP’s Gopichand Padalkar has the lowest assets amounting to ₹87.63 lakh. her part, Shiv Sena’s Neelam Gorhe, who is currently the deputy chairperson of the

State Legislative Council, has declared assets worth ₹7.70 crore, while the NCP’s Amol Mitkari (₹1.17 crore), and Congress’ Rajesh Rathod (₹6.42 crore) have modest assets of 1.17 crore and ₹6.42 crore respectively.

Another NCP’s newly elected member Shashikant Shinde has declared an asset of ₹39.88 crore.

From among the Opposition BJP MLCs, the richest is Ranjitsinh V. Mohite-Patil (₹ 50.21 crore), followed by Ramesh Karad (₹8.17 crore) and Pravin Dattake (₹2.56 crore), while Padalkar is the only a lakh-pati in the BJP.

Only one among the nine new MLCs possesses a post-graduate qualification, while two are professional graduates, three are graduates and two have passed out High Secondary School.

Vijayan blames expatriates for spike in Kerala cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

As the persons tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday shot up to 24 and the number of Covid-19 patients in the State increased to 666, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan blamed the expatriates who returned to Kerala for the spike in pandemic.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Vijayan said that Kerala was facing a serious situation as the number of coronavirus afflicted persons were on the rise. The State saw 12 persons testing positive for the pandemic on Tuesday while the numbers doubled by Wednesday evening.

“Out of the 24 persons tested positive on Wednesday, 12 were expatriates who returned to the State while 11 were those who returned from Maharashtra (eight) and Tamil Nadu (three),” said the Chief minister. He said though the situation in the State is precarious because of the increase in the number of persons tested positive, the Government has decided to conduct the Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination from May 26. The Vocational Higher Secondary Certificate Examination too will be held simultaneously, he said.

The Government is tightening the rules in the backdrop of the hike in the number of persons tested positive for covid-19, said the Chief Minister.

K’taka: Tiger captured near Bandipur Tiger Reserve

KESTUR VASUKI ■ BENGALURU

In a major operation, the Karnataka forest department officials have captured a male tiger outside the boundaries of Bandipur Tiger Reserve (BRT) in the Nilgiri bio sphere. According to T Balachandra, Conservator of Forests and Field Director, Project Tiger Bandipur a cattle eating injured male tiger has been captured outside Bandipur Tiger Reserve on Tuesday.

The four year old Tiger supposedly killed many cattle in the villages of the vicinity of the forest. “The tiger killed and ate 20 domestic cattle. It made its territory outside the forest near a human habitation,” said Balachandra.

73 new cases raise J&K tally to 1,390

PNS ■ JAMMU

A day after Jammu district was classified as Orange zone, the highest number of 20 cases of coronavirus were detected on Wednesday.

However, a total number of 73 cases, 36 from Jammu division and 37 from Kashmir division were detected taking the total tally in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir to 1,390 cases. One more patient died in Srinagar, taking the death toll due to covid-19 to 18.

In Jammu, nine members belonging to a single family tested positive while a retired doctor, undergoing kidney treatment, and a lady police constable, posted in Chest disease hospital, also tested positive.

The family members were close relatives of a patient, who died last week after he too tested positive posthumously in Preet Nagar area of Jammu.

In Kashmir valley, out of 37 fresh cases, Kupwara recorded 17 cases, Baramulla 8 while Anantnag and Kulgam reported five cases each. The police lines in Anantnag is turning out to the hot spot as 78 police personnel have tested positive so far in the district.

In Jammu, the district administration reviewed the ground situation after the markets were reopened for the first time on day one of fourth phase of lock down period. The shops remained open till 5.00 p.m and markets witnessed rush of local residents in many pockets. The policemen were seen making regular announcements and patrolling in the area to ensure proper social distancing in market places.

Railways gives toys to make migrants’ children happy

KESTUR VASUKI ■ BENGALURU

At the time of Covid -19 pandemic fear migrants are returning to their native villages by. A major humanitarian situation India is facing. In this situation the Railways have distributed toys to children of migrant labourers to make them happy and memorable.

In a novel gesture Bengaluru Division of South Western Railway distributed over 700 world famous Channapatna toys to children who have boarded Shramik Special trains since Monday.

This initiative is the brainchild of Bengaluru Divisional Railway Manager Ashok Kumar Verma and is to bring smiles on the face of these hassled children.

Lakhs of migrants are going back to their native places and railway has arranged special trains from Information Technology city Bengaluru.

A press release issued by the South Western Railways said many Kids Toy Store and other

agencies have sponsored this initiative and joined hands with Railways in making the train journey of migrant labourers and their families happy and memorable during Covid-19 crisis.

Channapatna lacquerware toys are GI (geographical indications, approved by the government) tagged and world famous.

These toys are safe and good for children as they are made of wood and natural colours. These toys are attractive and safe for the children.

Channapatna toys are a particular form of wooden toys that are manufactured in the town of Channapatna near Bengaluru .

The origin of these toys can be traced to the reign of Tipu Sultan, the erstwhile ruler of Mysuru province, who invited artisans from Persia to train the local artisans in the making of wooden toys. The initiative of the railways is also to support local art and craft of Karnataka and encourages business of local artisans and artists.

New Delhi-Chennai Rajdhani train to begin service today

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The first Rajdhani Super-Fast Special Train between New Delhi and Chennai post-national lockdown will begin its service on Thursday. The Train No: 02434 New Delhi-Dr MGR Chennai Central Rajdhani Superfast Special Train will leave New Delhi at 4 pm on Mondays and Thursdays and reach Chennai at 8.40 pm on Tuesdays and Fridays respectively, according to a release by B Gugesan, chief public relations officer, Southern Railway.

The release said that No: 02433 Dr MGR Chennai Central-New Delhi Rajdhani Superfast Special Train would leave Chennai Central at 6.35 am on Wednesdays and Saturdays starting from May 23 and reach New Delhi at 10.30 am on Thursdays and Sundays.

The trains will have stoppages at Agra Cantt, Jhansi, Bhopal, Nagpur, Warangal and Vijayawada in the journey which takes 28 hours. Tickets could be booked only through the website of the IRCTC or through Mobile App. The release by the Railways has asked the passengers to carry their own food and drinking water. “Dry, ready-to-eat food and bottled water shall be provided on demand, inside the trains on payment basis,” said the release.

IRCTC shall make provision for

limited eatables and packaged drinking water on payment basis. Information to this effect shall be made available to passengers during time of booking ticket.

Indian Railways has made the post-corona journeys stricter by enforcing stringent conditions. All passengers would be compulsorily screened and only asymptomatic passengers would be allowed to enter /board the train.

The release further stated that Passengers traveling by these special services should observe the following precautions : (a) Only passengers with Confirmed tickets will be allowed to enter the Railway station.

(b) All passengers should wear face covers/masks at the entry and during travel.

(c) Passengers should reach the station at-least 90 minutes in advance to facilitate thermal screening at the station. Only passengers found asymptomatic will be permitted to travel.

(d) Passengers should observe social distancing both at the station and on trains.

(e) On arrival at their destination, the travelling passengers would have to adhere to such health protocols as are prescribed by the destination State/UT, said the release.

Maha: 65 deaths, 2,250 test positive

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

For the fourth consecutive day, the pandemic toll remained above 50 in Maharashtra, as 65 more persons succumbed to Covid-19 and 2,250 others tested positive for coronavirus in the State. A day after Maharashtra notched a day’s highest-ever death tally of 76 persons, Covid-19 claimed 65 lives and left 2250 others infected in various parts of the State.

There were as many as 63 deaths on May 18, while the state recorded 51 deaths on May 18. With the fresh fatalities and infections, the total number of deaths rose to 1390 and infected cases mounted to 39297 in the State on Wednesday

Of the 65 deaths reported on Wednesday, Mumbai accounted for 41 deaths, while there 13 deaths in Pune, three in Navi Mumbai, two each in Pimpri-Chinchwad, Solapur,

Ulhanagar and Aurangabad.

Of the dead today, 46 were men while 19 were women. Thirty two of them were aged over 60 years, 31 were from the age group 40 to 59 years and 2 were aged below 40 years. “Forty eight out of 65 patients (74%) had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease,” a state health bulletin said.

Out of 3,07,072 laboratory samples, 2,67,775 tested negative while 39,297 samples tested positive for COVID-19 until Wednesday. There are 1849 active containment zones in the state currently. Total 15,495 surveillance squads worked across the state on Wednesday and surveillance of 65.11 lakh population was done. As many as 10,318 patients have been discharged till date after full recovery. Currently, 4,04,692 people are in home quarantine and 26,752 people are in institutional quarantine.



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF TEXTILES



PUBLIC INFORMATION

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) Coveralls for COVID-19 for use of healthcare professionals is now available for procurement by Private Hospitals.

In the past 60 days, India has developed more than 500 PPE Coverall Manufacturers with a production capacity exceeding 4 lakh pieces per day. There was no PPE Coverall production in the country until 20th March, 2020. Eight Laboratories in the Country have been authorized to test PPE Coveralls for COVID-19 and issue Unique Certification Codes (UCC) Certificates.

List of UCC Certificates is available on the weblink on Ministry of Textiles website **texmin.nic.in**. Buyers are advised to verify the UCC Certificates prior to procurement.

The UCCs are issued by the Testing Organisations based on the proto-type samples submitted by the respective Manufacturers. However, this does not guarantee the quality of materials during the supply process. Buyers are advised to test random samples from the supplied lot from any approved laboratory to ascertain quality.

The information on UCCs are dynamically updated on the website. Buyers are advised to visit Ministry of Textiles website **texmin.nic.in** for all relevant information on PPE Coveralls.

Website: www.texmin.nic.in

Davp 41101/11/0001/2021

Reverse spread

Returnee migrants are taking back the virus to their home States which are ill-equipped to handle the pandemic



Had we controlled the exodus of migrants, either by holding them at their work sites or arranging a systematic transport mechanism to ferry them back when COVID-19 cases weren't spiking enough, then we wouldn't have had the upward curve that we have today. Given the high infectivity of the virus and the prolonged exposure of migrants to it on roads, at stations and at crowded camps, the returnees are all testing positive and taking the disease burden to their home States which do not have the health infrastructure to

combat it. This poses a serious threat to containment protocols in rural India. Even if the returnees are quarantined and kept separate, are there enough hospitals and facilities to treat them or are we looking at a spilling at the seams scenario? With most being asymptomatic, random testing in Bihar revealed that one in four workers, who made it back to their home State from Delhi, were infected with the novel Coronavirus. Until May 17, the authorities had tested 8,337 migrant workers, who returned from north Indian towns where they worked. The infection rate was eight per cent, which is double the national average of four per cent. This after the arrival of 300 special trains. Another 500 trains are expected over the next week. Add to this the number of those walking home or crowding in a bus. An estimated 2.2 million from Bihar migrate to other States, according to the 2001 census. Most of them work in hotspot States like Kerala, Delhi, Rajasthan and Maharashtra apart from those who take up jobs in the Middle East. Given these huge numbers and the sick returnees expected, Bihar's health infrastructure could be highly stressed as it was ranked at 20 out of 21 States on the Niti Aayog's Health Index report of 2019. For its 120 million population, it currently has four operational COVID-19 test centres, three in Patna and one in Darbhanga. There are only nine Government medical colleges and hospitals. Neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, too, has the lowest availability of beds and having received 16.5 lakh workers since March 1, any surge can take it to tipping point. Consider that it has the highest population per doctor with one allopathic doctor serving 3,692 people, as against the WHO's recommendation of one doctor per 1,000 patients. With 19.84 lakh migrants registering for inter-State movement, Rajasthan, itself among the worst-hit, is finding it difficult to manage screening, sampling and enforcing quarantine of returnees. Having been at the front-line of the battle from the very beginning, even achieving success with Bhilwara, its administration is stretched and struggling to replicate the same model too many times and could just get swamped. As people flee an urban contagion, these beleaguered States have another burden piling up, that of rehabilitating the healthy or recovered with jobs or doles as MGNREGA work may just not be enough.

Even now our preparedness, despite voluntary efforts by the private sector, is confined to cities. The Centre did ask State Governments to set up temporary hospitals, increase the number of beds and set up isolation wards but many do not have the capacity to expand. There's also a shortage of protective equipment for health workers. Besides, all doctors are not skilled or trained enough in COVID-19 protocols. The less said about primary healthcare centres in villages the better as they can hardly handle any emergencies, let alone an outbreak. Yes, we need a three-tiered approach to rebuild a health pyramid in the long-term but a reverse migrant influx means straining whatever little resources one has. Of course, not that ingenuous solutions have not been found within the prevailing matrix as Odisha has shown. By now an expert at handling most natural disasters, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has ensured the State has 34 Covid hospitals with 5,493 beds and 296 ICUs. He has plans to increase the number of beds to 10,000. There are 14,795 temporary medical camps with 6,28,686 beds in 6,798 gram panchayats for quarantine and isolation of people returning from other States. To meet the increasing requirement of staff, the State Government has also enrolled 1,039 medical graduates, students and other professionals. And in a historic move, it delegated powers of district collectors to sarpanches of Gram Panchayats to ensure smooth return of workers and their proper monitoring under quarantine. If anything, the pandemic has showed us that innovative thinking, decongestion of worker settlements, preventive protocols and an immunity-boosting plan for rural folk should have been initiated at all levels to arrest the spread. Lockdowns allowed that time. For if the countryside and communities are porous, one dreads to even hazard a guess on the consequences.

Real estate ripples

The impact of Coronavirus on commercial real estate will be interesting, primarily because none really knows the future



As the Coronavirus pandemic began spreading its tentacles out of China and to the rest of the world in the middle of March, offices and malls began clearing out. People became genuinely scared of contracting the virus. Now, as the world is gradually beginning to lift the lockdown, the commercial real estate sector is just about picking up the pieces. Nobody really knows what the future will be. Take the example of movie theatres. One among the single-largest occupiers of space in malls, the pandemic not only forced the people home, it also drove up media consumption but on streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar. And while streaming services always showed movies soon after the release, several Indian movies scheduled to be screened around the Eid time-frame, a major marketing opportunity, have moved straight to streaming platforms. An angry and petulant letter by one theatre chain will not change studios from adopting this practice. Going back to the movie theatre or indeed the mall will need confidence to come back to the consumers. As e-commerce players restart deliveries of "non-essentials," we could find ourselves spending even more time at home.

Then what about offices? Not only will several organisations, small and large and previously profitable, find themselves on the verge of bankruptcy at the end of the pandemic, they may also give up their expensive office rental spaces. Other organisations may have noted the success of the "work from home" culture started by the virus, which may as well lead to a re-evaluation of the amount of space they actually need in a building. But some operations, which need physical presence of employees, might end up needing more space as the need for distancing might mean more floor space is required. The usage of "hot-desking," where employees can use any free space, has been banned in several Western countries, but it may well be followed in India for hygiene reasons. This could lead to more space being needed. The overall impact of the virus on real estate may, therefore, not be all negative. However, with the entire economy stressed and short-term impact of less office space being needed will lead to less buildings being occupied. For a sector that was already teetering on the edge, the virus is proving to be deadly. Far deadlier than it actually has been on humans.

