

OPINION 8
MAINTAIN
THE FINE LINE

WORLD 11
RUSSIA REPORTS 10,633 NEW
CASES, HIGHEST IN A DAY

SPORT 14
THOUGHT OF FACING LEE
TOOK MY SLEEP: ROHIT

LUCKNOW, MONDAY MAY 4, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



the pioneer

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Lockdown 3: Caution is key Tipplers have a reason to cheer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government, in conformity with the Union Ministry for Home Affairs (MHA) guidelines, on Sunday issued orders allowing or denying relaxation in restrictions during lockdown 3.0, commencing from Monday.

The UP government accepted the definition of zones as provided by the Centre. The state currently has 19 red zone districts, 36 orange zone districts and 20 green zone districts.

This means that people in cities like Agra, Lucknow, Saharanpur, Kanpur City, Moradabad, Noida, Greater Noida and Meerut, which are red zone districts, will be able to buy alcohol from Monday if they live in non-containment zones.

The advisory says that people above the age of 65 years, children under 10 years of age

and pregnant women are not allowed to venture on roads except in cases of emergency.

The UP government advisory says that movement of people, except of those engaged in essential services, would be banned between 19:00 hours and 07:00 hours for the next two weeks — from May 4 to 17. A curfew-like situation will prevail during the period and Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code would be enforced strictly at night.

For solemnising marriage, not more than 20 people are allowed and permission has to be sought from authorities.

However, the advisory said that the enforcement of strict measures in the containment areas of the hotspots would continue and there would be no relaxation and only the permitted people would be allowed to move.

Regarding opening of the industrial units, the advisory says that units in the SEZ,

export-oriented units, industrial estates and townships can function as per the Central government guidelines while adopting social distancing norms.

But in the orange and green zones, there are several additional restrictions, including operation of cabs and taxis inside the districts. While in green zone all the shops can be opened, in orange zone, single shops in residential areas can be opened. However in red zone, single shops can be opened outside the containment area. There are no such restrictions in the rural areas.

However, the restrictions would vary from district to district in the state as the government has given all powers to the district magistrates to take a decision on the relaxation. However in the advisory there is no mention of opening of non-veg outlets in the state.

For the next two weeks — from May 4 till May 17 — all

commercial flights would remain suspended except air ambulance and other flights permitted by the MHA.

All modes of transport, including railways, airlines and metro rail, except those permitted by the MHA shall remain suspended.

All the markets, shopping malls within the municipal areas shall remain closed. However, small shops in residential areas and stand-alone shops shall be allowed to open.

All reception and hospitality services, except the places identified for quarantine purpose for the police and medical personnel and stranded tourists, shall remain closed.

Cinema halls, shopping mall, gymnasium, sports complex, swimming pool, water parks, theatre, bar, conference hall and auditorium shall remain closed.

All programmes by the political parties, sports, entertainment, cultural and religious programmes, and religious places shall remain closed for the common people.

Complete ban shall remain in forces on religious processions and activities of gathering of people.

All the cases of COVID-19, including the suspect cases in containment zone, shall be dealt with as per the prescribed protocol.

In the containment zone, no movement of individual or transport, except of medical emergency and essential services, will be permitted.

OPD services and opening of clinics will not be allowed in containment zones.

Complete record of movement of persons in containment zone shall be maintained. However, the clinics will be allowed to operate in green and orange zones subject to compliance with social distancing and guidelines issued by the Health department.

Offices of private estab-

lishments and companies shall be allowed to operate only with the 33 per cent of the total staff and same condition shall apply on government offices.

Inter-state movement of trucks, including empty trucks, will be allowed. Transport of goods from neighbouring countries, subject to the international treaties, shall be allowed. Wearing of face mask at public places shall have been made compulsory.

The additional chief secretary said that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during the review meeting had emphasised on cashless transactions with the use of Rupy card. He said the chief minister had appealed to Jan Dhan account

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In what comes as a big relief to the tipplers, the Uttar Pradesh government, following the advisory of the Union Home Ministry, has finally given permission to liquor shops to operate in all districts from Monday.

The liquor shops will open subject to certain restrictions, in all the red, orange and green zones except for the containment areas and hotspots in the red and orange zones but not in shopping malls.

The order, however, is applicable to stand-alone liquor shops only. A similar order has also been released for tobacco shops.

The decision for opening liquor shops was taken by the state government on Sunday and Chief Secretary RK Tiwari issued a 16-page

advisory.

Almost all the recommendations of the Central government have been adopted by the UP government in phase three of the lockdown. Sources said that as the state was facing short-fall in revenue, hence the decision to open the liquor shop was taken.

The UP Excise department authorities have announced that standalone liquor shops will be allowed to open in all areas in the state except containment zones in red zones. The liquor shops will remain open from 10 am to 7 pm.

The authorities also clarified that alcohol sale will not be permitted at hotels, bars and restaurants. All necessary measures will be taken to ensure social distancing is followed. Only five people will be allowed to buy liquor from a shop at one time.

5 martyred trying to save civilians

Colonel, Major, J&K Police SI lose lives; 2 Pak terrorists slain in Kupwara

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Commanding Officer (CO) of the Indian Army's elite Counter-insurgency force, 21 Rashtriya Rifles (RR), was martyred in action, along with four other security personnel, including a Major and Sub Inspector of Jammu & Kashmir Police, in Handwara town of North Kashmir's Kupwara district late on Saturday night.

They came under heavy fire while attempting to evacuate civilians amid fierce gunfight with a group of Pakistani terrorists. In the night-long operation, two terrorists, including a Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) commander Haider from Pakistan, were killed while trying to escape the tight cordon near the encounter site.



The martyrs and (below) security forces jawans during an encounter with terrorists in Chanjimmullah area of Handwara in Kupwara of north Kashmir on Sunday

At least, two to three terrorists are believed to have escaped taking advantage of the adverse weather conditions prevailing in the area. On ground zero, the security forces were still carrying out searches in the area to track down the footprints of terrorists.

The commanding officer, who attained martyrdom in the line of duty, was identified as Colonel Ashutosh Sharma from Uttar Pradesh.

He had been decorated twice for bravery and had been part of several successful counter-terrorism operations in the past.

In a span of less than one month, the Indian Army has suffered huge losses while conducting counter terrorist operations in Kupwara district alone.

On April 5, the Indian Army had lost five soldiers, including three elite para commandos, in a hand-to-hand combat with infiltrating

terrorists in Keran sector of Kupwara.

Remembering her husband, Pallavi Ashutosh told a TV news channel, "I am proud of his supreme sacrifice in the line of duty. The loss is unbearable and irreparable but I'm proud of what he did for his nation, for his unit, for his men and for the safety of civilians. I have no regrets."

He had told me he will come home the next day after eliminating the terrorists. "He will be home tomorrow with us, wrapped in a tricolour," she said.

Another Army officer, who attained martyrdom, was identified as Major Anuj

Sood from Himanchal Pradesh. His father, Retd Brig Chandrakant Sood while paying tributes to his son said, "He has made a supreme sacrifice. It was part of his duty and what he was trained for. I feel sad for his wife as they just got married 3-4 months back. He was meant to save lives."

According to ground reports, the joint teams of the security forces were chasing a group of 4-5 terrorists in Rajwara forest area since May 1. On May 2 when security forces received credible inputs about the presence of terrorists in Chanjimmullah area of Handwara, they launched an operation to free civilians

from the custody of holed up terrorists. Ground reports claimed, the team of Army officers led by CO, along with J&K cop, was conducting house-to-house searches in the area when they came under fire from the terrorists inside one of the houses.

However, Army spokesman claimed a team of five Army and J&K Police personnel entered the target area occupied by the terrorists to evacuate the civilians and successfully extricated the civilians.

"During the process, the team was subjected to heavy volume of fire by the terrorists. In the ensuing firefight two terrorists were eliminat-

ed and the team of five security personnel comprising two Army officers, two Army soldiers and one Sub Inspector of Jammu & Kashmir police attained martyrdom," he said.

Acknowledging the valour of serving officers, the Indian Army in a statement said, "We salute Col Ashutosh Sharma, Maj Anuj Sood, Naik Rakesh Kumar, Lance Naik Dinesh Singh & SI Shakeel Qazi and express our deep felt condolences to the bereaved families."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also paid tributes to courageous soldiers martyred in Handwara encounter.

"Tributes to our courageous soldiers & security personnel martyred in #Handwara. Their valour & sacrifice will never be forgotten. They served the nation with utmost dedication & worked tirelessly to protect our citizens. Condolences to their families & friends," tweeted Modi.

Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat in his tribute said, "Commanding Officer leading from the front along with other personnel of the unit and J&K Police have laid down their lives, living up to the motto: Service Before Self."

Army Chief General MM Naravane and all ranks of Indian Army also paid tributes to the valiant braves of Army and J&K Police for their supreme sacrifice while fighting and eliminating terrorists in Handwara.

In Kupwara, rich tributes were paid by the senior Army and police officers before dispatching the mortal remains of martyred soldiers to their native places.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With several States like Punjab, Bihar, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, which were relatively safe, reporting high number, and Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh showing no sign of slowing down in terms of positive cases, India on Sunday saw another 2,000 plus day cases taking its overall count to 42,000.

This huge increase from the time the country went into the first lockdown on March 24 when the total stood at just 500 positive cases.

Delhi recorded highest single-day spike with 427 new coronavirus cases, tally now 4,549, said the Delhi Government.

For instance, Haryana saw biggest single day gain of 66, while Bihar crossed 500 mark by adding 22 new cases and Ladakh's count doubled in last two days from 23 to 42.

Meanwhile, the Union Ministry has deployed 20 public health teams in 20 highest Covid burden districts which are reporting the maximum number of cases in the country to oversee the containment measures in the affected areas.

These districts are: Mumbai, Thane and Pune in Maharashtra; Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodra in Gujarat; South East and Central Delhi; Indore and Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh; Jaipur and Jodhpur in Rajasthan; Chennai, Tamil Nadu; Hyderabad, Telangana; Agra and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh; Kolkata, West Bengal; Kurnool, Guntur, Krishna in Andhra Pradesh.

Punjab on Sunday recorded 331 new coronavirus cases, with the total climbing to 1,102. Of the 331 cases, 326 were returnees from the famous Sikh shrine in Maharashtra's Nanded, who came back last



A medic screens a labourer at APMC fruit market during the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown, in Navi Mumbai, on Sunday

Four fresh cases in city

Lucknow (PNS): Four persons tested positive for coronavirus in city on Sunday taking the total number of cases to 226. With three of those affected coming from Kaiserbagh vegetable market, the mandi was declared a hot spot and subsequently sealed.

A senior official said the two men and a woman were likely to be contacts of a vegetable vendor who had tested positive close in the mandi earlier. A 13-year-old girl was the fourth case testing positive. The teen lives in the same house from where the kin of a KGMU nurse had tested positive.

Meanwhile, SGPGI media spokesperson Kusum Yadav said that a 28-year-old female COVID-19 positive shifted from Agra died on Sunday at the SGPGI. She was a case of ESRD (end stage renal disease) and was on maintenance dialysis.

week after remaining stuck there for nearly a month. In the past five days, Punjab recorded 728 cases — a majority of them Nanded returnees.

Tamil Nadu reported one Covid-19 death, 266 fresh infections, pushing total number of coronavirus cases to 3,023 while Haryana reported 421 cases. Ladakh added 19 cases on Sunday taking the total to 92 cases.

Gujarat on Sunday registered 374 new Covid-19 cases and 28 deaths, which is the highest single-day increase in deaths so far. With this, the

overall number of the coronavirus positive cases mounted to 5,428 and the death toll rose to 290.

Around 790 people had tested positive and 36 deaths were reported in the worst-hit state of Maharashtra, bringing total to 12,296.

In West Bengal, the total number of novel coronavirus cases reached 886 even as 15 more people died due to Covid-19 and 127 people tested positive.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said at least 682

Tirupati board chief, family visit temple, trigger row

Hyderabad: Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Board chairman and former MP YB Subba Reddy was seen offering prayers at the temple along with his family members during the coronavirus lockdown, triggering controversy. MHA's orders state that places of worship will continue to remain closed during the lockdown.

Meanwhile, Reddy rubbished the allegation and said that he is entitled to visit the temple to review the situation as TTD chairman. The TTD also denied that it has sacked 1,300 sanitation workers. PNS

CRPF HQ in Delhi sealed as officer tests positive

It will be closed till Tue morning for disinfection

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Hit hard by coronavirus, the CRPF shut its headquarters here after an Assistant Commandant attached with a senior officer as private secretary tested positive even as 26 BSF men were also found infected on Sunday.

The entire building at the CGO Complex here will be disinfected and offices will remain closed till Tuesday morning. The infected officer's fam-

ily is being tested. Forty men traced to be in his contact have been quarantined.

"As one corona positive case has been detected in the Directorate, the entire building of the Directorate General will be subjected to disinfection by the Government notified agency, keeping in view with protocols and directions of MOHFW. Accordingly, CRPF Directorate General, CRPF office will remain closed till Tuesday morning (May 5, 2020). Hence all officers and men working in Directorate General, CRPF are requested not to come to office and work from home till then. They should remain available to

their seniors on phone to respond to necessary emergencies," said an order of the CRPF headquarters on Sunday.

Those responsible for collection and distribution of urgent messages may continue to do so by safe and secure means. All other activities including Monday meeting stand postponed, added the order. The Assistant Commandant infected with Covid-19 was tested on Friday.

Meanwhile, 25 more men of a company of BSF's 126 Battalion deployed with Delhi Police in Jama Masjid area have been tested Covid-19 positive on Sunday. The strength of the company is 94.

Saluting corona warriors from air, land, sea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Acknowledging the role of the "corona warriors" in fighting the pandemic in the country, the Armed forces on Sunday paid tributes to them by conducting flypasts by fighter jets in many parts of the country, including the national Capital, playing martial tunes outside hospitals treating coronavirus patients, and showering on them flower petals by choppers.

The warships were lit up from evening onwards and enthralled people in the coastal region at more than 25 places.

The thanksgiving to the "frontline corona fighters", including doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, police and the media, commenced in the morning with wreath placed on

behalf of the three Services at the National Police Memorial here as a mark of respect.

The IAF helicopters showered petals from air at the memorial.

The nationwide programme of saluting the "corona warriors" was unveiled by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat on Friday. In fact, some of the activities began on Saturday itself with the three services conducting flypasts, performances by military bands and the warships on the shores gaily lit up. The finale was on Sunday.