Opinion

Bugle for more reforms

The Corona crisis is about personal and economic survival. This should compel us to regenerate like the proverbial phoenix by discovering creative solutions for revival and recovery



BINDU DALMIA

The Prime Minister's announcement on May 12 of a monetary package of ₹20 lakh crore to revive the Indian economy presaged a roadmap for the many reforms the Finance Minister would unleash during the five consecutive days. The dominant theme emanating from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's communication was of *Sankalp* (oath) to shake off the pandemic — the paralysis of fear that had immobilised the nation since February — to think of a life beyond COVID, roll up our sleeves and get going. Undertones of cautious optimism were much needed as feel-good terms often used by the Prime Minister had receded from his lexicon since the past few months. Take, for example, the creation of "New India," the recurrent goal-setting reminder of "achieving a \$5 trillion economy" or the virtues of harnessing India's "demographic dividend." Seasoned economists read Modi's zest for transformational reforms as his "1991 moment of economic inflection," aimed at enthusing business sentiment locally and as an aggressive pitch for inbound Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Of course, the exigencies that triggered the 1991 reforms were different from the one witnessed this year. Cut to the present, the compulsion for announcing these reforms is entirely different. They have been necessitated due to the pre-COVID overhang of a contracting global and national economy; deglobalisation; the much-anticipated pandemic-led revenue losses to the exchequer; and a pressing need to implement politically sensitive reforms in "land, labour, laws and liquidity" to woo Global Value Chains (GVCs) exiting China. Certainly, this is a finite now-or-never window of opportunity.

Looking at the breakdown of the package, the liquidity support and credit guarantee measures accounted for nearly three-fourths of the economic support package, which was followed by monetary measures at 15 per cent and fiscal support at 10 per cent. Hence, the upfront direct fiscal cost announced remained limited to 1.2 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Exceeding fiscal deficit runs the obvious risk of downgrade by rating agencies because when debt-to-GDP ratio breaches the 60 per cent mark, sovereign borrowing costs escalate.

When provisioning for higher borrowing, the Government would have to factor in pre-existing high debt-to-GDP ratio and low tax-to-GDP ratio. It will also have to factor in negative economic growth forecasts for 2020-21 due to stagnant growth and falling revenue estimates. However, as India is not the only country which had to resort to exceed the budget fiscal deficit, rating agencies will be compelled to revise their assessment criteria by gauging each nation's macro-economic fundamentals and how prudently the money is spent.



The biggest learning from the Corona pandemic for India is to stop looking for leadership or overly rely on the "big two," China for imports and the US for patronage. It is in this context that the central theme of the Prime Minister's prescription for "*atmanirbharta*" or self-resilience and self-reliance is relevant. It falls back on the time-tested Gandhian economics of supporting and building swadeshi brands. With India's globalisation index as high as 62 per cent, the need is for a paradigm shift. We must lower our dependence on global supply chains.

World over, economic nationalism, which is a self-preservation strategy to build and buy local goods to foster local employment, is being practised. With growing mistrust between nations due to the spread of the pandemic as also the weakening writ of multilateral institutions, globalisation has been in retreat since the past five years.

Modi's 21st century reinterpretation of "self-reliance" must be viewed as a "hybrid model" of economic nationalism, one that is not overly protectionist or insular to inbound FDI. Nor does "self-sufficiency" here imply a regressive return to the Nehruvian era of import substitution, which mollycoddled the local industry into mediocrity and complacency. Instead, re-packaging "brand" India is as vital as building strong brands.

For "brand" India to attract relocating GVCs, we need to reposition and undertake an image makeover to promote India as a business destination that has an

investor-friendly Government with no policy volatilities and has rid itself of a menacing bureaucracy. Because industries exiting China are in the process of due diligence. They are evaluating the risk-rewards of relocation to an Asian country or are ready to cede to US President Donald Trump's admonition. The likes of Apple are contemplating to relocate to India.

For Indian brands to become a natural "first-choice" for domestic consumers as also to increase our export potential, indigenous products will have to be benchmarked to meet global standards. We also need to maintain a competitive edge in price, quality and delivery. This is highly do-able. Think of traditional brands like Khadi Gramodyog, Amul, Patanjali, Dabur and Bajaj among others, which have become household names today.

The first tranche of the Finance Minister's relief package was the most pertinent as it sought to infuse ₹50,000 crore equity into viable Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and disallowed global tenders in Government procurement up to ₹200 crore. This will increase participation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in infrastructure projects, which have an outlay of ₹100 lakh crore over the next five years. At stake are not just 11 crore jobs but the future of what makes up 45 per cent of the country's total manufacturing output, 40 per cent of exports, and 30 per cent of the national GDP. However, the above only stimulates the supply side.

To spur demand there exists pent-up demand for non-essentials but potential buyers remain in cash conservation mode. Retail borrowers' ability to service pre-existing loans remains challenging despite extended moratoriums due to uncertain earning capacity. So even if the industry resumes production at full capacity, there is the risk of inventory build-up, which may lead to dual defaults from both retail borrowers and manufacturers. It may put pressure on the already risk-averse banks despite a 20 per cent Government guarantee to fund MSMEs.

Therefore, initially, only essential-spend services and products defined as catering to the needs of a post-COVID society will be resilient to bounce back. They constitute sunrise sectors, those which will have a higher multiplier effect in creating employment. Hence, funding of these sectors will have a better risk-reward ratio and lower insolvencies. Other gainers will be companies with strong balance sheets. They will be at a vantage to look at distressed assets for acquisitions.

The fastest rebound would come from sectors like IT and telecom, which became indispensable for virtual communications during the lockdown; new-age sectors like fintech and digital payments services that became the contactless method of financial transactions; pharma and FMCG sectors, which supply essential services; e-commerce because it's the most efficient form of contactless delivery; ed-tech platforms and telemedicine to administer learning and

medical consultation; gadgets that are essentials for work from home like air conditioners, iPads, computers and smartphones among others.

The other propeller of economic activity is expected through the Government-funded affordable housing for both rentals and purchase. India's \$180 billion real estate industry employs 52 million people and contributes six per cent to the GDP. Under PMAY, the affordable housing segment has got an additional fund infusion of ₹70,000 crore. Also, there are big opportunities for labour-exporting States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Jharkhand to become low-cost manufacturing hubs should they seize the moment by offering lucrative incentives to industries that can help absorb the 14 crore reverse migrants into their own home States.

I end on a reflective note and it is this: When confronted with an existential crisis, we either adapt or perish. Speedy recalibration is needed at multiple levels to adjust to the new normal, whether it's about shifting towards faceless e-governance models, restructuring previously lucrative business models of the "sharing economy" or even airlines catering to cargo instead of passengers. The crisis is about personal and economic survival. This should compel us to regenerate like the proverbial phoenix by discovering creative solutions for revival and recovery.

(The writer is author, columnist and Chairperson for the National Committee of Financial Inclusion at Niti Aayog)

SOUND BITE

It is really not true that someone who hasn't played international cricket or who hasn't played enough cricket can't become a successful coach.

Former cricketer
—Gautam Gambhir



We need little to live and be minimalistic. Greed and consumerism have just taken over all of us. Though I am not a hoarder, I am enjoying being minimalistic.

Actor
—Kirti Kulhari



We will not accept the Beijing authorities' use of 'one country, two systems' to downgrade Taiwan and undermine the cross-strait status quo. We stand fast by this principle.

Taiwanese President
—Tsai Ing-wen



We will have to understand our responsibilities. They (migrant workers) aren't just Indians but India's spinal cord and everyone's responsibility. This isn't the time for politics.

Congress leader
—Priyanka Vadra



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Listen to experts

Sir — While worldwide medical experts are busy tackling a surge in the COVID-19 pandemic, the world's leading non-medical expert, US President Donald Trump, has been rather slow and ineffective in his response to the virus. Now, he has stated that the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine can ward off the Coronavirus even though warnings of serious, even fatal side effects, are already there.

Any treatment has to be well-researched, tested, checked for its side effects and approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) before it is made available on the shelves. Hydroxychloroquine effectively treats malaria but at this moment, there is no proof that it works for COVID-19. Some initial testing is being undertaken though.

Worse, Trump's son, Eric Trump, has attracted fierce criticism for attacking Joe Biden and the Democrats by describing the epidemic as a "political smoke-screen." This, to prevent his father from campaigning in the manner he considers the best approach with large crowds and enthusias-

tic supporters. None of the 90,000 people, who have died due to the pandemic will get to vote for Trump or anyone else. In times of crisis we must pay heed to medical experts and not the politicians. For, we do not know when the vaccination will be available.

Dennis Fitzgerald
Melbourne

Trump and the pandemic

Former US President Barack Obama described incumbent President Donald Trump's mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic as an "absolute chaotic disaster" and added that "US officials were not even pretending to be in charge." One couldn't agree with him more. From the very beginning, he was dismissive of the Coronavirus outbreak. He shunned wearing face-masks, was sceptical about social distancing and incited his supporters to hit the streets to protest lockdowns. Contrary to medical caution, he was desperate to reopen the economy. He was not even deterred by the certainty of more casualties. Even when there was a spike in cases, he claimed that the US had succeeded in flattening the curve.

True to style, Trump prescribed injecting disinfectants (household bleaches) and exposure to high-dose UV rays as cures to COVID-19. He confessed to taking unproven hydroxychloroquine drug. Vast quantities of this anti-malaria drug were imported from India with hopes that it would turn out to be a wonder drug. He stuck to his stand that "Obamacare must go" despite



the fact that it guaranteed health insurance to COVID-19 patients with pre-existing conditions. He claimed that he was having sleepless nights over the tragedy that befell the American people. May be he was suffering from insomnia due to his receding chances of re-election.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Win confidence

Sir — The Government's allocation of ₹40,000 crore to India's jobs scheme under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is inadequate considering the fact that lakhs of

migrants are still trudging their path away from urban sprawls on highways and trains to reach their home States.

An increase in wage from from ₹182 to ₹202 per person last month, too, is a small raise. Besides, a scheme at the urban space is much-needed. The urban labour shortage will not be easy

to fix. Workers will not be willing to get back to the very cities that left them to their fate in times of crisis. Their plight calls upon the Government as well as the employers to introspect and make their lives more secure.

Ayush Daruka
Via email

Truth of the matter

Sir — Only an independent and impartial probe can unmask the truth behind the spread of the virus which has shaken the world. Allegations against China are not unfounded. Under the wilful patronage of the World Health Organisation (WHO), it kept on befooling the world regarding the genesis and dissemination of COVID-19. Nations must stand united to take on China. Imposition of tough economic sanctions and severing of international relations will break its back. The role of the WHO, too, must be probed. If found guilty, strictures should be passed against it.

Shambhavi
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Exiting a *desi* lockdown

India needs a sustainable exit from the shutdown and return to business as usual with a minimal loss to lives and livelihoods



UTTAM K ROY

Nearly a century ago, British biologist-turned town planner Patrick Geddes was appointed by the Maharaja of Indore to suggest strategies to fight the plague and save the city. Instead of demolishing run-down neighbourhoods as proposed by other experts, Geddes suggested creating separate community dining spaces in poor settlements and keeping cats as pets so that the rats could be concentrated in a few places in search of food and be killed by the cats. Times have changed and we have made many technological advancements but our approach to fighting epidemics like the COVID-19 can still be simple, fundamental and effective. We have already seen that though the lockdown did slow the spread of the virus, we have not been able to flatten the curve. In fact, there has been a surge in cases ever since we began a graded exit from the lockdown.

So what India needs is a sustainable exit from the lockdown and return to business as usual with minimal loss, both due to COVID-19 and hunger, as the shutting down of the economy has resulted in millions of job losses, especially in the informal sector. The media is replete with images, videos and articles on suffering labourers left to fend for themselves, desperate to get back home.

Thus, exiting the *desi* lockdown needs unique local solutions and reflection in the broad canvas of national directions. One needs to understand the underlining factors between life and livelihood. The answer to exiting the lockdown is not straightforward. It is not definitive, rather probabilistic. Converging synergy to innovate is the need of the hour.

COVID-19 hotspots and districts with Red, Orange and Green Zones have already been notified. However, much more beneficial confinement zoning can be done at the local level, based on the congestion factor and disease spread, to determine "vulnerability." For example, a high-density urban area of South Delhi or a slum in Mumbai may have a higher risk factor as compared to low-density suburbs or urban areas. Thus, the congestion factor provides a critical qualifier to determine the hotspots or vulnerability.

Next, all economic activities are not essential nor urgent and an assessment of essentiality is a crucial qualifier. The key is to decide between vulnerability (life) and essentiality (livelihood). Can it be done at the local level? The local administration can surely identify organic economic activities better than the centralised administration. Though vulnerability and essentiality must guide the decision-making process, let us recognise that a complete exit is only possible once the herd immunity is in place or we have a vaccine and medicine to stop and cure the contagion. Till that time, a basket of intelligent strategies to sustain necessary activities for survival may be useful.

Micro-confinement zones: Delineate the micro-zones at the local/neighbourhood level considering the intensity of cases and population density. It is better to have a "laproscopic" approach. Involve social groups along with the police to ensure confinement and protocols. De-confinement can be allowed slowly and sequentially, on a case by case, basis.

Support, incentives and disincentives: Support and incentivise the medical, essential and food supply chain (in cash and kind). Support State Governments to create a permanent infrastructure to fight epidemics. Announce awards for an early vaccine, rapid-testing kits, medicines and medical discovery. Continue withdrawal of support or approval to all mass gatherings (religious, sports, large festivals) till the full exit.

Continue to test, re-test, and isolate: Massive, rapid, accessible and affordable testing followed by quick isolation helps in the micro-delineation of confinement zones. Areas with high density of populations, like slums, should be given priority where repeated testing is concerned, week after week. All foreign returnees must continue to go through strict quarantine protocol for months after we have made a full exit so that there is no second wave.

Use the local and social machinery: The COVID-19 curve of India can mislead if it is used for any localised actions. Instead, geographical statistics and curves should dictate local actions. The involvement of community institutions to analyse, forecast and plan ahead may be helpful to decide State and district-level controls and solutions. Use local organisations to share the accountability of making citizens aware of developing immunity to fight possible Corona infections.