After the wreath-laying ceremony at the Police Memorial, the countrywide activities commenced with a flypast of fighter jet formation including SU-30s, Jaguars and MIG-29s above the Rajpath.



Doctors, nurses and other medical and para-medical workers react as an IAF chopper showers flower petals on them at AIIMS in New Delhi on Sunday

The fighter flying was undertaken at a height of 500 metres to enable the people of the capital and suburbs to see the skillful display.

Continued on Page 6

Spruce up quarantine centres: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With migrant workers streaming in from various regions into the state, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asked district authorities to make adequate arrangements at quarantine centres in their respective jurisdictions.

Earlier, the chief minister had directed officials to make preparations to accommodate around 25,000 people in every district.

Chief Secretary Rajendra Kumar Tiwari told news persons in Lucknow on Sunday, "The chief minister said that there should be arrangement to accommodate 15 lakh workers in quarantine centres across the state and the facilities to be provided should be good along with quality food, water and clean toilets."

The first Shramik Special train with 847 workers from Nashik (Maharashtra) chugged into Charbagh station in Lucknow on Sunday morning. After medical check-ups, these workers were allowed to board buses for their home districts.

Two more special trains from Gujarat and three from Maharashtra are expected by Monday morning.

Prior to this, thousands of



migrant labourers were evacuated from Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi.

The chief secretary asked all district magistrates, district police chiefs and chief medical officers to personally check quarantine centres and regularly monitor food, drinking water, sanitation and other arrangements. He also asked the district officials to check community kitchens too.

Tiwari further said, "Yogi Adityanath has asked officials to medically check migrant workers after their arrival from other states. Only if they are fully fit, they would be asked

for home quarantine for 21 days and district officials would provide them adequate food grain kit for at least a week."

The chief secretary asked officials to stop migrant workers coming on foot and provide them food and transport for the rest of their journey.

He said that if any migrant worker was found to have any illness, he/she would be tested accordingly. "If found coronavirus positive, then the worker be immediately admitted to isolation ward of hospital while others be sent to quarantine centres," he said.

Gkp's terracotta gets GI tag

Lucknow (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath congratulated his native place Gorakhpur for getting a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for its traditional terracotta craft.

The famed baked clay or terracotta products made from special soil found in Bhathat area of Gorakhpur is famous across the country.

In a tweet on Sunday, the chief minister said: "Terracotta craft has given a special identity to Gorakhpur and now this GI tag will benefit the artisan engaged in the trade."

Yogi said that terracotta craft had got international identity now but the state government had given recognition to the product under 'One District, One Product (ODOP) scheme in 2018.

On Thursday last, Gorakhpur terracotta craft was given the GI tag and it was approved against an application filed by Laxmi Terracotta Murtikala Kendra,

Aurangabad Gularia of Gorakhpur.

The terracotta work of Gorakhpur is a traditional art form that transcends centuries and potters make various animal figures like horse, elephant, camel, goat, ox, etc. with hand-applied ornamentation.

Despite the richness of art and numerous laurels, artisans live in penury as they often fail to get the right price for their products.

Terracotta craftsmen are mainly spread over villages of Aurangabad, Bharwalia, Langadi Gularia, Budhadih, Amawa, Ekla etc. in Bhathat and Padri Bazaar, Belwa Raipur, Jungle Ekla No. 1, Jungle Ekla No. 2 in Chargawan block of Gorakhpur.

In 2018, Yogi Adityanath included terracotta craft in the ODOP scheme to help artisans in branding of the products and earning their livelihood.

Another brave son of UP martyred

Lucknow (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed profound condolence on the martyrdom of Army Colonel Ashutosh Sharma, who was among the five killed in an encounter with terrorists in Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. Along with the colonel, a major and two army personnel of 21, Rashtriya Rifles and a J&K Police sub-

inspector were also martyred in the encounter.

The colonel is survived by his widow, a son and a daughter who were stationed in Jaipur at present. The last rites will take place there on Monday.

Sharma, a native of Parwana village in Siana police station area in Bulandshahr, was the commanding officer of a Rashtriya Rifles unit in

Kupwara.

The chief minister announced ₹50 lakh compensation along with a government job to the officer's family. He also announced that a 'Gaurav Gate' would be constructed at his native village.

Of the compensation amount, ₹40 lakhs in cheque would be provided to the colonel's wife and ₹10 lakh to his mother.

BJP to Akhilesh: Don't do politics in the hour of crisis

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh unit of Bharatiya Janata Party advised former chief minister and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav not to play politics at a time when the country was passing through a dark phase and people were unitedly fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

"At a time of crisis, the statement of Akhilesh Yadav is unfortunate where he said that police were disposing of the bodies of dead COVID-19 patients and the government was trying to conceal exact mortality. What the SP leader said is incorrect. In fact, this is not the time to score political points," BJP state general secretary Vijay Bahadur Pathak said in Lucknow on Sunday.

Pathak said that Akhilesh Yadav has been the chief minister of the state and knows the



gravity of the situation. "At this time, the focus should be on helping the poor. Political parties of all hues and members of civil societies should join hands with the state government in extending help to the needy," he said.

Pathak further said, "The state government is doing a very good job and extending help to all sections of society without any bias."

Labourer ends life after factory shuts down

Aligarh (PTI): A youth who was rendered jobless after a meat factory shuttered temporarily due to the coronavirus-forced lockdown has been found hanging his room here, police said on Sunday.

Mohammad Haider (23) was found hanging on Saturday afternoon in Alambagh locality of Civil Lines area here.

Inspector of Civil Lines police station Amit Kumar said the cause of the suicide "is being investigated and a family discord cannot be ruled out".

According to the victim's mother Salma, Haider was working as labourer in the meat factory and became jobless after the plant was temporarily closed down a few weeks back.

He was the only earning member of the family and was depressed for the past few days as he had become financially weak amid the lockdown, Haider's mother said.

Congress national secretary and former MLA of Aligarh city Vivek Bansal visited the family and demanded that they be provided financial relief immediately to save themselves from starvation.

Cop suspected of killing daughter for honour

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In what appears to be a case of 'honour killing' in Moradabad, a Government Railway Police (GRP) constable posted in Ghaziabad cremated his teenaged daughter, claiming that he was charred during a road mishap on Wednesday last.

After a case was registered at Thakurdwara police station of Moradabad and the cop was grilled, his ambiguous statements created doubts.

As per reports, Kiranpal Yadav of Thakurdwara (Moradabad) was posted is GRP constable in Ghaziabad. Last Wednesday, he approached the local police claiming that he was going to his in-laws' house, also in Thakurdwara, when his Wagon-R car hit a divider and went up in flames in which his daughter Payal (14) was charred to death. Before coming to the police, the cop had cremated the body.

Upon learning of the death and lack of witnesses, Circle Officer Vishal Yadav grilled the constable but he failed to give satisfactory answers. The first suspicion cropped up as to how the cop reached Moradabad when Hapur-Ghaziabad and Amroha-Moradabad roads were sealed. Also, no relative attended the cremation as they were not informed.

The officer suspects that as the girl was an adolescent, she might have been killed to save 'family honour'.

A case was registered and investigations are on. In Gorakhpur, the body of a youth was

found hanging at a railway crossing cabin in Nakha crossing of Chilluwatal area on Sunday morning.

With the help of his mobile phone, the police identified the deceased as Hassan aka Sonu of Jamuniya in Gorakhnath.

The deceased used to work as motor mechanic and had left home on Friday evening after receiving a phone call. In a video clip recovered from his phone, he claimed to be in love with a girl and since their affair was being opposed, he was ending his life and no one was to be blamed for it.

Meanwhile, two minor girls were raped in Azamgarh and Sitapur respectively.

In Azamgarh, Siddhartnagar MLA's gunner Pravin Singh went to his native village Raunapar (Azamgarh) where he raped a nine-year-old girl in his neighbourhood.

When the victim's mother went to lodge a report, police refused to accept it. The woman lives in the village with her two minor daughters and her husband works in Nashik.

Later, she narrated her ordeal to Director of Shreeramanand Swarnat Library, Heena Desai, and on her intervention, a case was registered.

In the second incident reported from Sitapur, a six-year-old girl living in Imiliya, went out to ease herself on Saturday evening, when she was raped by an unknown youth.

The victim was taken to Mahila Hospital where it was confirmed that she was raped. A case was registered and efforts were being made to nab the accused.

Clash in Etah hotspot leaves 12 injured, probe on

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police apathy in enforcing lockdown resulted in a bloody clash, that too in a hotspot, over beating of a buffalo at Ganeshpur hamlet in Jalesar area of Etah on Sunday. The degree of police laxity could be gauged by the fact that a quarantined man escaped from one of the centres and he along with his aides clashed with a rival group, the clash leaving a dozen persons with serious injuries. Jalesar's Sub-Divisional Magistrate Arun Kumar, who rushed to the spot with a strong police force to control the situation, later ordered a probe to establish how the clash took place in an area declared hotspot where serious restrictions were in place.

As per reports, Prem

Chandra hit a buffalo owned by Pushpendra, who is suspected of coronavirus infection and is presently in quarantine.

When Pushpendra came to know of the incident, he escaped from the quarantine centre and accompanied by his cronies attacked Prem Chandra. A clash ensued in which sticks and swords were freely used. By the time cops rushed to the village, a dozen persons from both sides were injured. The injured were admitted to a hospital where the condition of Kishen, Mohan, Rajkumar, Akhand Pratap from Pushpendra side and Mohan Singh, Karan Singh, Dhruv, Gauri Shankar, Yogendra, Prem Chandra and a woman from the other side was said to be critical. A heavy police force was deployed in the village to avert any fresh clash.

Meanwhile in Kannauj, scared of being infected by coronavirus, a man ended his life by hanging himself inside the district hospital on Sunday morning. The deceased was later identified as Pappu Kori (60) of Nakhosa. He was admitted to the hospital as his family members suspected him to be infected by coronavirus.

Elsewhere, in Muzaffarnagar, district Bhim Army chief Upkar Bawra was arrested for creating a ruckus in district hospital on Saturday evening. Bawra and some of his aides from Purkazi reached the district hospital and scuffled with doctors and medical staff, alleging that no one was attending to a patient. Someone informed the police, after which a team rushed to the hospital and arrested the accused. Based on a complaint from the medical staff,

a case was registered and the accused were sent to jail for lockdown violation and for attacking medical staff. In Bhadohi, an ambulance driver and attendant accompanying a coronavirus suspect abandoned their vehicle and fled after being alerted by Aarogya Setu app of a coronavirus positive case being in close vicinity on Saturday evening. Chief Medical Officer Dr Lakshmi Singh said that a youth escaped from a quarantine centre in New Delhi and reached Barji hamlet of Gopiganj in Bhadohi on Saturday morning.

On being informed by his family, an ambulance was sent to admit him in a quarantine centre on Saturday evening. While he was being driven to the centre the incident took place. The youth was working in Kota and reached Delhi where he was quarantined.

Minister asks industrialists to keep workforce intact

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Chapter of PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) organised an interactive session with minister Sidharth Nath Singh. The minister urged the industrialists to keep the workforce intact instead of letting them go back to their villages.

The key objective of the webinar was to discuss the issues and challenges faced by the MSMEs sector of UP during the lockdown and devising the best way out. Singh not only addressed the concerns of the members of PHDCCI but also deliberated on the current issues and scenario of the MSMEs of the state, and assured them support in terms of industry's revival.

He said that the formal government orders for Logistics Park Policy incorporating the industry recommendations would be issued soon. He added that the government was there to support the MSMEs in all possible ways but, at the same time, equal support from the industry was anticipated.

He also said that 10 lakh job profiles have been created by the government in rural areas to provide employment to



migrant workers. The minister emphasised that in order to give a push start to economy, it would be equally important to bring foreign investments in the state apart from reviving the already existing industries.

Principal Secretary (MSME and Export Promotion) Navneet Sehgal said they were working in accordance with the Central government. He said that the state government was working dedicatedly in defining the containment zones and restrictions might be reduced to a shorter radius.

He said that the state government had allowed the industrial units in rural areas under non-hotspot regions to be operational. He also requested PHDCCI to provide the list of industries facing GST refund issues so that the government

could be proactive in releasing the same in this hour of crisis.

President of Korean Association ED Park stated that there were already 700 Korean industries running their businesses in India and there were many Korean industrialists who were still keen on relocate their industries to Uttar Pradesh, and a concrete proposal for the same would be shared with the state government soon.

Co-chairman of UP Chapter of PHDCCI Gaurav Prakash said that many of the industrial plots in UP were on lease and in majority of the cases, the consumption of allotted leased land was around 30% only. Therefore, he suggested that the rest of the land could either be made free-hold or rented out in order to gain more revenue for the state.

Opportunities after lockdown discussed in a webinar

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Taking note of the fact that academic activities are greatly affected due to the Covid-19 outbreak and various challenges arising as a result, the Centre for Advanced Studies at AKTU has started a weekly webinar series on online platforms on lockdown opportunities. AKTU media spokesperson Ashish Mishra said that in the first week, two sessions were scheduled with eminent speakers from both academia and industry.

Around 230 enthusiastic participants registered to attend these sessions and more than 100 participants attended all the talks in these sessions.

"The registered participants included faculty, research scholars, students affiliated to all institutes of AKTU, participants from industry and few international participants from Ireland," he said.

Prof J Ramkumar from the department of Mechanical Engineering (IIT-Kanpur) spoke on 'Intellectual property rights'. His lecture was focused on innovations because this lockdown has provided an opportunity to innovate and develop new technologies and solutions that can be useful for our overall wellbeing. He also motivated the students to think about patenting ideas and developing innovative prototypes and technologies.

The second lecture was delivered by Jatinder Chaudhary, senior data scientist (CISCO Bengaluru) on 'Analysis and modelling of coronavirus spread data'. He demonstrated data modelling

and analysis of coronavirus spread data with the help of data science and data analytics techniques using python code. He covered exploratory analysis in his talk, including a few visualisations, and modelling using the SIR model for disease spread.

Prof Ashish Dutta from the department of Mechanical Engineering (IIT-Kanpur) delivered a talk on 'Biped locomotion'.

He talked about bipedalism allowed hominids to free their arms completely, enabling them to make and use tools efficiently and use their hands for social display and communication. He explained the advantage of biped locomotion of robots over wheel robots. Furthermore, he motivated the students to use the latest robotic technology and how robots can be useful for society and to avoid the interaction between the humans in the current situation of pandemic.