To summarise, the strategic position of a slow but steady exit, using separation, sequence and support to appropriate groups is recommended. Extensive testing to delineate micro-confinement zones for better control seems to be useful once accountability is shared with local and social organisations. The exit from the *desi* lockdown must be sustainable and permanent to avoid a second wave of this contagious disease. Our cities and regions must build resilience against epidemics with the people and for the people. COVID-19 calls for a serious introspection of how we perceive, plan and manage our environment.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture and Planning, IIT Roorkee. Inputs by Surman Sensarma, Vice-President, SREI Infrastructure Finance Ltd and Subhajyoti Samaddar, Associate Professor, Kyoto University)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE UTTAR PRADESH CONGRESS HAS GOT TRAPPED IN ITS OWN NET OF DECEIT OVER ITS OFFER TO PROVIDE BUSES FOR MIGRANT LABOURERS.
—UTTAR PRADESH DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER
KESHAV PRASAD



THERE ARE 1,000 BUSES. IF THE UP GOVERNMENT HAS ANY DOUBTS, THEY CAN CONDUCT A PHYSICAL VERIFICATION OF THE VEHICLES AT THE BORDER.
—UP CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON
ASHOK SINGH

Some ASHA amid violence

ASHAs make the difference between life and death for women who cannot seek help because they have no access to mobile phones or are too scared to use one for fear of being caught



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

Life had never been easy for Savitri of Gujarat's Radhanpur village. Running the household solely on her income as a daily wage worker was slowly becoming impossible. Demands made by her alcoholic husband to finance his addiction were eating into her paltry income and increasing debts. Yet, the 40-year-old was reluctant to leave her husband despite the frequent beatings and verbal abuse. Even her three children were not spared the onslaught. But in early March, the stress became too much to handle and Savitri decided to end her life by ingesting poison. Fortunately, timely action by her neighbour, who rushed her to Radhanpur Hospital, saved Savitri's life. She was also fortunate that doctors recognised the signs of domestic violence and referred her to the Mahila Sahayta Kendra, a crisis intervention and support cell. Run by the Society for Women's Action and Training Initiatives (SWATI), an Ahmedabad-based not-for-profit, this cell is embedded in the hospital. After counselling by the Mahila Sahayta Kendra, Savitri filed a police complaint against her husband. But the police let him off after summoning him to the station. Soon after, the country was placed under lockdown to combat the Corona pandemic. Since then, Savitri has been stuck at home with her abuser. There has been little change in her husband's behaviour. With the alcohol de-addiction centre closing down because of the lockdown, even the small ray of hope that Savitri had of a violence-free life is fading fast. However, Savitri is not the only one living in fear amid the lockdown. There has been a spike in complaints related to domestic violence since the shut down began in late March.

According to the National Commission for Women (NCW), complaints received by them till mid-April suggested an almost 100 per cent increase in domestic violence during the lockdown.

Gender-based violence tends to increase during a crisis as unequal gender power structures fuel dissension. In a lockdown situation, women in an abusive relationship and their children are likely to be exposed to a dramatic increase in violence as family members spend more time in close contact and families cope with additional stress and potential economic or job loss, says the World Health Organisation. Intimate partner violence affects the mental health of women, too, with prolonged stress leading to chronic health problems.

Last month, the NCW announced a special WhatsApp helpline number (7217735372) in addition to the existing 181 helpline number, to make it easier for women in distress to seek support. While this is a step in the right direction, only 38 per cent women in India own a mobile phone.

Data also show that a large number of women don't seek help when they face abuse because they think that violence against them is warranted. According to the National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS), over 26 per cent of girls and women (aged 15-49) think that the husband is justified in beating a woman for going out of the house without permission. While 37 per cent women said a thrashing was acceptable if a woman showed disrespect towards her in-laws, 32.7 per cent cited neglect of household chores and children as a justifiable reason and 11 per cent cited bad cooking as reasonable grounds for violence.

Since the prevalence of such social and cultural norms and lack of mobility are more pronounced among rural women, a good way to get around this

“ASHAS ARE IDEALLY PLACED TO SCREEN, COUNSEL, REFER AND SUPPORT WOMEN IN THEIR COMMUNITIES WHO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE. A STUDY BY THE POPULATION COUNCIL, EXAMINING THE FEASIBILITY OF SCREENING AND REFERRING WOMEN EXPERIENCING MARITAL VIOLENCE BY ENGAGING FRONTLINE WORKERS IN RURAL BIHAR, CONCLUDED THAT ONCE TRAINED, ASHAS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN BRINGING CHANGE



has been to leverage the power of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs). An integral part of the public health system, these women volunteers, usually between 24 and 45 years of age, interface between the community and the public health system. In fact, healthcare providers are often the first point of contact for women experiencing violence as they may access health services for treatment of physical and/or psychological trauma, according to research on the role of the health sector in addressing intimate partner violence by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW).

Thus, ASHAs are ideally placed to screen, counsel, refer and support women in their communities who experience violence. A study by the Population Council, examining the feasibility of screening and referring women experiencing marital violence by engaging frontline workers in rural Bihar, concluded that once trained, ASHAS played a vital role in bringing change. So SWATI's decision, to make ASHAS the pivot of the response system to help identify domestic violence and prevent it at the local level, was a good one. Not only are ASHAS a part of the community but they also visit every household in their jurisdiction (one ASHA for every 1,000 people in a village) at least once a month and can reach out to vulnerable women.

Moreover, ASHAS are part of an extensive network of health workers and play an important role as part of an upward referral system. At the village level, ASHAS are supported by Anganwadi workers (AWWs), auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs), medical officers and village health and sanitation committees. While it is the ASHA supervisors who provide the requisite support at the cluster level, it is the community

mobilisers who do so at the block and district level. Another advantage is the rapport between ASHAS and block-level Community Health Centres/tertiary care hospitals. Since they bring women for antenatal check-ups, ASHAS are known at these facilities. So, if a violence prevention and support cell were to be located in a public health facility/hospital, there would be greater chances of women in need being able to get the necessary support services related to their physical and mental health.

This is what prompted SWATI to institute the Mahila Sahayta Kendra in Radhanpur Hospital, to tackle domestic violence in Patan, a predominantly rural district in Gujarat. This cell, a collaborative effort between the health department of the Gujarat Government and SWATI, is the first-of-its-kind in the State. Although it took SWATI almost three years after its institution in 2012 to get it going, recognition of the importance of health workers in addressing violence against women and including it in the Government training module for ASHAS in 2015 gave the initiative a big boost.

The initiative has incorporated several components common to the Dilaasa Crisis Centre for Women, the first hospital-based crisis centre in India, designed to respond to the needs of women facing violence within their homes and families. This is a joint initiative of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) and is located at Bhabha Hospital, in Mumbai, Maharashtra. SWATI has adapted from this model and added additional features that specifically respond to the needs of rural areas. Besides training ASHAS, the capacity of medical staff at the hospital (where the cell is located) has been

improved to respond to the healthcare/first aid needs of the victims and survivors of domestic violence, sensitively and appropriately. This is how Savitri was referred to the cell when she was brought to Radhanpur Hospital after her attempted suicide.

Even during the lockdown, their counsellors are constantly in touch with abused women through phone, according to Neeti Singhal, Research and Training Coordinator, SWATI. Depending on the case, SWATI also works through ASHA workers to reach assistance required to the women, she says. So far, over 550 ASHA workers in five blocks in Patan have been trained and the Mahila Sahayta Kendra has now been established in two more referral hospitals — General Hospital, Siddhpur and the Medical College and Hospital at Dharpur.

Clearly, ASHAS can make the difference between life and death for women who cannot seek help because they have no access to mobile phones or are too scared to use one for fear of being caught by the abusive partner. However, it is important to remember that ASHAS are voluntary workers. They receive performance-based incentives for delivering various healthcare services. But more often than not, these honorariums are not paid in time. Sometimes, just a part payment is made. The fact that they continue to work despite being underpaid should not be an excuse to undervalue them.

The work of ASHAS is more critical during these unprecedented times. If preventing violence against women is a priority, then those who are at the forefront of such initiatives, like the ASHAS, must be respected and protected.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

Follow norms meticulously to stay safe

Hospitals will have to gear up to have a separate wing with exclusive entry and exits or standalone buildings for treatment of Coronavirus patients, since it is not advisable to have other critical patients under the same roof due to high infectivity



DR SUNIT MEDIRATTA

With the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 resulting in a complete lockdown in most countries, it has resulted in hospitals shutting down routine outpatient departments (OPD) and planned surgeries. While it was hoped that a few weeks into the lockdown, the situation would improve in India, in reality the disease has only grown exponentially due to various underlying reasons.

As of now, the number of positive cases in the country has swelled to 1,06,886 and the number of casualties

has touched the 3,303 mark. This has resulted in the delayed opening up of regular healthcare facilities for non-COVID diseases, dealing an additional blow to a set of population already reeling under economic hardship brought on by the extended lockdown and the resultant salary cuts and job losses.

At present, most hospitals are open for emergency services only. Government and private sector hospitals are reluctant to start regular OPD services fearing the spread of the Coronavirus, as patients and their families would crowd into the treatment facility, making social distancing difficult to manage.

However, one has to be cognisant of the fact that many people suffering from cataract, cancer, physically disabling spine problems, pain due to kidney or gall bladder stones and many other illnesses have been denied treatment for far too long as these diseases do not need immediate and urgent attention under normal circumstances.

However, if one has a potentially life-threatening, disabling disease or pain, one always looks for early treatment and relief. For the patient, it is an urgent need even if it doesn't classify as an emergency.

COVID-19 is here to stay and we will have to live with it. Hospitals will have to gear up to have a separate wing with exclusive entry and exits or standalone buildings for treatment of Coronavirus patients, since it is not advisable to have non-COVID patients under the same roof due to high infectivity.

The treating healthcare staff will also have to be exclusive to these patients while maintaining strict infection-control protocols. All hospital admissions for planned surgery and treatment will have to be done only after COVID-19 testing to safeguard its healthcare staff, while those patients needing urgent care will need to be placed in isolation wings of the hospital until their test results come back. Unfortunately, all this is going to

escalate the cost of healthcare in the country. Another social impact that this virus has brought about is the loss of domestic help in most households, leading to further health and safety issues for people suffering from ailments and senior citizens. With many Resident Welfare Associations preventing the entry of domestic help within the colonies, the elderly have been left to fend for themselves.

Many of these senior citizens live alone and have been dependent on the domestic help for their day-to-day living. People with ailments and pregnant women and young mothers, too, are suffering from the lack of domestic help as traditionally the burden of caring for the family falls on the women of the house.

Even with the lockdown, the number of cases was going up and it wasn't the poor domestic help who brought the disease to our borders. But the fact of the matter is that the poor are facing the brunt of the impact of the disease on our society.

However good a plan the Government comes up with, there will always be a number of people who will oppose it with scientific reasoning and statistical data. This is an unprecedented crisis wherein everyone presumably is trying to do his/her best under the prevailing circumstances and there is never going to be a single "best solution."

One also needs to understand that although COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease, close to 90 per cent people only have minor symptoms like fever, sore throat, body ache and only about five to 10 per cent of the infected patients actually need hospitalisation. With a mortality rate of about 3.2 per cent in India as per the data on the Aarogya Setu app, it must be said that a road crash is 10 times more likely to kill than COVID-19.

According to data compiled by SaveLife Foundation, the fatality rate per 100 road accidents was around 30 during 2019 and 381 patients had died in 1,200 road accidents in the last two

months, translating to a fatality rate of almost 32 per cent.

As the Government may not be in a position to feed the poor for long, it is imperative to begin economic activity soon as suggested by industry experts. Although it is easy to keep the disease at bay through social distancing, maintaining simple social and personal hygiene and practising it religiously without dropping guard, it is indeed worrying to see people letting go of social distancing norms with the easing of the lockdown and putting everybody's lives at risk.

We better learn to stick to all the guidelines issued by the Government to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus quickly, else we, as a nation, would have to pay a heavy price. The choice is ours. All we need to do is maintain distance from fellow beings to keep ourselves safe. How difficult can that be when your life is at stake.

(The writer is a consultant Neurosurgeon at Apollo Hospital)



Money talks but it should not be allowed to bully. If football players are to return so soon to a sport in which unpredictable physical contact is an obligation, there must be maximum confidence in testing procedures and in the efficacy of the "protective bubble" around the pitch and the stadium. And teams should be match-ready. Should Project Restart prove unworkable in the short summer timeframe, so be it.

(The Guardian editorial)

TO PRESCRIBE RAPID REOPENING

GOP seeks pro-Trump docs for TV interviews

Washington: Republican political operatives are recruiting “extremely pro-Trump” doctors to go on television to prescribe reviving the US economy as quickly as possible, without waiting to meet safety benchmarks proposed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

The plan was discussed in a May 11 conference call with a senior staffer for the Trump reelection campaign organised by CNP Action, an affiliate of the GOP-aligned Council for National Policy.

A leaked recording of the hourlong call was provided to The Associated Press by the Center for Media and Democracy, a progressive watchdog group.

CNP Action is part of the Save Our Country Coalition, an alliance of conservative think tanks and political committees formed in late April to end state lockdowns implemented in response to the pandemic.

Other members of the coalition include the

FreedomWorks Foundation, the American Legislative Exchange Council and Tea Party Patriots.

A resurgent economy is seen as critical to boosting President Donald Trump’s reelection hopes and has become a growing focus of the White House coronavirus task force led by Vice President Mike Pence.

Tim Murtaugh, the Trump campaign communications director, confirmed to AP that an effort to recruit doctors to publicly support the president is underway, but declined to say when the initiative would be rolled out.

“Anybody who joins one of our coalitions is vetted,” Murtaugh said Monday.

“And so quite obviously, all of our coalitions espouse policies and say things that are, of course, exactly simpatico with what the president believes. ... The president has been outspoken about the fact that he wants to get the country back open as soon as possible.”

During an emergency such

as the current pandemic, it’s important that the government provide consistent science-based information to the public, said Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr, an epidemiology professor at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease expert and a member of the White House’s coronavirus task force, has been among the most visible government experts warning that lifting lockdowns too quickly could lead to a spike in deaths.

El-Sadr said having doctors relay contradictory information on behalf of the president is “quite alarming.” “I find it totally irresponsible to have physicians who are touting some information that’s not anchored in evidence and not anchored in science,” El-Sadr said.

“What often creates confusion is the many voices that are out there, and many of those voices do have a political interest, which is the hugely dangerous situation we are at now,” *PTI*

US topping world virus cases is ‘badge of honour’: Trump

Washington: President Donald Trump has said it is a “badge of honour” for America to “lead” the world with 1.5 million confirmed coronavirus cases since it means the US is testing more people for the disease that has killed over 300,000 people across the world.

The US has 1.5 million confirmed coronavirus cases and over 91,000 deaths, both the world’s highest.

“I look at that as, in a certain respect, as being a good thing because it means our testing is much better,” he added. “So I view it as a badge of honour. Really, it’s a badge of honour.”

Trump was responding to a question about whether he was considering a travel ban on Latin America, Brazil in particular. “It’s a great tribute to the testing and all of the work that a lot of professionals have done,” the president said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, a federal agency, the US had conducted 12.6 million coronavirus tests by Tuesday. *PTI*



cases,” he continued, “I don’t look at that as a bad thing. I look at that as, in a certain respect, as being a good thing because it means our testing is much better.” He added: “So I view it as a badge of honour. Really, it’s a badge of honour.”

Trump was responding to a question about whether he was considering a travel ban on Latin America, Brazil in particular. “It’s a great tribute to the testing and all of the work that a lot of professionals have done,” the president said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, a federal agency, the US had conducted 12.6 million coronavirus tests by Tuesday. *PTI*

CYCLONE AMPHAN

B’desh shifts over 2 million people, armed forces put on alert

Dhaka: Bangladesh has shifted over two million people to storm shelters and deployed the military to deal with the powerful cyclone ‘Amphan’ which is set to make a landfall on the costal districts, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on Wednesday.

Authorities have already raised the alert level to ‘great danger’ for some districts in the country as the cyclone, the most powerful storm since cyclone ‘Sidr’ killed nearly 3,500 people in 2007, was approaching the coastline.