TS Rajput, deputy AGM (National Small Industries Corporation), spoke on 'Entrepreneurship development programme'.

"The modern entrepreneurship is transforming the world by solving big problems like initiating social change, creating an innovative product or presenting a new life-changing solution. Presently, the time is changing very fast and thus the nature of job and job profile is also changing very fast. In the situation of pandemic, there are thousands who are losing their jobs but at the same time, the number of opportunities await. Therefore, student can innovate, develop and start their own ventures," he said.

Cop suspended for beating up man

Etawah (PTI): A policeman in Uttar Pradesh's Etawah district was suspended after a video of him beating up a man surfaced on social media on Sunday. In the 2.20-minute video, constable Subhash Kumar is purportedly seen beating up the man with sticks and his legs. The video was shared by the Samajwadi Party on Twitter.

"The barbaric face of the UP Police has once again come to fore in Biba Mau village of Etawah. A

constable has brutally beaten up a mentally-challenged youth. Suspension of the constable is not enough, SO should also be investigated," the SP said in a tweet in Hindi. According to a statement by the DGP office here, the man being assaulted in the video is Sunil Yadav. Acting on a complaint of some locals that Yadav was violating the lockdown, police had gone to speak with him on May 2 but he attacked a constable with a sharp-edged weapon,

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No.: 33/2020
Important Notice
 It is notified for information of the general public due to measures taken in the wake of COVID-19, it has been decided that the cancellation of all passenger train services shall be extended till the 24:00 hrs of 17-05-2020.
 All originating Mail/Exp. trains and passenger trains from North Eastern Railway shall remain cancelled till 24:00 hrs of 17-05-2020.
 CPRO/T-03 Dy. Chief Operating Manager/Coaching, Gorakhpur
 About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 99794845955
Never travel on roof and foot boards.

Extension of Prayagraj Jn. - Jhansi Parcel Special Train during Covid-19 Lockdown

Train No. 00436 Prayagraj Jn. - Jhansi	Station	Train No. 00435 Jhansi- Prayagraj Jn.
07.00	Prayagraj Jn.	13.40
08.35-08.40	Manikpur	12.00-12.05
09.10-09.15	Chitrakutdham Karvi	11.20-11.25
10.15-10.20	Banda	10.15-10.20
11.10-11.15	Mahoba Jn.	09.10-09.15
13.40	Jhansi	07.00

Ex Prayagraj Jn.: From 04.05.2020 to 15.05.2020=12 Trips.
Ex Jhansi: From 04.05.2020 to 15.05.2020=12 Trips.
Composition: SLR-01 or VP-01

Note: More information on Parcel booking can be obtained from the following sources:

Commercial Control
 Prayagraj Division ☎ Agra Division ☎ Jhansi Division
 9794837343, 9794837285 9760537860 9794831208, 05102446066

NTES Website
 enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

SETU-NCR-24X7 Helpline: 9794835988
National Helpline No. 139 or 138

@CPRONCR North central railways **North Central Railway, Prayagraj**

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Labourers stuck in Nashik brought back An overwhelming moment for medical personnel



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Around 845 labourers, who were stuck in Nashik after the lockdown was announced, were brought to Lucknow by Shramik Special Train on Sunday morning. After being screened by a medical team of railways, the workers and labourers were sent to their homes by buses.

Around 6:20 am on Sunday, the train reached the Platform No. 1 of Charbagh railway station, where yellow lines were drawn to ensure social distancing. The passengers were screened at the time of boarding the special train and also on their arrival to Lucknow. They were given food packets after their screening was over.

The entire operation was manned by the ticketing staff, railway protection force, safari workers and medical wing of Northern Railways, Lucknow division. Senior divisional commercial manager Jagtosh Shukla said the passengers were handed over to the district administration after they were thoroughly checked at the platform. The entry/exit gates at the station were manned by RPF personnel to ensure that no unwanted element entered the station premises.

"We put barriers at the platform to help maintain



(Top) Migrant labourers being screened at Charbagh railway station upon their arrival from Nashik on Sunday. (Above) Labourers waving after boarding a bus to their destination

social distancing. The workers and labourers were helped in coming out of the station and reach the buses parked in the circulating area. Entire work was done in a methodical way and without delay. The passengers shortlisted as per their respective destinations and were taken to the buses for their home districts," he said.

Shukla said that railways followed the guidelines of the Central government and worked in sync with the district administration officials who were also present at the time of arrival of the special train and departure of the buses ferrying the workers to their homeland. The railway officials who

were in the team that carried out the operation said the passengers were weary, probably due to the long journey, but they looked happy soon after the train reached the platform. "All of them were happy that they will soon be able to meet their families," the railway officials said. They said there were several of them who had tears in their eyes at the thought of reaching their homes.

After handing over the passengers to district administration, the railway staff carried sanitised the platform and train was put in the yard of the railway station. It will be sanitised before being pressed into another operation.

Scenes of joy at Charbagh station

Lucknow: Mulyam Singh Yadav was among the first to get off the special train as it arrived at Platform No. 1 of Charbagh railway station, where health officials, policemen and news photographers waited for them.

Eager to reunite with his family in Jaunpur's Machlishahr, Yadav said, "It is a matter of barely a few hours." Yadav, in his mid twenties, had boarded the train in Nashik on Saturday morning. It reached Lucknow at around 5:52 am on Sunday. At around 5:34 am, the first announcement of the arrival of 02121 Shramik Special from Nashik on Platform number 1 was made. Railway, health and police officials stood alert. The ticket examiners were deployed on the platform to ensure that the arriving passengers adhere to the norms of social distancing. Arun Chauhan, who worked as a driver in Nashik and hails from Azamgarh, was thankful for the arrangements made by the government to facilitate the return of migrant workers to their native places. He, along with his friends Rajesh Kumar, Om Prakash and Neeraj Kumar, boarded the Azamgarh-bound bus and waved at the policemen and other officials as his onward journey to home began.

Surya Jaikumar from Sonbhadra said, "We faced no problem of food and water during our journey. Now, I am looking forward to return back to my village."

Mohammed Arif, who hails from Shamli, too was happy to return home. "I worked as a welder. Once lockdown is lifted and travel permission is allowed, I may think of going back. However, till the time lockdown is in place, I will stay in my home," he said. Pramod, who worked as a

daily wage labourer and hails from Maharajganj, was tying his jute bag and covering his face with a green-coloured towel as he was readying himself to board the bus for home.

For loco driver Haridas and guard Rajeev Raikwar, the Shramik Special wasn't just another train. It was something they will tell their grandchildren about when they ask what they did during the lockdown of 2020. The "workers special" the two rolled into Lucknow Sunday morning was the first such train to Uttar Pradesh, bringing home 800 migrant labourers stranded for weeks in Maharashtra.

Haridas who drove the train from Jhansi to Lucknow - a part of its journey from Nashik in Maharashtra - had stayed home during the nationwide lockdown against coronavirus. And his family in Jhansi was apprehensive about the job, amid the pandemic.

"Going to a red zone gave them tense moments. However, I responded to the call of duty and have no regrets," he told PTI, calling the assignment a "unique experience". Haridas said he is happy he helped in uniting the stranded workers with their families. "I will also tell stories of my duty during the lockdown to my grandchildren," he said. Rajeev Raikwar, the guard who got onto the train along with him, too felt happy for doing his bit. "Overall, the experience was good and I will tell my stories of the lockdown and about discharging my duties to my grandchildren," he said. "The family was telling me to say no, sensing danger. But duty is duty," he said. "The RPF personnel in the train informed the passengers at regular intervals that they should not step down at any station," he said. PTI

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The shower of flower petals by the Indian Air Force helicopters on KGMU & SGPGI and fighter aircraft flypast around Vidhan Bhawan generated tremendous enthusiasm amongst doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and health workers called Covid warriors. Medical personnel gathered outside the administrative building of KGMU and at the SGPGI Trauma Centre waving and clapping even as the helicopters showered them with petals. A majority of them were overwhelmed by the experience.

KGMU Vice-Chancellor Dr MLB Bhatt said it was a historic moment. The amount of happiness and enthusiasm seen on the medical university campus was unparalleled for the manner in which the Indian Air Force appreciated the services by any organisation in the peace time, he added.

"Never has this kind of enthusiasm been seen before. It is not only an honour bestowed on the medical profession but I also see it as a great motivator for health employees in the future beyond corona war," he said. He added that it was a great sentiment that though their hard work is not seen by anyone directly, it has been appreciated by persons who are not visible at large and not seen during the peace time. He said the way he was perceiving it was that the medical profession which was losing its credibility in the society and respect and the manner in which it was being seen by the society in a hostile manner had regained its lost prestige and glory. "The corona war is an opportunity to prove once again the commitment of medical profession for the cause of health and health services," he added. The KGMU Vice-Chancellor said it was also a great moment for him since he has served as in the Indian Army from 1984 to 1989 and



An IAF helicopter showers petals on KGMU while doctors and paramedical staff bask in the glory on Sunday

closely worked with the Indian Air Force. SGPGI director RK Dhiman said he felt greatly honoured by the tribute.

"Through this tribute, they put my team consisting of doctors, nurses and staff as soldiers on the war front. It's a special honour and special occasion and I would like to assure the citizens that we won't be found wanting," he said.

"Five minutes prior to the event, I was looking at the mood of our staff at the Rajdhani Covid Hospital and they were extremely excited. They were motivated and encouraged to be able to help the patients," he said.

Head of Microbiology department, KGMU, Amita Jain

said it was an overwhelming experience and she was left with no words to describe the special moment.

"For the last three months, we have been working continuously and it was for these ten minutes of flower shower that my team and I stopped the work. I was extremely happy for my team because I get many platforms where we could sense the recognition of the work but with this act, it went to the last rung of health workers who have been tirelessly working for the cause," she said. Incharge of Infectious Disease Centre (KGMU) Dr D Himanshu said it was great and exciting to be recognised in this manner by the defence forces.

SGPGI begins process for plasma therapy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bollywood Singer Kanika Kapoor will also be donating plasma to SGPGI where she was cured of Covid-19. Director RK Dhiman said the singer had assured him that she would also donate plasma to SGPGI after KGMU. He said they were hoping to begin the process of plasma therapy at the hospital soon. "Kanika was cured at SGPGI and she told me that she would come here to donate plasma," the director said.

"Many patients will likely be in a position by next month to donate plasma. The patients who get cured now will be able to donate plasma in about 28 days. We expect more patients who will be able to donate plasma next month," he said.

He said that SGPGI has decided to establish "Electronic Covid Care Support" to provide decentralised care to patients suffering from Covid-19 and

other diseases. "Through this, the OPD services will be run through telemedicine. This will help in providing teleconsulting services and remote clinical decision support throughout Uttar Pradesh to patients as well as doctors catering to patients," he said. He added that it would be done by different specialties such as Cardiology, Gastroenterology, Neurosurgery and Urology on specific days, as was the case before lockdown.

"Those who have Covid-19 symptoms but are not sure of the course of action can seek consultation from here. Those with other medical and surgical emergencies who are not able to come to tertiary care hospitals due to travel restrictions can also call us. Those suffering from other non-Covid-19 ailments with significant symptoms being managed by doctors in peripheral hospitals that do not have sufficient

expertise and can also use these services," he explained. He said that the services were also available for doctors and other healthcare workers working in level 1-3 hospitals that are managing patients with Covid-19 as well as non-Covid-19 diseases and need specialists' consultation.

"The consultants-on-call may receive investigations and radiological data either via email, fax, WhatsApp or Zoom. They will give tele-advice immediately and record the call data. In case they want a second opinion from a specialist department, they can either talk to the consultant-on-call and then get back to the patient or connect the call to the specialist," he added.

The director said there was a dedicated hotline number through SGPGI exchange having multiple lines. "These are emergency numbers flashed on the institute website. They

will connect to the SGPGI services. Each number has multiple lines so that the all lines are not engaged.

Landline numbers (0522-2494000, 0522-2495000) may be used for non-Covid-19 medical consultations. The SGPGI exchange will immediately connect calls received on these numbers to the consultants posted in the telecommunication unit.

Dhiman said if a very specific call was directed at a specific consultant, the exchange would connect the call to the required person.

0522-2496000 is the landline which will be used for Covid area-related information, like enquiring about the status of a patient in the Rajdhani Covid Hospital or for a patient who has undergone treatment there. The call will be directed by the exchange to APRO in the Rajdhani Covid Hospital.

UP Board evaluation to begin tomorrow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The evaluation of UP Board copies will begin at four centres in Lucknow from May 5, DIOS Mukesh Kumar Singh said. Looking into the situation, only a group of 11 teachers will be allowed sit in one class for evaluation, the DIOS said.

He said the schools were being cleaned and sanitised for the purpose and fogging was also being carried out there.

The DIOS said that the teachers would have to pass through a thermal scanner and clean their hands with a sanitiser before they begin the evaluation work. He added that the teachers were supposed to bring their appointment letters and identity cards and they would face no problem in reaching the centres.

The DIOS said that evaluation would be done as per the subjects finalised for particular dates. He added that the teachers should reach their respective centres on time.

Woman found hanging

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 22-year-old woman was found hanging at her house in Gudamba on Sunday. As per reports, the woman, identified as Roshni, married Rahul Rajput of Ganne Ka Purwa locality in the area three years ago. Around 4 am on Sunday, mother Pramila of Gosainganj was informed of Roshni's death by Rahul's family and she reached the house of her daughter. She said she found Roshni dead when she reached her house and later, she informed the police.

The police said Roshni was found hanging from a bamboo shaft fixed horizontally in a thatched roof on top floor of the house with a dupatta tied around her neck. The police said she took the extreme step on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday. The couple, who had a 6-month-old son, used to have verbal duels over financial status. Meanwhile, the Thakurganj police on Sunday arrested a man who was named in the death of his wife Arshiya Bano due dowry on Friday. Arshiya had died after she fell down from top floor of her house under mysterious circumstances in afternoon on Friday. Police had registered a

case against Arshiya's husband Mohammed Faizal and her in laws. Other accused in the cases were being hunted by the police. The autopsy report had revealed that Arshiya had suffered injuries at her mouth and in her legs.