“We have the preparations (to face cyclone Amphan). We are taking all possible measures that we should adopt for protecting the lives and properties of the people from the cyclone,” Prime Minister Hasina told a meeting of the National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) formed to review the preparations in facing the pos-

sible assault of the super cyclone.

“Twenty lakh people have so far been evacuated to the cyclone centres as part of the prior preparation,” Hasina was quoted as saying by The Daily Star newspaper.

The Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force have made preparations to tackle the super cyclone, Bdnews24.Com reported.

A Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRC) volunteer drowned on Wednesday when a boat capsized while evacuating villagers to safety in southwestern Patuakhali, becoming the first victim of Amphan. “He was on a boat along with four others when a sudden storm under advancing Amphan’s influence overturned it. Three others managed to escape,” BDRC’s cyclone preparedness programme Nurul Islam Khan told PTI. *PTI*

Boris Johnson refuses to back down on ‘unfair’ surcharge on foreign docs

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday dismissed any hope of a review into what has been branded an “unfair” surcharge on foreign doctors, including Indians, working in the UK’s state-funded National Health Service.

A number of professional associations for doctors in Britain have been campaigning against the annual Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS), imposed of foreign workers to raise additional funds for the NHS, as an additional burden while they directly contribute to the health service.The Opposition Labour Party Leader, Keir Starmer, backed their campaign in the House of Commons during the weekly Prime Minister’s Questions on Wednesday, when he asked Johnson if he thinks the surcharge on NHS doctors and

nurses is “fair”.

“I have thought a great deal about this and I do accept and understand the difficulties faced by our amazing NHS staff. I have been a personal beneficiary of people and carers who have come from abroad and, frankly, saved my life,” replied Johnson, making a reference to his COVID-19 hospitalisation last month during which he was cared for by foreign medics.

“I know exactly their importance. On the other hand, we must look at the realities that this is a great national service, a national institution which needs funding and those contributions actually help us to raise about 900 million pounds. It is very difficult in the current circumstances to find alternative sources, so I do think that is the right way forward,” *PTI*

20 yrs after withdrawal, Israel, Hezbollah brace for war

Sidon: Twenty years after Hezbollah guerrillas pushed Israel’s last troops from southern Lebanon, both sides are gearing up for a possible war that neither seems to want.

Israeli troops are striking Hezbollah targets in neighboring Syria and drilling for what could be an invasion of Lebanon. Hezbollah is beefing up its own forces and threatening to invade Israel. The bitter enemies routinely exchange warnings and threats.

“We are preparing seriously for the next war. We’re not taking any shortcuts because we understand we have to be extremely strong to defeat the enemy,” said Col. Israel Friedler, an Israeli commander who has been overseeing a weeks-long exercise simulating war with Hezbollah at a base in northern Israel.

Hezbollah emerged as a ragtag guerrilla group in the 1980s, funded by Iran to battle

Israeli troops occupying southern Lebanon. A protracted guerrilla war, characterized by roadside bombs and sniper attacks, eventually forced Israel to withdraw in May 2000. With the exception of an inconclusive, monthlong war in 2006, the volatile frontier has largely remained calm.

Since then, Hezbollah has evolved into the most powerful military and political entity in Lebanon. The party and its allies dominate Lebanon’s parliament and are the main power behind Prime Minister Hassan Diab’s government.

“Domestically, Hezbollah has emerged to become the preponderant force in Lebanon,”

said Hilal Khashan, a political science professor at the American University in Beirut. But regionally, he said, “the position of Hezbollah is precarious” due to Israeli pressure, domestic turmoil and problems for its Iranian benefactors. *AP*

The group can ill afford another massive clash with Israel. The Lebanese economy is in shambles, around half the population is now estimated to live in poverty — including in Hezbollah strongholds — and the group’s finances are suffering because of US sanctions imposed on it and Iran.

The group also suffered heavy losses in the Syrian civil war, losing some 2,000 fighters while battling alongside the forces of Syria’s President Bashar Assad. Once seen as a liberation movement, Hezbollah is now seen by many in Lebanon and the region as an Iranian pawn.

Qassim Qassir, an expert on Hezbollah, says the group has no interest in going to war but has been preparing for battle for a long time. “The battle will not be a battle of missiles only,” he said, a reference that Hezbollah might try to invade parts of northern Israel. *AP*

Burundi holds crucial presidential election amid virus pandemic

Nairobi: A crucial election began on Wednesday in the East African nation of Burundi, where President Pierre Nkurunziza is stepping aside after a divisive 15-year rule but will remain “paramount leader” in the country that continues to reject outside scrutiny.

The vote is one of the most important transfers of power in Burundi since independence in 1962.

Few face masks were observed, even on the ruling party’s candidate, as voters crammed close to each other in line. Some paused to wash their hands.

Burundi’s government has been criticized for not appearing to take the coronavirus pandemic seriously. Nkurunziza himself attended crowded political rallies. The country has 42 confirmed virus cases. “We are

not afraid because the organizers did not require us to distance 1 meter,” voter Ndayishimiye Innocent said. “They saw that God is with us.”

Regional observers are not present after being told that arriving foreigners would face a 14-day quarantine, and on Wednesday citizens and journalists said access to social media was not possible without a virtual private network.

“The government is cutting social media so that we don’t tell the world what is happening,” said one voter, Jean Pierre Bazikamwe. Ahead of the vote, government agents were accused of harassing the main opposition party, the CNL, whose leader Agathon Rwasa is believed to be in a close race with Nkurunziza’s chosen successor in the ruling CNDD-FDD, Evariste Ndayishimiye. *AP*

Cambridge Varsity: All lectures to be online-only until summer of 2021

London: Cambridge has become the first university in Britain to cancel all face-to-face lectures for the 2020-21 academic year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The university says all lectures will be held virtually and streamed online until summer 2021. Cambridge says it may be possible to hold tutorials and other teaching in small groups - a key part of the university’s system - when the new academic year starts in October, as long as social distancing can be followed. The pandemic has already upended student life. Cambridge moved all its teaching online in March, and exams are being held remotely.

British universities are warning they will face a financial crisis if students decide they don’t want to pay tuition fees - currently 9,250 a year (USD 11,300) in England - for a virtual experience. *AP*

S Koreans return to school amid virus outbreak

Seoul: South Korean students began returning to schools Wednesday as their country prepares for a new normal amid the coronavirus pandemic.

In a reminder that returning to normalcy won’t be easy, students in some schools near Seoul were quickly asked to leave and return home after two students were found to have contracted the virus.

Health authorities on Wednesday reported 32 new cases over a 24-hour period, the first time the daily jump has been above 30 in more than a week. Hundreds of thousands of high school seniors entered their schools after having their temperatures checked and rubbing their hands with sanitizers on Wednesday morning. *AP*

Pak woman legislator succumbs to Covid

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A 60-year-old woman legislator of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party in Punjab province died of COVID-19 on Wednesday, making her the first lawmaker in the country to succumb to the virus that has killed over 900 others in Pakistan.

Shaheen Raza, 60, was admitted to the Mayo hospital in Lahore a few days ago after she was tested positive for the coronavirus.

Her health deteriorated over the weekend following which she was put on ventilator, Gujranwala Deputy Commissioner Sohail Ashraf said.

However, Raza succumbed to the viral infection in the hospital on Wednesday, he said.

She was also suffering from other diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes and her situation deteriorated fast, officials said.

Prior to developing coronavirus symptoms, Raza had been inspecting various quarantine centres.

Raza was the only PTI member from Gujranwala district in the Punjab Assembly. She was elected on a special seat in 2018.

President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed deep grief and sorrow at her demise.

Afghan: Attacks kill 14 civilians, 9 militiamen

Kabul: Gunmen killed 14 people in two separate attacks in Afghanistan while the Taliban targeted pro-government checkpoints in the northeast, killing nine militiamen, officials said on Wednesday, the latest in relentless violence that continues to plague the war-torn nation.

The attacks came against the backdrop of renewed UN calls for an end to violence and as Washington’s special peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, embarked on another round of talks with the Taliban to press them to start negotiating with the newly reconciled Afghan political leadership in Kabul.

In Parwan province, north of the capital, Kabul, an unknown number of gunmen

stormed a mosque late on Tuesday, killing 11 worshippers and wounding several others, said Wahida Shahkar, spokeswoman for the provincial governor. Reports earlier in the day had eight killed.

Also late on Tuesday, gunmen in eastern Khost province attacked a family returning home from a nearby mosque, killing three brothers, according to Adil Haidari, spokesman for the provincial police chief. In both attacks, the gunmen fled the scene. No one claimed responsibility for either attack but the Taliban promptly denied involvement. The Islamic State group, which has been increasingly active in Afghanistan after suffering battlefield losses to government and US forces, as well as its Taliban rivals, has carried out similar attacks in the past. Washington blamed the IS for last week’s horrific attack on a maternity hospital in Kabul that killed 24 people, including two infants. In a third attack, the Taliban targeted checkpoints belonging to a local pro-government militia in northeastern Takhar province, killing nine militiamen, said Khalil Aser, spokesman for the provincial police chief. *AP*

Philippine police raid illicit hosp for virus patients

Manila: Philippine police raided a clandestine hospital and drugstore that was secretly treating Chinese nationals suspected of being infected with the coronavirus, police officials said Wednesday.

Two people were arrested and one patient was found during Tuesday’s raid at the residential villa that had been illegally turned into a seven-bed hospital and drug store, Police Brig. Gen. Rhoderick Armamento said.

More than 200 suspected coronavirus rapid test kits and syringes were recovered in trash cans at the villa, which has a small canteen with stacks of beer cases at the lobby entrance where a red sign welcomed visitors with well wishes in Chinese.

The hospital and drugstore are in a large room by the swimming pool at the back of the compound, according to Armamento and a police video.

The Chinese male patient was moved to a Philippine hospital. Those arrested were the Chinese administrator of the hospital, which may have been operating secretly for about three months, and a compatriot who manned the drugstore, he said. *AP*

कार्यालय मुख्य चिकित्सा अधिकारी, हापुड़।		
पत्रांक:—मु0चि0अ0 / निविदा / 2020–21 / दिनांक:— 20.05.2020		
ई–निविदा सूचना		
मुख्य चिकित्सा अधिकारी, हापुड़ के अन्तर्गत निम्नवत् ई–निविदा आमत्रित की जाती है जो कि दिनांक 21.05.2020 से 01.06.2020 को सायं 05.00 बजे तक वेबसाइट https://etender.up.nic.in पर प्राप्त कर अपलोड कर सकते है जो कि दिनांक 02.06.2020 को दोपहर 01.00 बजे से खोली जायेगी।		
क्र0 स0	कार्य का विवरण	निविदा खोलने की तिथि व समय
1.	नवनिर्मित 100 शैव्यायुक्त जिला सयुक्त चिकित्सालय हापुड़ की स्थापना हेतु आवश्यक उपकरणों/साज–सज्जा सामग्री के क्रय हेतु	02 जून, 2020 को दोपहर 01.00 बजे
हस्ता/–		
मुख्य चिकित्सा अधिकारी हापुड़।		

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE	
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)	
1. Name of work with its location	Hiring of 02 nos Trucks for carrying man and material for day to day maintenance of bridges, one each for SSE/Br/Sp/DBSI & SSE/Br/Sp/UMB for (02) Two years under the jurisdiction of Dy.CE/BL/TJK.
2. Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 4194851.83
3. Earnest Money	Rs. 83900.00
4. Completion period of the work	(24) Twenty Four Months
5. Cost of Tender form	Rs. 3000/- Note: - Cost of EMD & Tender Form should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only. FDR will not be accepted as cost of tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Boards letter no 2015/ICE-I/CT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016
6. Date & time for submission of tender & opening of tender	Upto 15.00 hrs on 15.06.2020 Opening of tender after 15:00 hrs on same day
7. Website particulars where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded.	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
Tender Notice No: 32-W-HIRING-TRUCK-TKJ Date: 19.05.2020	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	
1132/20	

United Nations: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Wednesday that the coronavirus pandemic threatens Africa’s progress and could push millions into extreme poverty.

The UN chief said in a video message launching a policy report on “The Impact of COVID-19 in Africa” that countries on the continent have responded swiftly to the crisis, and as of now reported cases are lower than feared with more than 2,500 deaths.

The virus is present in all African countries with most recording fewer than 1,000 cases, the 28-page UN report said.

The relatively low numbers of COVID-19 cases confirmed

thus far “have raised hopes that African countries may be spared the worst of the pandemic,” the report said.

“Caution is warranted, however, as these are early days in the life cycle of a disease that is still not fully understood and where we have seen repeated patterns of first slow, then exponential growth in the number of cases.”

The UN said the low numbers could be linked to minimal testing and reporting, pointing to a World Health Organisation warning that the pandemic “could kill between 83,000 and 190,000 people in 47 African countries in the first year, mostly depending on governments’ responses’ .extremism”. *AP*

Sensex builds on gains, jumps 622 pts

Nifty reclaims 9,000-mark

Mumbai: Benchmark indices marched higher for the second straight day on Wednesday as robust gains in market heavyweights HDFC twins and RIL offset lacklustre global cues.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 622.44 points or 2.06 per cent to settle at 30,818.61, while the broader NSE Nifty rose 187.45 points, or 2.11 cent, to 9,066.55.

Traders said encouraging corporate results bolstered investor confidence, though rising COVID-19 cases in India capped the gains.

Further, media reports said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has not ruled out announcing more measures to help the coronavirus-hit economy, which added to the buying momentum, they added.

M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging 5.92 per cent, followed by HDFC, L&T, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank and Sun Pharma.

Only four Sensex constituents ended in the red --



IndusInd Bank, Hero MotoCorp, Bharti Airtel and Asian Paints, shedding up to 2.85 per cent.

"Domestic markets opened flat but gained higher later during the day led by buying across all sectors. Positive statements from the Finance Minister also could have lifted markets (and showed) that the government was with industry and would do as much as possible depending on how the coronavirus pandemic will pan out, implying

there could be further stimulus ahead," said Paras Bothra, President of Equity Research, Ashika Stock Broking.

BSE healthcare, capital goods, finance, consumer durables and oil and gas indices rallied up to 3.16 per cent, while telecom ended in the red.

Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices spurred up to 1.49 per cent. Global markets were largely subdued after news reports cast doubts on some COVID-19 vaccine trials. **PTI**

Centre sanctions ₹46,038.70 cr as States' shares in taxes for May

New Delhi: The finance ministry on Monday said it has sanctioned ₹46,038.70 crore for May instalment of devolution of states' share in central taxes and duties.

"These releases, similar to April releases, have been calculated based on tax receipts projected in Budget 2020-21 & not as per actuals," the ministry said in a tweet.

It added that the Government of India's prime objective has been protecting states' revenues and meeting their liquidity requirements in their fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Budget had projected the share of the states in taxes at Rs 7.84 lakh crore for 2020-21. The 15th Finance Commission had recommended the share of states at 41 per cent of the divisible pool and 1 per cent for the newly-created union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. The 14th Finance Commission had recommended the states be given 42 per cent share in taxes. "Finance Ministry has issued sanction orders for ₹46,038.70 cr today for the May instalment of Devolution of States' Share in Central Taxes & Duties," the ministry said. **PTI**

Centre releases ₹15,340 crore GST compensation to States so far this fiscal

New Delhi: The Centre has released ₹15,340 crore GST compensation to the states and Union territories so far in the current fiscal, despite an insignificant revenue mop up from goods and services tax owing to the nationwide lockdown, according to sources.

For 2019-20 fiscal (up to November 2019), the Centre has released Rs 1,20,498 crore GST compensation, higher than Rs 69,275 crore released in full 2018-19 and Rs 41,146 crore in 2017-18. GST was rolled out on July 1, 2017.

The cess collection in 2019-20, 2018-19 and 2017-18 fiscal was Rs 95,000 crore, Rs 95,081 crore and Rs 62,611 crore, respectively.

As the compensation requirement of the states was less than collection in the first two years (2017-18 and 2018-19) of GST rollout, Rs 47,271 crore GST cess collected had remained unutilised in the compensation kitty.

Finance Ministry sources said since the end of August 2019, the central government has started realising the impending precarious position in paying GST compensation to the states and UTs as the compensation cess requirement was being double of the

average monthly cess collection.

"On an average the monthly GST compensation cess requirement was to the tune of ₹14,000 crore while the cess collection average was only in the range of ₹7,000 to ₹8,000 crore per month," a source said.

In the current fiscal year, the central government has released Rs 15,340 crore to the states and UTs as GST compensation despite an almost insignificant collection practically due to relief provided in terms of filing of return and payment of taxes owing to the lockdown caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the source added.

With dwindling cess kitty, the options left with the GST Council were to either bring more items under the cess base by expanding the base of GST cess items or to increase cess rate on the existing items.

"Any increase in compensation cess on few items could only yield about Rs 2,000-3,000 crore a year. Therefore, the other options left were to either forego full cess compensation which was increasing at the rate 14 per cent per annum or to go ahead with whatever compensation is

available. One more option was to raise the tax rate on items by rationalisation of rates by shuffling slab rates," another source said.

For 2019-20 fiscal, despite lower GST revenue collection, the Centre has cleared compensation till November, 2019, without any discrimination between states. For the period of December 2019-March 2020, GST compensation payout is due.

Compensation is released on a pro-rata basis uniformly for all states without discriminating among them, a source said, adding the calculation of compensation is done in transparent manner and is shared with the states.

Under GST law, states were guaranteed to be paid for any loss of revenue in the first five years of the GST implementation from July 1, 2017. The shortfall is calculated assuming a 14 per cent annual growth in GST collections by states over the base year of 2015-16. Under the GST structure, taxes are levied under 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent slabs. On top of the highest tax slab, a cess is levied on luxury, sin and demerit goods and the proceeds from the same are used to compensate states for any revenue loss. **PTI**

Paper demand to shrink by 10-15% in FY21: Crisil Research

Mumbai: The nationwide lockdown to curb the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted demand for paper and paper boards which is likely to witness a 10-15 per cent year-on-year decline in 2020-21, according to Crisil Research.

The extended lockdown to stem the COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a nasty blow to the highly fragmented paper industry in India, Crisil Research said in a report.

The demand has shrunk as schools and colleges are shutdown, while majority of offices have also crimped demand for writing and printing (W&P) paper.

Industrial paper usage has also crumpled because of weakness in FMCG, consumer durables and apparel segments, which account for 50-60 per cent of demand, it said.

The demand for paper and boards is expected to contract 10-15 per cent this financial year compared to the previous year, the report said, adding all categories of products will be affected. Around 80 per cent of the nation's paper capacity of 25 million tonnes (750-800 mills) is clustered around six states that account for half of India's gross domestic product. **PTI**

Ravi Dadhich takes over as Director (HR) Delhi Transco Ltd

New Delhi: Ravi Dadhich, a dynamic and result oriented bureaucrat of DAN-ICS (1996 batch) has taken over as Director (HR) of Delhi Transco Limited.

An alumnus of Maharaja College Jaipur — University of Rajasthan, Dadhich has done his post graduation in Sociology.

During his illustrious career spanning over twenty five years, Dadhich has held many challenging postings in Delhi as well as in Lakshadweep.

His first posting was as SDM — Preet Vihar Delhi. Among the other few important postings Dadhich has held in Government of NCT of



Ravi Dadhich

Delhi include as Officer on Special Duty to Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Additional Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister, Member (Administration) — Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, Secretary to Minister (Transport) and Additional Commissioner (Food and Civil Supplies). In Lakshadweep, he has been Additional District Magistrate, Director (Tourism) and CEO, District Panchayat.

Dadhich has also worked with Delhi Development Authority and New Delhi Municipal Council and has vast experience of urban development sector.

L&T Infotech shares surge nearly 7% after Q4 results

New Delhi: IT company L&T Infotech shares rallied nearly 7 per cent on Wednesday after the firm reported a 12.9 per cent growth in consolidated net profit for the January-March 2020 quarter.

Stock of the company jumped 6.86 per cent to close at ₹1,783.60 on the BSE. During the trade, it advanced 9.75 per cent to ₹1,832.

It zoomed 5.31 per cent to close at ₹1,759 on the NSE. L&T Infotech on Tuesday reported a 12.9 per cent growth in consolidated net profit to ₹427.5 crore for the January-March 2020 quarter. This is against a net profit of ₹378.5 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said. Its revenue was up 21.2 per cent to ₹3,011.9 crore in the reported quarter from ₹2,486 crore in the year-ago period, L&T Infotech (LTI) added. **PTI**

Bangladesh, India add 5 more ports of call

Dhaka: India and Bangladesh on Wednesday added five more ports of call that would augment bilateral trade and provide stimulus to the economic development of the new locations and their hinterland.

The five new ports of call in Bangladesh side are Rajshahi, Sultanganj, Chilmari, Daudkandi and Bahadurabad, while in Indian side are Dhulian, Maia, Kolaghat, Sonamura and Jogigopha, the Daily Star reported.

Bangladesh's Shipping Secretary Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Riva Ganguly Das signed the addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade here, the report said.

Under the protocol, presently there are six ports of call. They are Kolkata, Haldia, Karimganj, Pandu, Shilghat

and Dhubri on Indian side and Narayanganj, Khulna, Mongla, Sirajganj, Ashuganj and Pangaon on the Bangladesh side.

Further, two more extended ports of call — Tribeni (Bandel) and Badarpur on Indian side and Ghorasal and Muktapur on Bangladesh side — have been added through this addendum.

Now, total ports of call are 11 and there are two extended ports of call in both countries. The Inclusion of Jogigopha in India and Bahadurabad in Bangladesh as a new port of call will provide connectivity to Meghalaya, Assam as well as Bhutan.

Jogigopha also becomes important, since a multimodal logistics park is proposed to be established there, said Indian High Commission in a statement. **PTI**

PMVY rate of return reduced to 7.4%, scheme extended till March 2023


New Delhi: The Government on Wednesday fixed the annual rate of return for Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVY), a social security scheme for senior citizens, at 7.4 per cent for 2020-21, down from 8 per cent in the previous fiscal, as it extended the scheme by three years.

The Union Cabinet extended the PMVY up to March 31, 2023 for a further period of three years beyond March 31, 2020 and also allowed "initially an assured rate of return of 7.40 per cent per annum for the year 2020-21 per annum and thereafter to be reset every year", an official release said.

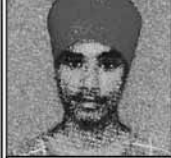
In Union Budget 2018-19, the government had extend the scheme up to March 2020 with an assured return of 8 per cent, and also doubled the investment limit per senior citizen to ₹15 lakh.

The release further said the Cabinet also approved an annual reset of assured rate of interest with effect from April 1 of financial year, in line with revised rate of returns of Senior Citizens Saving Scheme (SCSS) up to a ceiling of 7.75 per cent, with fresh appraisal of the scheme on breach of this threshold at any point. **PTI**

WESTERN RAILWAY
SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM
Tender No.:**SG_244_64_WA_CCTV dated- 18/05/2020**, Department: Signal & Telecomm. Executive: Sr.DSTE(N)/BCT.
Work and location: Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Video Surveillance system in connection with implementation of Integrated Security system (ISS) at Surat Station of Non Suburban Section of Mumbai, Division, Western Railway. **Approx. Cost of Work: ₹1,81,90,418/-**. **EMD: ₹2.41,000/-**. **Particular office where E-tender open:** Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer(North), 2nd Floor, Divisional Railway Manager's Office, Mumbai Central, Mumbai-400 008. **Time & Date for closure for submission of E-Tender Documents:** On 15.00 hrs. on 19.06.2020. **Time & Date for opening of E-tender:** On 15.30 hrs. on 19.06.2020. The tender can be viewed at web site <http://www.irops.gov.in>.
Follow us on: [Twitter](#) [twitter.com/WesternRly](#)

<div>  हरियाणा सहकार  </div>					
CORRIGENDUM NOTICE					
SR. No.	NAME OF BOARD CORP./AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/NIT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, AMBALA CITY	MCA/XEN/2020/1119 DATED 02.05.2020	Closing date of Tender extended from 19-05-2020 to 27-05-2020 at 05:00 PM	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	mcamb.54@gmail.com
2	DHBVN HISAR	NIT NO. - 02/SE/CBO/MRBD/2020 (ID 2020_HBC_127960_1)	EXTENDING CLOSING DATE UPTO 22.06.2020 & PRE - BID MEETING RE-SCHEDULED ON 04.06.2020	www.dhbvn.org.in	8059900357 Secbo@dhbvn.org.in
3	HVPNL PANCHKULA	NIT NO.12/2019-20/XEN/TS DIVISION, HVPNL, HISAR DATED: -14/02/2020 (ONLINE TENDER ID NO. 2020_HBC_118292_1)	Last date of online bid submission is extended upto 26/05/2020 (13:00 hrs) Due date for opening of E-tender (Technical Bid):- 27/05/2020 at 15:00 hrs.	www.hvpn.org.in	0172-2583789 pro@hvpn.org.in
4	HVPNL PANCHKULA	21/GNL-161 DATED 22.03.2020	The last date of online bid submission is extended up to 03.06.2020.	www.hvpn.org.in	
5	HVPNL PANCHKULA	02/CCD-344/VOL-VI DATED 11.05.2020	The last date of online bid submission is extended up to 04.06.2020.	www.hvpn.org.in	
6	HVPNL PANCHKULA	22/CCD-286/VOL-XI/2020-21 DATED 17.03.2020	The last date of online bid submission is extended up to 02.06.2020	www.hvpn.org.in	
7	HVPNL PANCHKULA	03/CCD-190/H/VOL-IX DATED 13.05.2020	The last date of online bid submission is extended up to 03.06.2020	https://www.hvpn.org.in	
8	HPGCL, PANCHKULA	15/CE/PLG/BIOMASS U-V/313/VOL-II DATED 05.03.2020	The due date of Bid submission is extended up to 02.06.2020 till 13:00 hrs and opening of Part-I (Techno-Commercial Bid) shall be on 04.06.2020 at 15:00 hrs. (Please check department website for further details).	www.hpgcl.org.in	0172-5022439 rajesh.verma@hpgcl.org.in ceplg@hpgcl.org.in
9	HPGCL,PANIPAT	(NIT NO.PTP/POM-331722) (TENDER ID 2020_HBC_115225_1)	Start date 15.01.2020 at 17:00 hrs. & Last date 29.05.2020at 13:00 hrs	www.hpgcl.org.in	0180-2566015 xenmtcplg1@gmail.com
10	HPGCL HISAR	2020_HBC_118209_1 NIT NO.310/RGTPP/MM-II/TOE-4013 DT. 13.02.2020	Corrigendum -3rd Due Date of Bid submission 26.05.2020 up to 15:00 Hrs Opening is 02.06.2020 up to 15.30 Hrs. Supply of TFT Monitors, External & Internal Hard disk & coaxial to RJ45 Hub at RGTPP, Khedar	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	8222023551 mm2rgtpp@gmail.com
11	HPGCL,PANIPAT	(NIT NO.PTP/POM-200026) (TENDER ID 2020_HBC_119537_1)	Start date 20.02.2020 & Last date 29.05.2020 at 13:00 hrs	www.hpgcl.org.in	0180-2566015 xenmtcplg1@gmail.com
12	HPGCL,PANIPAT	(NIT NO.PTP/POM-200030) (TENDER ID 2020_HBC_119547_1)	Start date 20.02.2020 & Last date 29.05.2020 at 13:00 Hrs	www.hpgcl.org.in	0180-2566015 xenmtcplg1@gmail.com
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in					RO NO. 80962

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



Govinda

General Public is hereby informed that one boy **Namely: Govinda, S/o: Shishpal, R/o: H. No. 36/26, B-Block, Suraj Park Colony, Sector 18, Rohini, Delhi** has been missing since **18.04.2020** at 11 am. from his house from the area of P.S. Samaypur Badli, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **FIR 304/20 U/s 363 IPC dated 19.04.2020** has been lodged at P.S. Samaypur Badli, Delhi. The description of the missing boy are as under: **Age:** 16 years 6 months, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5', **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Hair:** Normal, **Wearing:** Yellow colour shirt, blue colour jeans and blue colour ladies hawai slipper in his feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the boy but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this boy kindly inform to the following.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639
DP/227/ON/2020

SHO
P.S. Samai Pur Badli, Delhi
Ph.: 011- 27854757, 7065036326

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that this person **Named: Ram Ratan, S/o: Bhojal Prasad, R/o: Unknown, Age:** 35/45 years approx, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'5", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Built:** Normal, **Face:** Round, **Wearing:** Multi Colour Shirt. has been found dead at 64/16, Indra Basti, Timarpur, Delhi on 04.05.2020 in the area of PS Timarpur, Delhi.

In this regard a DD No. 18-B, U/s 174 Cr. PC, dated 04.05.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Timarpur, North District, Delhi. Dead Body has been kept preserved in Subzi mandi Mortuary for 72 hours for identification.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S. Timarpur, Delhi
Ph.: 011-23812734, 23814421
DP/217/N/2020(UIDB)

SEARCH FOR MISSING



Kiran Pandey

General public is hereby informed that a female namely **Kiran Pandey, W/o: Badri Nath Pandey, R/o: H. No. 1265, Gali No. 2, near Ramtalab Bada Shiva mandir, Alipur** has been reported missing since **02.05.2020** from the area of P.S. Alipur, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 22A, dated **04.05.2020** has been registered at P.S. Alipur, Delhi. The description of missing female is as under:

Name: Kiran Pandey, **Age:** 22 Years, **Height:** 5'5", **Face:** Long, **Complexion:** Brown, **Hair:** Long, **Wearing:** Grey colour suit and salwar.

If anyone have any information about this missing female please inform P.S. Alipur, Delhi.

Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, **Email:** cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638/24368641, **Fax:** 011-24368639

SHO
Police Station, Alipur Delhi
Ph: 011-27202265, 7065036325
DP/230/ON/2020

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)	
Name of work with its location	Hiring of (02) Two Nos. Non AC road Multi Utility Vehicle (Innova, Scorpio/Bolero or equivalent on monthly basis in jurisdiction of Dy. CE/BL/T&J for official use, for a period of two years.
Approximate Cost of Work	₹25,64,994.52
Earnest Money	₹49,300/-
Completion period of the work	(24) Twenty Four Months
Cost of Tender form	₹3,000/- Note: Cost of EMD & Tender Form should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only. FDR will not be accepted as cost of tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Boards letter no. 2015/CE-I/CT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016.
Date & Time for submission of tender & opening of tender	Upto 15:00 hrs. on 15.06.2020 Opening of tender after 15:00 hrs. on same day.
Website Particulars where complete details of tender can be seen & downloaded.	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.irops.gov.in
Tender Notice No.: 32-W-HIRING-MUV-DLI-2020 Dated : 19.05.2020 1133/20	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

GULSHAN POLYOLS LIMITED
CIN: L24231UP2000PLC034918
Regd. Off.: 9th K.M. Jansath Road, Muzaffarnagar - 251001 (U.P)
Website: www.gulshanindia.com, email:- cs@gulshanindia.com
Tel:- 011-49999200, Ext. 237 Fax:- 011-49999202

NOTICE OF BOARD MEETING
Notice is hereby given that the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on **Tuesday, 26th May, 2020** through Audio Visual / Video Conference, inter alia, to consider and approve the Audited Financial Results of the Company for the Quarter (Q4) and Year ended **31st March, 2020**, and, if any and other matters. The information contained in this Notice is also available on Company's website www.gulshanindia.com and on the Stock Exchange website: www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com

For Gulshan Polyols Limited
Sd/-
(Vijay Garg)
Company Secretary

Delhi
May 19, 2020

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
NOTICE INVITING TENDER	
Name of work and its location	30-Elect-63-T-R1-2019-20-E3 Electrical work in connection with Provision of escalators at Delhi Main (10 Nos.), Ghaziabad (02 Nos.), Meerut city (04 Nos.) and Faridabad (02 Nos.) over Delhi division. (Total 18 Nos.).
Approx cost of the works in Rs.	75.86 lacs
Address of the office	Sr. Divl Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
Earnest Money	Rs. 151700.00
Date & time of submission of tender	15.0


Trend Blazer


Quarantine the bitterness: Big B

AMITABH BACHCHAN on Wednesday shared a post urging people to let go of bitterness.

“Aye man me kisi kone me kisi ke bare me padi kadwahat ko quarantine kare kya pata koi rishta ventilator par jaane se ruk jaye (Let’s quarantine the bitterness lying in some corner of our mind. Who knows, this way we might prevent a relationship from being put in tough times),” he wrote.

Along with it, he posted a video that shows him smiling as he places his hand on his heart.





‘I was very concerned when I got to know about my mother’s fall and the fracture to the right arm. My first impulse was to rush to Delhi but that was not possible due to the lockdown. So as soon as the process opened up, I applied for permission and travelled by road from Mumbai to Delhi.’

—Swara Bhasker



Andrew Millison, international permaculture designer and a professor at Oregon State University recently released an episode on his YouTube channel on **AAMIR KHAN** and **KIRAN RAO**’s Paani Foundation.

Andrew visited a village in Maharashtra to understand the work that they do on watershed management. He was completely amazed by the work the villagers have learnt doing, thanks to the water cup competition, held by the Paani Foundation and described it as the biggest permaculture project on this Earth. He even made a short film on the same.

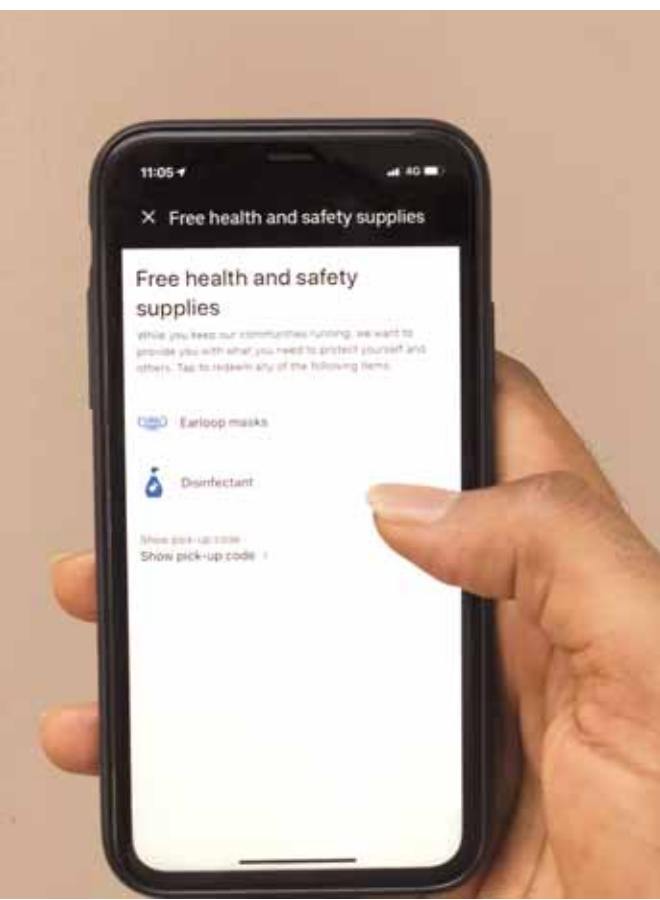
Ruby Rose quits Batwoman

Actor **RUBY ROSE** has bid adieu to *Batwoman* just after one season, and says it was difficult to take the decision to quit the lead role.

“I have made the very difficult decision to not return to *Batwoman* next season,” said Rose.

She added: “This was not a decision I made lightly as I have the utmost respect for the cast, crew and everyone involved with the show. I am beyond appreciative to them.”





NECESSITY, THE MOTHER OF MANY INVENTIONS

During a time when normal life has gone for a toss, many brands have come up with out-of-the-box products to protect frontline warriors and common people. By **AYUSHI SHARMA**

While ringing in 2020, like every year, we made resolutions about leading a better lifestyle, creating a balanced mental canvas, visiting new holiday destinations and so on... Who would have thought that the year would be a harbinger of a phenomenon that would bring the world to a grinding halt leaving us wondering what had hit us? This time might be one of the toughest for the world, but then it is human tendency to turn around adversity. Formulation of products that help the frontline warriors and common people appears to be the perfect example of how necessity and tough times can often lead to new inventions.

Stay home, stay safe — the motto today continues to be true for everyone who can adhere to it and feel secure. But it is not an option for those who are stationed at forefront fighting the pandemic every day with faces buried inside masks that make breathing cumbersome, wearing the protective clothing and tackling scary life situations day in and day out. In such a crisis, Desmania, the brainchild of alumnus of NID, has come up with the Full Face Mask D’Armor, a protective face mask.

The product is primarily an amalgamation of the mask and face shield, smartly crafted to snugly fit the face and get adjusted according to the facial contours. It is thoughtfully formulated to address issues faced by users. For instance, heavy breathing, fogging up of the shield which reduces visibility, overall bulkiness of the equipment which makes quick transitions difficult, are all taken into account and resolved.

While the focus is on hygiene these days, the dumping of disposable masks can eventually lead to biological hazards in times to come. Backed up by professionals at AIIMS and IIT Delhi, Face Armor keeps this aspect in view as well. It’s washable and abides with the norms of sustainability. Much in line with the nano and N95 masks, this product can be reused without compromising safety or burning a hole in your pocket.

The brand is diligently conceptualising other products for door to door vendors and delivery boys, who are at equal risk. For instance, they have made a belt equipped with modular compartments that can be adjusted as per the need. It has a place to keep a sanitiser bottle, hook their helmet and a cash collecting box so that hygiene is not compromised.

Taking cognisance of the current situation, Bata India Limited has launched anti-bacterial shoes for children. Matteo Lambert, chief collection officer of the brand, feels that change in consumer behaviour is bound to be a natural fall-out of the on-going crisis. In the post-pandemic world, health and safety would be of paramount importance for everyone. He says, “Brands that employ the best of safety measures, right from the production stage to the final delivery are going to be in vogue. Fashion alone would not be the deciding factor and that would be a game changer as consumers would be cautious about what they are purchasing and the kind of risks they expose themselves to. An increased receptiveness to products that are durable and offer more protection will be seen. These shoes can be easily washed and sanitised, without

impairing their make and material.” “From what the consumers are eating to what they are wearing, everything will have to measure up to standard benchmarks of safety and hygiene. Keeping these safety concerns in mind, Bata is planning to include feet sanitisers, wipes and face masks in the bouquet of product offerings. We want to ensure that we are well equipped in advance to meet the evolving consumer demands,” adds he.

To step up safety standards for riders and drivers, U b e r launched a comprehensive set of measures, ramped up the distribution of millions of PPE kits to drivers and introduced safety awareness education video courses for them. Uber’s new in-app safety feature will notify drivers to replenish their PPE supplies after they have completed a predetermined number of trips. The notification will provide a list of convenient pick up points and generate a QR code once they select the preferred location. An Uber volunteer will scan the QR code at the designated pick up location and hand over PPE supplies to drivers.

In case drivers choose to source the required PPE themselves, the brand promises to reimburse the cost.

Distribution of PPE kits has been ongoing in Green and Orange zones since the relaxation of the lockdown. As a part of its safety initiatives, the company has also made it mandatory for driver partners to complete ride-sharing specific educational videos, highlighting standard operating procedures for vehicle disinfection and other COVID-19 related safety protocols.

Drivers can only take trips, once they have watched these videos to ensure they’re following the safety protocols.

Pavan Vaish, head of Central Operations, Uber India, shares, “The safety of everyone who uses our platform is a priority. We ordered millions of masks and sanitisers at an early stage of the pandemic. Our new distribution technology ensures that drivers can get these safety supplies over a long period of time. As authorities lift the lockdown and millions prepare to get back to work, we will double our efforts to set industry standards for safety.”

The pandemic has pressurised and overburdened our healthcare systems and is challenging their preparedness to deal with the emergency scenarios in an

unprecedented manner. Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS), Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) and DRDO laboratories have developed an Ultraviolet C Light-based sanitisation box. This can be used to sanitise objects like keys and wallets. The organisations have also developed a handheld UV-C device with a wavelength of 254 nanometres.

On the same lines, nanotechnology start-up, Log 9 Materials, has invented an effective solution in the form of a disinfection chamber — CoronaOven. The product uses UV-C light (based upon the scientific principle of Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation) to kill the virus and other pathogens within 10 minutes after an object is placed inside the box for decontamination. It has been designed based on the study done on SARS virus. It’s as easy to use as a microwave. Put your products to be disinfected inside the box, turn it on for 10 minutes and they will be virus-free.

The question that arises now is how much will such products last? Will they continue to be necessities even after we emerge from the pandemic? Kartik Hajela, co-founder and COO of the brand, tells us that COVID-19 will definitely lead to a consumer behaviour shift. “We anticipate hygiene and sanitisation becoming one of the major categories and hence, the UV based sterilisation technology we are bringing to the market will be adopted even after the current situation stabilises,” says he.

Of course, humans will continue to shop but the whats and whys of the products are all set to change.

Entertained through innovative storytelling: Anushka Sharma

The success of *Paatal Lok* is because of its content,” says actor-producer Anushka Sharma, who has produced the series along with her brother, Karnesh Sharma under their production house Clean Slate Filmz.

The show, created by Sudip Sharma has got overwhelming appreciation from critics and audience. People have credited Anushka, who became the youngest actor-producer at the age of 25 with *NH10*, for giving the country an amazing show.

Anushka says, “I’m overwhelmed with the love and adulation that audience and critics have showered on our labour of love *Paatal Lok*. Its success is because of the content. In today’s day and age, superlative content is truly the most important yardstick and Karnesh and I, have always looked to give audience something that they might have never seen before.”

She adds, “As a producer and an actor, I have only tried to entertain through innovative, highly engaging and clutter-breaking storytelling. Karnesh and I realised quite early that content landscape was going to witness a massive change as we get exposed to global content. I have tried to bring

my learnings here.”

According to the actor, the success of the show validates the company’s strategic focus on content curation. “Despite being a young production house, we have stuck our neck out and thankfully our instinctive content choices have stood out. It has been a huge learning experience for all of us at Clean Slate Filmz as we have taken baby steps into having a razor-sharp focus on content curation. The success of *Paatal Lok* is a massive validation of our beliefs, planning and curation strategies,” says she and goes on to add: “We share this incredible moment with our entire team, who have shared our vision and taught us many things in the process. It is Sudip’s brilliance that has captured the underbelly from a lens that’s unique, inspiring and discomforting.”

The actor adds that the directors of the show Prosit Roy and Avinash Arun Dhaware have starkly and breathtakingly brought alive the rawness of the script on screen and the talented cast led by Jaideep Ahlawat, Neeraj Kabi, Abhishek Banerjee and the likes of Swastika Mukherjee, Niharika, Jagjeet, Gul Panag, Ishwak, Asif Basra, among others have poured their hearts out to translate the magic of script to screen.



Hope, promise and excitement

Actor **DIA MIRZA** says that staying authentic set her apart during Miss India and continues to define her now

From an actor to a producer to an environmental changemaker, Dia Mirza juggles her myriad roles with ease. But for a then 18-year-old Dia, the Hindi film industry was a world far removed from hers. The journey actually began with the Miss India pageant. “It feels almost surreal to look back 20 years. I was so young when it all happened,” she says as she reminisces on an experience that made the innocent, young Hyderabad girl a household name, popular for her endearing smile and positivity. “The year 2000 marked a new millennium, bringing with it a sense of hope, promise and excitement”, she adds.

Interestingly, Dia was never one who dreamt of winning a beauty pageant, but instead came from a very different world. “I happened to be spotted by a modeling agent who offered me a part-time job at 16. Everything happened very quickly after that — advertising campaigns, fashion shows, editorial shoots. One thing led to another and I was selected from Hyderabad for the Miss India pageant. I remember my mother being really surprised that I wanted to take part,” the actor recalls. Dia, who had never left Hyderabad before in her life, vividly remembers adapting



to life in Mumbai. “It was a journey that brought love and encouragement, but was still very daunting to be go through alone. As an individual, I have never believed in competition, so for me it was about putting my best foot forward, enjoying myself and learning as much as I could,” she said. Dia went on to be crowned Miss India - Asia Pacific

later that year, an important step in her dynamic journey of becoming an actor-producer and now an important voice of environmental and wildlife conservation.

Dia still remembers the feeling and chaos of that winning moment. “We were announced the winners, crowned, wore our sashes, took that final walk, and had thousands of lights and cameras flashing in front of us — through all of that, I remember thinking ‘where are my parents? I want to meet them’ In that moment I truly realised how happiness can be truly cherished when you have your family to share it with.”

But as a winner just crowned, she found herself whisked away for the iconic Femina cover photo-shoot with actor Shah Rukh Khan. “That was a whole experience in itself, as the camera caught me looking at him in complete awe and love,” she candidly added.

Another iconic moment which Dia remembers fondly was when she got a chance to share the stage for a big group picture with all the previous international title winners from India — Aishwarya Rai, Sushmita Sen, Diana Hayden and Yukta Mookhey along with her and that year’s other two winners — Lara and Priyanka. The three of them went on to win their respective international titles as well.