MAN DUPED OF CASH

A man was duped of over Rs 51,000 on the pretext of bike sale. The victim, identified as Rahul Rai of Raipur locality in Madaion, contacted Jitendra Rajput after seeing ad on an online shopping site some days back. "Jitendra introduced himself an army employee to win my trust. We sealed the deal and on April 23, I transferred Rs 51,700 into Jitendra's bank account for purchase of a power bike," Rahul alleged. He said Jitendra demanded more money for delivery of the bike to his house but later reneged from his promise. "When I warned him of a police case, he threatened me with dire consequences and switched off his phone," Rahul alleged.

Meanwhile, the Chinhat police claimed to have arrested two drug peddlers and recovered 100 gram smack from their possession on Sunday. Those arrested were identified as Shalu and Shivakant of Thakurganj.

Construction work for LDA project gets underway

Lucknow (PNS): Civil construction work for the dream project of Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) got underway with fencing on Sunday. The project will come up near Shaheed Path on Gosainganj road on a 50-acre land.

LDA chief engineer IS Singh said the project is a part of LDA policy to promote the sports activities in the city. Besides planning housing schemes, and commercial, social and community projects, the LDA administration is aimed at promoting other activities to help people brush up their skills.

A special feature will a 3-tier swimming pool, said to be the first of its kind in north India. The chief engineer said that the project would be divided into two parts - indoor sport complex and sports academy. The indoor sport complex is the venue where players will be given memberships.

The selection of players for the academy will be done on merit basis. The candidates have to appear for tests. Apart from indoor games, emphasis will be laid on developing a football complex of international standards.

VERY IMPORTANT REQUEST TO ALL THE RESPECTED DISTRICT MAGISTRATES OF INDIA

We are earnestly willing to open all our business branches all over India to start our business.

Keeping the nature of our business in consideration, in every large city, 5 to 10 thousand field workers and at small places, 500 to 1000-2000 field workers will require special passes to move all over the city/area. As the nature of the business demands, all the workers go house to house, shop to shop to conduct 100% business. If we are unable to do so, our business generation level stands at zero.

We also request for passes for 100% of our office workers because there are thousands of offices where only 2,3 or very few office workers are at work and unless all the necessary related sections such as computer, application form, receipt, voucher, payment, commission computing etc., are not fully functional, the office cannot run. The reduced number of workers to one-third or half cannot do the required job. Moreover, we will require many other relevant permissions such as the permission to operate few kinds of vehicles, etc.

For passes and other permissions, our authorised managers will contact you with the complete list of the workers. We request you to please get the passes and required permissions, etc. arranged at the earliest so that we can open our offices soon.

Being the guardian of the world's largest family Sahara India Pariwar, I am conveying to you the feelings of its 15 lakh workers and on their behalf, I express my heartfelt gratitude and deep regards to you the Head of the District Administration and every member of your Team, Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics, Members of the Police Force, officials and workers of Local Administration, Sanitation Workers and all the warriors who are fighting the tough battle against the corona pandemic in this difficult time.

Sahara Pranam

Saharabhai
(Subrata Roy Sahara)

Three new COVID-19 cases found in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Three more COVID-19 cases have been found in the district on Sunday and with these the number of corona patients has increased to 64. In wake of this shocking news, some encouraging developments were also seen as four more patients have succeeded in defeating the virus and with this, the number of patients recovered fully has increased to 13 while one has died, leaving 50 active patients. Meanwhile, to express its gratitude to the corona warriors an Air Force helicopter showered petals on different hospitals in the city where COVID-19 patients are being treated.

Carrying 400 kilograms petals of roses, the helicopter took off from Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur and showered petals at Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital and ESI Hospital (both in Pandeypur) and Sir Sundarlal Hospital (SSH) and its Shadabdi Super Speciality Block in Banaras Hindu University (BHU). When the copter reached at the top of these hospitals in their honour, the doctors and paramedical staff reached the rooftops to express their thanks.

According to District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, as many as 45 reports were sent to KGMU Lucknow for testing. Out of them, the reports of 44 were found in which five were positive, while 39 negative. As out of these five, two positive reports were of those who are already being treated, there were only three new cases and it increased the number of corona patients in the district to 64.

Among these three, two were from the family of woman scientist from BHU including



Air Force helicopter showering petals at ESI Hospital at Pandeypur in Varanasi on Sunday to express gratitude towards corona warriors

her 66 years old father and one year old son.

Both of them have been shifted to isolation ward in Sir Sundarlal Hospital (SSH) in BHU where woman scientist is also being treated. It may be mentioned that after finding of woman scientist, the testing work in BHU has been suspended for three days so that the reports were sent for KGMU under alternative arrangement.

The other positive patient is 75-year-old resident of Madanpura who had come into the contact of an earlier patient from Karnataka attended Tablighi Jamaat Markaz event in Delhi. With this, the number of patients related to Jammam has increased to 18. The DM informed that out of 44, 16 were repeat sampling and out of them, two were found positive, while 14 negative. In these 14, one is 19-year-

old boy from Pandey Haveli and three those related to Jamaat and all of these four, belonging to Madanpura hotspot have been released from the DDU hospital.

As all the new three patients are from already sealed hotspot areas, no new containment zones have been made. Among the 25 earlier hotspots, three have become green zones with no new cases came from there during the last 28 days, the number of hotspots has reduced to 22. The areas which are not hotspots now are Gangapur, Bajardiha and Lohta. Meanwhile, all the existing hotspots continued to be sealed and they are Madanpura, Revari Talab, Pitarkunda, Nakkhighat, Habibpura, Madauli, Kashipura, Seer, Sapt Sagar, Chanduwa, Arjunpur, Maidagin, Choti Piyari, Mehmoorganj, Mukimganj,

Kazipura Khurd, Lalpur, Jai Prakash Nagar, Bag Bariyar Singh, Jaitpura, Sujabad and Cholapur.

Earlier, the DM held a meeting with the officials to discuss how to deal with the arrival of migrated workers, tourists, students and others from other states. He instructed the officers that all such persons coming from other places should go through the process of screening and their lodging, eating and other arrangements should be made at buildings on highways. Besides, ration kits should also be given to every worker coming here from buses. SDM (Raja Talab) said that such persons would be quarantined at KIT and Varanasi Public School, while SDM (Pindra) informed that the arrangements of such outsiders have been made at National Inter College and Raj Polytechnic School.

New timings for opening shops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma said that the new timings for opening shops of essential commodities in the city during lockdown-3.0 from Monday will be as per the guidelines of the government. According to him, apart from opening of shops of essential items Visheshwarganj Mandi, the biggest foodgrain market of the region, will also be opened from Monday but with some new arrangements. Though 900 semi-wholesale shops will be opened on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, about 160 fully-wholesale shops will be allowed to open on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and the

market will remain completely closed on Sunday. The shops will be opened every day only between 9 am and 3 pm. and the arrival of any individual customer in this market will be restricted as only retail shoppers will be allowed to buy goods.

DM said that in view of repeated requests from many districts of Purvanchal (eastern UP), the biggest wholesale market of medicine, Sapt Sagar will also be allowed to be opened with new arrangement which was finalised after discussion with concerned associations under which only one-third shops will be allowed to open every day and it will remain closed on Sunday. According to him, there are

about 575 shops in this market and only 190 shops will be opened every day. The order of opening of a shop will come after three days and it will be determined by concerned association.

Only two entry gates of this market will remain open and all other 4-5 gates will remain closed. It may be mentioned that after finding of several traders and employees corona positive recently, the market was closed down for few days.