From being a regular girl from Hyderabad to living the dream in Mumbai, Dia cruised along the year 2000 gracefully as she only aimed to stay true to herself. Over the years hundreds of young women from across the country compete to become a beauty queen and forge for themselves a name in Bollywood. “I recognised how lucky I was to be offered such an opportunity and I couldn’t take it for granted,” she says, ever grateful for her experience. Ask Dia what is the one thing that has stayed with her through since then, and she says without batting an eyelid, “Be yourself. Staying authentic and speaking my truth was what set me apart then and continues to define me even now.”



RELIEF TO CHHATTISGARH FARMERS

Under the *Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojna* launched by Chief Minister BHUPESH BAGHEL, an incentive of ₹5,700 crore will be transferred to more than 18 lakh farmers' accounts

The *Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojna* has been launched today on the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel through video conferencing. The scheme will benefit over 19 lakh farmers in the state and encourage them to produce more crops. It will come as a relief to farmers during this time of crisis.

What it holds
Under the scheme, ₹5,700 crore will be transferred directly into accounts of farmers in four installments. More than 18 lakh farmers (approximately 18,34,834) will be provided ₹1,500 crore as first installment for paddy crop.

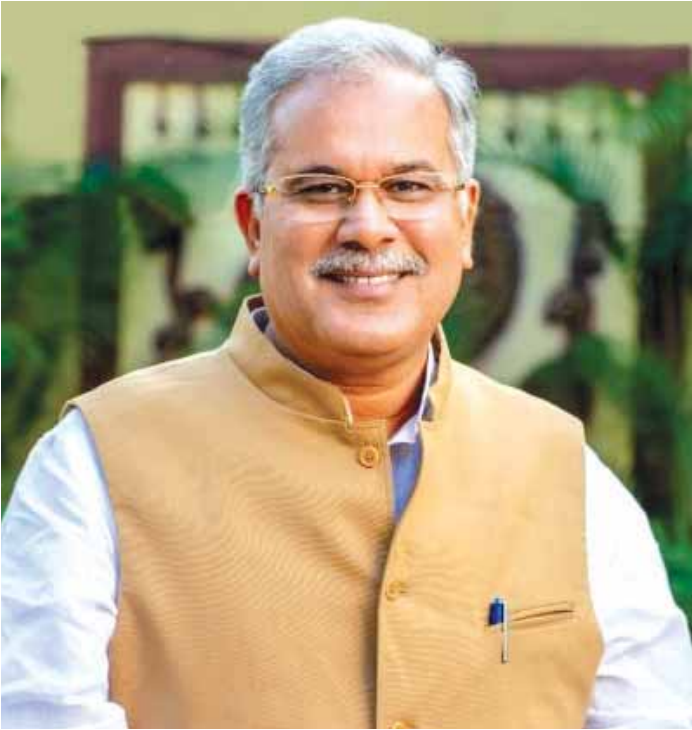
The financial assistance calculated on the basis of ₹10,000 per acre will be deposited to each beneficiary account based on registered area and area under cultivation during Kharif crop season 2019 as an agricultural assistance grant through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for procuring crops like paddy, maize and sugarcane (Rabi).

Purpose and aim
Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojna is initiated in the state to assist agri-

cultural inputs with an aim to encourage crop production. The scheme has been partially implemented from Kharif 2019 with retrospective effect.

Who are to be benefitted?
For farmers planting paddy and maize crops in Kharif 2019 through the medium of cooperative societies or on the basis of input ratio, the maximum amount is ₹10,000 per acre. It will cover around 9,53,706 marginal farmers, 5,60,284 small farmers, 3,20,844 big farmers — from Raipur, Durg, Bilaspur, Surguja, and Bastar divisions. Farmers of acquired maize crop are also to be benefitted under the scheme in Kharif 2019 through Cooperative Society. Data related to procurement is being obtained from the concerned department. On the basis of this, payment will be made to farmers producing maize in the next installment.

Providing support to sugarcane farmers
Under the *Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana*, for the year 2019-20, for crushing sugarcane crop purchased by the cooperative factory on the basis of the quantity of sugar-



cane, the FRP amount is ₹261 per quintal and a total of 93.75 incentives per quintal that is, maximum of ₹355 per quintal will be paid. Under this, more than 34,000 farmers of the state will get ₹73.55 crore in four installments. Sugarcane factory-wise benefi-

ciary in crushing year 2019-20 under the scheme are — Bhoramdev Sugar Factory, Kawardha; Maa Mahamaya Sugar Factory, Ambikapur; Maa Danteshwari Mayya Sugar Factory, Balod; and Loh Purush Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sugar Factory, Pandaria.

Payment of outstanding bonus for sugarcane
Payment of outstanding bonus of sugarcane crop crushing in the year 2018-19 through cooperative sugar factory, depending on the quantity of sugarcane, incentive ₹27 crore will be given to 24,414 farmers on the basis of ₹50 per quintal. Under this, ₹10.27 crore will be distributed.

Inclusion of more crops from next season
State government has also included sugarcane crops, paddy, maize, soyabean, groundnut, sesame, pigeonpea, moong, urad, kulthi, ramtil, kodo, kotki and rabi from kharif 2020 in the *Yojna*. It has

also been said that if farmers, taking the grant for paddy crop last year, replace the paddy with other crops included in the scheme this year, then, in such a situation, they will be given an additional assistance per acre.

Strengthening rural economy
In order to make the state economy dynamic and strong, Chhattisgarh government has transferred an amount of ₹900 crore to farmers in their accounts in times of crisis under crop insurance and *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Yojana*. Earlier, under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the state government had waived ₹8,800 crore loan for about 18 lakh farmers and provided relief to farmers by taking steps like four-time compensation on agricultural land acquisition, irrigation tax waiver.

Generating employment through MNREGA and other ways (forest produce)
During lockdown, the Chhattisgarh government has gen-

erated employment under the Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Scheme that has directly benefitted 23 lakh villagers. For people depending on forest produce, collection of 16.71 lakh standard sacks of tendu leaves has been fixed in the forest areas of the state. It will benefit about 12.53 lakh collectors. Chhattisgarh accounts for 98 per cent of the total forest produce across India. It is the major source of income for millions of families in the state. In the current season, the government has committed to pay ₹649 crore to people dependent on forest produce. The state government has announced an additional incentive of ₹13 per kg for the fixed support price of Mahua flower at ₹17 per kg. Similarly, in addition to the support price in the purchase of Kusumi lac, Rangeeni lac and Kullu gum, additional incentive is being given by the state government. To increase the income of the tribals, the government has ensured the middle-market free system and purchase of forest produce at the right price. Tendu leaf collection rate has been increased to ₹4,000 per standard bag. Also, the number of forest produce purchased at support price has been increased to ₹25 from ₹7.

DDA opens its complexes

Keeping norms of safety and social distancing in check, the Delhi Development Authority has listed the restrictions and facilities available for its sports club members

In compliance with government guidelines for partial lifting of lockdown, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has opened its sports complexes and Golf Courses today keeping in place restrictions and social distancing norms due to COVID-19. The DDA sports complexes will adhere to the laid down protocol. Persons above 65 years of age, children below 10 years of age and persons with co-morbidity or those suffering from chronic disease will be prohibited entry. Sports which will be opened for members are for tennis, badminton, table tennis, golf-driving range, shooting range, archery, walking and jogging track. The timings will be from 8 am to 6 pm. Protocol for facilities which will be opened for members:

- Tennis — Singles only
- Badminton — (i) Alternate courts will be opened for use by members; (ii) singles only
- Table Tennis — Singles only
- Jogging track/walking — 50 members only
- Shooting Range — Alternate shooting bays to be provided (Keeping minimum distance of six metres)
- Archery — Alternate shooting bays to be provided (Keeping minimum distance of six metres)
- Golf Driving Range — Alternate bays to be opened

Sports complexes will also allot slots for members with timings for each facility which is being opened. Only those members who have been allotted booking token will be allowed into the sports complex. Members without booking will not be allowed entry inside the sports complex.

Where online booking is available, members will book online and slots with token will be allotted by complex management. Sports complexes which do not have online booking will provide offline booking and issue token. Complex management will place temporary receptions at the main entrance gate for this.

Sports complexes will provide entry to members and staffs through main entrance gate of the complex only. All other gates will be closed and locked and notices will be put up.

Here are the mandatory accessories to be carried by members:

- Slot booking token
- Aarogya Setu App on mobile phone, which will be asked to show at the gate
- Compulsory face mask and gloves
- Pocket hand sanitiser
- Every member will have to get their temperature check at the entrance
- Sanitising shoes at the entry of indoor facilities
- Drinking water bottle and towel
- Sports equipment like badminton, tennis or table tennis rackets, shuttle cocks and tennis balls
- No sharing allowed

Following facilities inside the sports complexes will not be available:

- Lockers for player
- Bathing room
- Changing room
- Coaching facilities

Sunaayy makes way for the poor

At this time, when the world is facing a huge crisis due to COVID-19 outbreak, Sunaayy Foundation has come forward to distribute food and other relief materials to migrant labourers, underprivileged children and their families. Everyone has come forward to volunteer their services or with their valuable contribution towards this great cause.

The most remarkable ones are the participation of senior school students from India as well as various parts of the world who have come forward as the volunteers for innovative fundraising activities, creating awareness about various cultural aspects, bad effects of drugs and topics relevant to other social lacunas through online interactive activities, conducting chess and art classes, designing and conceptualising social media and other collaterals, and many other impactful work in their own ways.

Anika Singh, a student of grade 9, Robbinsville High School, New Jersey, USA, said, "Sunaayy Foundation and my family has a deep relation. I, my sister and my mother are engaged with it and it has somehow found a way in our lives. I work with Sunaayy to teach the kids, raise funds and spread awareness related to the organisation, among friends and strangers. Most recently, I am making efforts to raise awareness and funds in these difficult times."

Seattle, USA-based Siona Wadhwani, a student of grade 10, University Prep School, said, "Even though away from India,



I do best and everything in my capacity to help Sunaayy Foundation through fundraising. Whenever I am there, I make sure to visit the schools and get firsthand experience of the amazing work done by the organisation and Richa (Prasant, founder) aunt, who has also taught me that passion and determination can change the lives of many. I had the opportunity to engage in the number of activities with the kids. We ate cookies, drew butterflies, and I even helped them read English alphabets. I was amazed to see the eagerness among them to learn and also the importance given to education and learning."



Arnav Pandit, a student of class XI of Shriram School, New Delhi, said, "My journey with the foundation began when I was in the seventh grade. It started with me volunteering at the weekly hobby club on Saturdays. I would teach the children chess. After some time, I became the organiser for the hobby classes and continued teaching kids along with other volunteers. I also digitised their attendance records. Looking at all those registers full of names of children eager to learn really made me feel happy. We had started running into some problems with the funding for the hobby class. So later, I also raised a fund of ₹1.5 lakh to continue the classes. I am grateful every day for what I have been able to contribute to their organisation. It has been a great platform for me to give to society."

Also, New Delhi-based Shriya Chaturvedi (class 9, Sanskriti School) and Siddhant Sharma (class 12, VVS), and Switzerland-based Max Suter (grade 10) have set the examples of how one could volunteer at any age, from any location, and with any skill and not only make a social impact but also send a powerful message of volunteering to the whole world. "We take huge pride in having an association of volunteers where individuals and groups come together to offer their selfless service to educate and nourish the underprivileged children and make sure they remain healthy. This is what makes this organisation, the Sunaayy Foundation!" said Richa.

IN SHORT

Ravi Dadhich, a bureaucrat of DANICS (1996 batch) has taken over as Director (HR) of Delhi Transco Limited. An alumnus of Maharaja College Jaipur — University of Rajasthan, Dadhich has done his post graduation in Sociology. During his career span of twenty five years, he has held many challenging postings in Delhi and Lakshadweep. His first posting was as SDM — Preet Vihar Delhi. Other important postings that he has had in Government of NCT of Delhi include, Officer on special duty to Lieutenant Governor, Additional Secretary to Chief Minister, Member (Administration) — Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, Secretary to Minister (Transport) and Additional Commissioner (Food and Civil Supplies). In Lakshadweep, he has served as Additional District Magistrate, Director (Tourism) and CEO, District Panchayat. He has also worked with Delhi Development Authority and New Delhi Municipal Council and has vast experience of urban development sector.



NATA announces new test dates

In view of various orders issued by the government in the past, announcing lockdown in the country for containment of the pandemic, it has been decided by the Competent Authority of the Council of Architecture that the first and second test of NATA 2020 examination shall now be held on August 1 and 29 respectively.

The revised NATA brochure with revised important dates for both tests shall be uploaded shortly on the website of the council www.coa.gov.in as well on NATA website www.nata.in. The NATA portal shall be reopened shortly to facilitate students to apply for registration of first and second test and for candidate correction window for the said tests.

The candidates and parents are advised to keep visiting the said sites for latest updates. For any further clarification, candidates may contact NATA helpdesk at helpdesk.nata2020@gmail.com and 9319275557, 7303487773.

The study behind masks

As we embraced 2020, little did we know what is before us to deal with. Coronavirus has taken over the world and is claiming lives across the globe. Presenting a new challenge for the global healthcare industry, it is keeping the medical experts on their toes day-in and day-out. So far, the only solution for non-affected people is to quarantine themselves and maintain social distancing to avoid contagion.

Concerned authorities have issued various guidelines to spread awareness on how to keep oneself safe and maintain cleanliness. Washing hands frequently, using alcohol-based hand rub and using face mask have become a common practice. However, the effectiveness of using a mask as a preventive measure has become a global debate.

Can wearing a mask help fight against COVID-19? What kind of mask is more effective? And more questions are baffling people across the world. Various types of masks have flooded the commercial markets which are being bought in bulk up-front. Many households with no access to commercially available masks have also come up with masks made with readily available handkerchiefs or cotton clothes.

We will address three critical aspects of wearing masks — are they effective in preventing COVID-19? And which mask should be used and why?

□ Can masks prevent COVID-19?



Wearing a mask can protect one from coming in direct contact with virus-infected aerosol particles that are responsible for transmitting Coronavirus. These particles, when entered via mouth, eyes and ears, can potentially attack the respiratory system of a person. Hence, a face mask can obstruct the particles to enter the mouth and nose. However, wearing a mask will not be effective if the person is not washing hands or using hand sanitiser frequently. Wearing masks, along

with other hygiene routines, improves the effectiveness of face masks.

□ **Type of masks to wear and why?**
It has been found that the virus that results in COVID-19 can remain stable on solid surfaces and in aerosols for several hours. The life of the virus varies depending upon the nature of the surface. For instance, the virus can live on a cardboard surface for up to 24 hours and in the air for up to 3 hours. Therefore, the virus is airborne, but the chances of catching it from the atmosphere are slim. These chances can be further reduced by wearing a mask. WHO emphasis that "you only need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with the suspected 2019-nCoV infection." And other experts claim that the most effective masks are N95 & N99 respirators. They seal the nose and mouth sections completely. Also, they are multi-layered that can captivate and restrict the movement of the virus. However, it should be noted that even wearing a basic mask in public places can help in avoiding virus transmission. Jeremy Howard, a research scientist at the University of San Francisco and owner of fast.ai, conducted a study and found that 34 scientific papers support the idea of using DIY masks to "flatten the curve." Some other studies also indicate the wearing a surgical mask is more effective than DIY masks.

(The writer is V Deekshith Vara Prasad, CEO, Air Ok Technologies.)

Metropolis gets approval by ICMR

The Metropolis Healthcare Ltd has built a dedicated COVID-19 testing laboratory in Thane, Maharashtra which has now been approved by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and accredited by the National accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL). In addition to its lab in Mumbai and in Pune, this third dedicated facility in the state will now increase its testing capacity to conduct COVID-19 tests. The daily capacity of all the three labs put together stands at 4,000 now. Ameer Shah, promoter and man-

aging director, said, "COVID-19 testing needs to increase exponentially and, to meet the needs of the state, we have added this laboratory with an enhanced capacity. Four of our labs across India are ICMR approved. Our only focus in such times is to support the local government and municipal authorities to increase the number of tests conducted each day in order to fight this pandemic."

It has become one of the first laboratories to be approved by ICMR for COVID-19 testing and has been at the forefront since day one.



‘Football closer to return’

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is optimistic about the chances of completing the Premier League season as the champions-elect returned to training in small groups on Wednesday.

Klopp's side were just two victories away from ending a 30-year wait to win the title when the English top-flight was shutdown two months ago.

At the start of the out-break, Klopp accepted football should be suspended if it would help save even one life.

But the German believes it is now safe for players to return to phase one of training.

"I always said we don't want to rush anything, but I don't think it is rushed. It is for the first step, for this kind of social distancing training," Klopp told the Liverpool website.

"It was a long time, it is still ongoing, but the development is going with everything in the right direction and that helps.

"That football is closer to coming back I think is really a good sign for people as well."

Sheffield United manager Chris Wilder is also heartened that just 0.8 percent of the tests carried out by the Premier League resulted in positive cases.

"A lot of people have been



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp waves as he arrives at the club's Melwood training ground

tested and the signs are encouraging," said Wilder, whose side are in contention to qualify for European competition for the first time in their history.

The Premier League's target of restarting on June 12 has been called into question by players' concern for their welfare, both from the threat of the virus and injuries with little preparation time after such a long layoff.

However, Wilder does not believe fitness should be an issue as players have been able to maintain their conditioning

during the lockdown. "They weren't off to Dubai or Vegas eating and drinking whatever they want," Wilder added.

"They've got a professionalism about them and my players are in absolutely brilliant condition."

'LAB RATS'

Newcastle and England defender Danny Rose though is angry at the restart plans, arguing that players are being treated like "guinea pigs or lab rats".

"I could be potentially risk-

ing my health for people's entertainment and that's not something I want to be involved in, if I'm honest," said Rose on the *Lockdown Tactics* podcast.

Watford's Adrian Mariappa confirmed he had tested positive, with the bemused defender telling the *Daily Telegraph*: "Ever since I got my positive result back on Tuesday, I've been scratching my head to try to work out how I might have got coronavirus.

"It was a big surprise because I haven't really left the

No 'Anfield boost'

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp believes his runaway leaders will cope without the "best kick in your ass" of their Anfield crowd should the Premier League season resume.

English top-flight players return training this week and if matches do eventually take place again this season, they will be behind closed doors and possibly at neutral venues.

And German boss Klopp, having watched his native Bundesliga resume last weekend without spectators at matches, is confident his Liverpool players can motivate themselves without a crowd.

"The competition will make the intensity," he told Liverpool's website.

"So it's not about 'oh,

house, apart from some exercise and the odd walk with the kids."

Burnley had previously announced that assistant manager Ian Woan, who is asymptomatic, was another case with two more from one other club yet to be revealed.

Meanwhile, Tottenham have launched another investigation after defender Serge

Liverpool have to win two games." "By the way, we have to win two games when we start — it's not 'only two, it's two. We have to win them."

The former Borussia Dortmund manager Klopp added: "We have to do it, unfortunately, without the best boost in the world and the best kick in your ass in the right moment in the world, from the Anfield crowd.

"But that's how it is. It's 100 percent (that) the perfect package of football is a full, packed Anfield stadium, two really good teams, big fight, super goals and at the end Liverpool win. That's the perfect match-day.

"So, a lot of these things are possible but Anfield will not be packed for a while...We love that but we cannot have it.

Aurier appeared to flout social-distancing rules for a third time.

The Ivorian posted an *Instagram* photo on Tuesday showing off his new haircut and tagged the barber in his post.

Hairdressers are closed in Britain in line with the Government's rules on social distancing.



Gareth Bale and Isco jog during Real Madrid's group training session

RMCF/Twitter

Zidane hails fit and ready Real Madrid

AFP ■ MADRID

Zinedine Zidane expressed admiration at both the physical and mental form in which his Real Madrid players have returned from the coronavirus lockdown and vowed they would give everything to win a trophy.

"The players have worked well from home and that's why they have come back on great form, this is going to be crucial," Zidane said of their individual training plans.

"This week has been great because even working in small groups we can go further, work better, and next week will be even better."

Real are two points behind

Barcelona in La Liga and the 13-time European champions also trail Manchester City after the first-leg of their Champions League quarter-final.

Frenchman Zidane led Madrid to three Champions League titles in his first tenure at the helm and hopes to win something in his first full season back in charge.

"After almost 60 days everyone is happy to get back here and catch up with each other, and to play some football, which is what they all love," said Zidane.

"We'll do everything to be ready for the restart and with eleven games to go we want to give it absolutely everything to win something."



Turkey capital Istanbul will host this year's UCL final

UEFA chief hopes CL will finish by 'end of August'

NYON: UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin is aiming to finish this year's Champions League by the end of August as football in Europe slowly starts to bounce back from the coronavirus pandemic.

"Our plan is to finish it between now and the end of August," Ceferin said in an interview with Portuguese sports daily *Record*.

"I think that will work. You never know what's going to happen but things seem to be calming down.

"Eighty percent of European leagues are going to restart, I don't see why the Champions League and Europa League shouldn't take place."

That end date for UEFA's European tournaments was widely reported but never officially confirmed by the continent's football governing body.

Ceferin's desired deadline gives clubs a chance to finish their domestic competitions before the Champions League restarts in early August.

In an interview with British daily *The Guardian*, Ceferin added that he would be prepared to bet a million dollars on Euro 2020 being played next year following its postponement to 2021.

"Yes, I would," he told the newspaper "I don't know why it (the tournament) wouldn't be (played).

"I don't think that this virus will last forever. I think it will (change) sooner than many think. "I don't like this apocalyptic view that we have to wait for the second and third waves or even a fifth wave."

AFP



Neuer extends Bayern stay

MUNICH (AFP): Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has signed a new deal with Bayern Munich that ties him to the club until 2023, the club said on Wednesday.

The announcement ends weeks of speculation over the Bayern captain's future, with widespread reports that talks between player and club had hit the rocks.

"During the weeks of the shutdown for the coronavirus pandemic, I didn't want to make a decision because nobody knew if, when and how Bundesliga football would continue," Neuer said in a statement.

"I look to the future with great optimism. I feel very comfortable and at home in Bavaria."

A World Cup winner in 2014 with Germany, Neuer joined Bayern in 2011 and has won almost everything with them, with seven Bundesliga titles, five German Cups & Champions League to his name.

Int'l hockey only after Covid vaccine is ready: FIH

PTI ■ LAUSANNE

International hockey will be played only after a vaccine is developed to cure the deadly coronavirus, the FIH has announced as the world governing body revealed a five-stage process, devised for resumption of the game at different levels.

The International Hockey Federation (FIH) believes global competition among its member countries will be possible only during the last stage of the process, the timeline of which cannot be set.

"These are very early days when it comes to a return to action but, with its guidance FIH has produced a five stage process showing the route back to something resembling normality. This starts, as has been seen in the Netherlands and Belgium, with a return to carefully managed training, still with social distancing measures in place," the FIH said in a statement.

"The next stage will be a resump-



tion of regional competition, followed by local travel between neighbouring nations. Trans-Continental competition will follow and, finally, once a vaccine is in place, it is hoped there will be a return to normal competition."

"There is no time scale for these stages to be reached and it will vary from country to country."

FIH said when competition does resume, organisers will need to be hugely conscious of safety measures that will need to be implemented, in order to keep the hockey workforce and the fans safe.

Serie A group training gets all clear

AFP ■ MILAN

Italy's Serie A teams have been given the green light to resume group training but will have to wait until May 28 to know whether the season can resume, Sports Minister Vincenzo Spadafora said on Tuesday.

Spadafora told Italian television that Government scientists had accepted the Italian football federation's (FIGC) revised health protocol.

The Sports Minister also told that he has scheduled a meeting on May 28 with FIGC president Gabriele Gravina and Lega Serie A chief Paolo Dal Pino to decide on the return to competition.

"We will then decide if and when

Serie A will restart," he said.

"The important thing will be to restart with the firm intention of completing the championship, then the federations will decide the modalities and formats to be adopted."

The minister also said that a controversial measure of isolating team members for two weeks at club facilities to limit the risk of contagion has been withdrawn.

If a player tests positive he will be quarantined for two weeks, while the team will be placed in isolation, and monitored, but can continue to train together.

FIGC president Gravina welcomed a "decisive step on the path of restarting football in Italy".



Eng bowlers' return to training

AFP ■ LONDON

England bowlers are set to re-report for training on Thursday, leading the way as cricket chiefs step up plans to start a season heavily delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Despite the pandemic, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is still planning to stage a full home international programme, starting with a three-Test series against the West Indies, which was originally scheduled for June.

The ECB has announced that up to 18 bowlers will be involved from Thursday.



Edgbaston, Hove, Old Trafford, the Oval, the Riverside, Taunton and Trent

Bridge will stage at least one session, before batsmen and wicketkeepers become involved from June 1.

The bowlers' identities have yet to be made public but the choice of venues indicates that James Anderson (Old Trafford) and Stuart Broad (Trent Bridge) will be among the leading England bowlers training at their home county grounds.

Bowlers will have to bring their own kit, including designated cricket balls, wash their hands regularly, and clean any equipment used with disinfectant wipes.

Cricket needs alternative to shine ball: Cummins

MELBOURNE: Australia's premier fast bowler Pat Cummins while accepting the health risk associated with the usage of saliva urged game's custodians to come out with an alternate option to strike a balance between bat and ball.

Cummins said applying sweat or any external substance like wax on the ball could be an alternate option saliva use is banned.

The ICC's Cricket Committee has already recommended a ban on the usage of saliva on the ball due to the risk of Covid-19 spread.

"If we remove saliva, we have to have another option," the 27-year-old pacer was quoted as saying by *cricket.Com.Au*.

"Sweat is not bad, but I think we need something more than that, ideally. Whatever that is, wax or I don't know what.



"If that's what that science is telling us, that it's high risk using saliva ... As long as we're keeping other options open, whether that's sweat or something artificial."

Cummins, currently world's No1 Test bowler, said sweat is a viable option to keep the ball shining. "We have to be able to shine the ball somehow so I'm glad they've let sweat remain," he said.

"We've just got to make sure at the start of the spell we're

Will take some practice to not put saliva: Ashwin

NEW DELHI: India's premier spinner Ravichandran Ashwin feels putting saliva on the ball is a habit and it will take some practice to get rid of it when cricket resumes in the post Covid-19 world.

"I don't know (when is) the next time I go out there. It is nat-

sweating and we're nice and warm."

Australian sports gear manufacturer Kookaburra had earlier this month claimed that it had developed a wax applicator which can keep the balls shining without the usage of saliva or sweat.

ural for me to put saliva. It's going to take some practise (to not apply saliva). But I think, if we all have to co-exist, which is the DNA of human race, we will have to try and adapt to this," Ashwin said during an *Instagram* chat with Delhi Capitals. **PTI**

Cummins, however, hopes that they can return to the usage of saliva in future as it is the best option to shine the ball.

"Hopefully we'll get to a stage where saliva is deemed safe. Hopefully, we can go back to that, to how it was," he said. **PTI**

Dutee starts outdoor training after 2 months



NEW DELHI: The lone athlete to start outdoor training after relaxation in lockdown guidelines, sprinter Dutee Chand only has the "eerie silence" of the stands for company as she tries "to wake" her body up at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar.

The 24-year-old Dutee began outdoor training on Monday after the Odisha Govt gave permission as per relaxed guidelines for lockdown's fourth phase, stepping out for the first time on a synthetic track in two months.

She was in Patiala to take part in Indian Grand Prix on March 20 but the event got cancelled and since then Dutee has been confined to her room at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, though she was allowed to use the gym there.

"After two months, I am feeling outdoors and it is a very nice training to experience the air while running on the track. For a track athlete, there is no better feel-

ing than this," Dutee said.

"Normally, there are a lot of trainees at the hostels inside the Kalinga Stadium complex but all of them have left for home due to this pandemic. So, I am the only one training at such a big stadium. It is unusual, to experience this eerie silence," said the Asian Games Silver-medallist in 100m and 200m.

Another top athlete from the state, sprinter Amiya Kumar Mallick also trains at the stadium but only after Dutee ends her daily stint. This has been done to avoid simultaneous training of two athletes.

The reigning World University Games champion said as of now she is loosening up the muscles which were tightened by the confinement of the two months. She said it will take some time to start full running on the 100m track.

Her aim is to maintain a certain degree of fitness and form this season and plan some foreign training and competition stints next year to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics.

"I have started training but there is uncertainty all around. I will take part in the national events planned by the AFI in September-October. These events are also tentative.

"The Olympic qualification period is suspended till the end of this season and there is no point going all out. I want to qualify for the Olympics as soon as possible next year. After that, I want to do my best in the Games in Tokyo." **PTI**

BCCI eyeing Sept 25- Nov 1 window for IPL

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

In what could be the biggest news for cricket fans across the globe amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is looking at a possibility of hosting the 13th edition of the Indian Premier League from September 25 to November 1, provided the country is able to lower the rate of coronavirus infections.

Sources in the know of developments said that while it is still early days, the BCCI is looking to zoom in on the end-September to November period to organise the cash-rich league to start India's domestic season in the post-coronavirus era.

"It is still early days as a lot of other things have to fall in place for this to materialise, but yes, the BCCI is looking at a September 25-November 1 window provided the number of cases in the country come down and the government does give a go-ahead. As I said, a lot of things do need to fall in place, but yes these dates are being talked about and contingency planning is on," the source said.

An official of one of the IPL franchises said that they were indeed working on the road ahead with an eye on the end-



September to early-November window as it would take at least a month's planning leading up to the league when it comes to advertising and marketing.

"Yes, we have been told that we should plan with an eye on these dates and in fact, we are looking to plan our build-up in such a manner. But then again, it all depends on the country's position with regards to the pandemic.

There is no denying that we are keeping our fingers crossed and hoping that the Government will continue with the brilliant job they have done and we will see a drop in the number of cases per day," the official said.

Another IPL official said

that while the window is being zeroed in on, a lot of clarity will need to come as time progresses with regards to logistics and the on-ground preparations.

"Yes, we have been told about the window, but nothing yet on the venues or how to go about the logistics. We need to understand those sides as part of the next step of preparation as foreign players will need to come in and we have to ensure that Government directives with regards to fighting the pandemic are fully abided by. I am sure we will get more clarity as time moves forward as preparations will start say around mid-August if we have to play our first match around the end of September," the official explained.