Besides, the DM informed that the police will have duty at the two open entry gates to allow the authorised retailers to go into the market.

A shopkeeper, an accountant and two employees will be

permitted inside a shop. Only 10 workers for the entire market will be allowed for loading and unloading of the goods and for Varanasi district, the entire supply will be made directly by the wholesalers through 10 vehicles after receiving orders from phones, WhatsApp and emails while the supply to other districts will be done through transport. The timing of this wholesale market will be from 9 am to 3 pm daily and it will be closed on Sunday.

On the request of the traders of Pahadia Sabzi Mandi, the timings have also been revised and it will now remain open from 12 midnight to 6 am instead of 3 am to 6 am.

Nine-point declaration to fight against COVID-19

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused immense disruption to our social and working lives. As we battle through these challenging times, we are being confronted with increasing questions and views as to how this pandemic will impact the sustainability profession. The nine-point Mahamana declaration are outputs from the webinar which minutely examined 'the role of indigenous alternative medicine systems in India, Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (abbreviated as AYUSH) in fight against coronavirus globally'. As no known treatment was available to fight against COVID-19 type viruses, under the circumstances, a special attention was needed to focus on how to access indigenous alternative medicine systems AYUSH to lessen morbidity and mortality in 1.39 billion consumers in India and 7.8 billion consumers around the world. In the first six-day international virtual seminar concluded on Saturday and organised by Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Science (IMS), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) over 100 professionals and experts from



Cops at a hotspot in Chetganj area in Varanasi on Sunday

government, industry, teaching institutions, patients and consumer organisations both from India and abroad presented their work on potential of AYUSH as an adjunct therapy alongside modern medicine in fight against COVID-19. Apart from BHU the seminar was supported by Patient Safety and Access Initiative of India Foundation (PSAIIIF), Quality Council of India (QCI) and Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

The declarations took note of policy issues or legal instruments, such as the Action Plan for the promotion and communication strategy required to

enable scientists work in partnership globally to provide credible options other than modern medicine to empower citizens globally to informed choice based sound science and evidence of outcomes, which are safe, with uniform standards and of high quality. In order to efficiently and effectively implement the nine-point declarations, it was resolved that a nine-member working group will be constituted to oversee the implementation of the declarations within the next 12 months.

The chairman of the working group will be dean, Faculty of Ayurveda, BHU Prof. YB Tripathi, while Prof Dr KN

Dwivedi (HoD Dravyaguna IMS BHU) will be its member secretary. The other members are Dr Meenakshi Datta Ghosh (former secretary, Government of India), Dr KK Aggarwal (former president Indian Medical Association), Prof Tanuja Nesari (director, All India Institute of AYUSH, New Delhi), Prafull D. Sheth (former vice-president FIP, board member PSAIIF Vadodara Gujarat), Arvind Varchaswi (managing director, Sri Sri Tattva, Bengaluru, Karnataka), Prof. RN Acharya (dean, Gujarat Ayurveda University, Gujarat) and Prof Bejon Kumar Misra (adviser/consultant IMS, BHU, New Delhi).

Alarm over spurt in coronavirus infection among policemen

17 more test +ve in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The sudden increase in coronavirus positive cases, especially among the police personnel at the forefront of the fight against the deadly virus, has created a flutter among the district administration and police personnel.

According to Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Shukla, with 17 new cases coming to light on Sunday, Kanpur City has reported 249 coronavirus positive cases to date out of which 228 are active cases.

In the past three days,

coronavirus infection has been increasing among police personnel. A dozen cops tested positive on Sunday and they were sent to hospitals.

The sudden rise in the number of coronavirus cases among the front-line workers has forced the district and the health authorities to pull up their socks to contain further spread of the virus among the police and medical staff.

Confirming that a dozen police personnel on duty had tested positive for coronavirus infection on Sunday, Dr Shukla said the medical authorities were committed to providing them prompt and best treatment so that they become well again and went to their homes. The chief medical officer

said of late it had been witnessed that the cases surfacing were not only from the hotspot areas but also belonged to the same family. He said it clearly showed that the people were not maintaining social distancing which was a potent tool in the fight against coronavirus. He advised people residing in hotspot areas to ensure that they maintained social distancing in the family, washed hands frequently and did not move out from home.

Dr Shukla said on Sunday 193 swab samples had been taken and sent to laboratories for test.

According to sources, a pregnant woman going for check-ups at a private hospital in Saket Nagar was found pos-

itive for coronavirus infection. The area surrounding her residence and the private hospital have been sealed and health officials are tracking the people who were in touch with the lady.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate BR Tiwari has issued directive permitting shops dealing with construction materials like bricks, cement, sand, maurang, TMT bars and hardware to open outside hotspots and buffer areas in city and rural areas by following social distancing.

He said apart from this mobile repair shops will also be allowed to open on similar conditions. He said in case of violation the shops will be sealed.

Around 1,200 migrant workers arrive at Kanpur by train

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Around 1,200 migrant workers along with their families arrived at the Kanpur Central station here from Ahmedabad by a special train on Sunday.

The train arrived at the station at 9:10 am at platform No. 9.

These workers are natives of Unnao, Kanpur Dehat, Jalaun, Jhansi, Fatehpur and some other districts.

Apart from Government Railway Police, Railway Protection Force and UP Police personnel, officials of district administration were present at the Kanpur Central station.

All the migrant workers and their families were allowed to alight from the train by maintaining physical distance.

After collecting their names and addresses, they were taken to the city side passengers hall for thermal screening and later asked to line up according to their home district outside the railway station and board 40 roadways buses available there.

Railway authorities and district administration provided mineral water bottles while some social organisations distributed cooked meal to the migrant workers.

Officials said the Railways had collected general class fare from the migrant workers for journey from Ahmedabad to Kanpur.



Migrant workers arrive at Kanpur Central Station from Ahmedabad by a special train on Sunday.

KANPUR METRO CONSTRUCTION WORK RESUMES: On getting the

final nod from the district administration, civil construction work of Kanpur Metro project has been resumed.

The work will be carried out as per the guidelines issued by the Union Home Ministry for lockdown 3.0 and the standard operating procedures approved by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry.

The construction related work has been started at Metro casting yard and depot sites at

Polytechnic here. Officials of UP Metro Rail Corporation said the work at the casting yard had been started by lifting and shifting of pre-cast T-girders and the required maintenance keeping precautions against novel coronavirus infection into consideration.

These maintenance works include disinfecting vehicles in use, construction sites and other materials.

Besides, thermal screening was also being done of metro officers and workers at the construction sites.

The work at both the sites was being carried out in only one shift from 9 am to 6 pm. Metro officers are also ensuring that social distancing remains on top priority during the work.

It may be recalled that before the announcement of lockdown, the civil construction work of Kanpur metro project was proceeding at an extraordinary pace, but had to be halted in unavoidable conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Four more test corona positive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

After four more persons tested positive for Covid-19 infection in Prayagraj district, officials of the Health department carried out containment exercise at Lukerganj, Saidabad and Bhaluha (Koraon) villages on Saturday.

Apart from sealing these three new hotspot areas, the Health department teams also conducted sanitisation exercise and collected details and started screening of the people living there.

On Friday, four persons were tested positive for Covid-19 infection taking the tally in the Prayagraj district to nine. Of these, one patient has recovered, while rest of them are undergoing treatment at the Covid-19 Level One hospital in

Kotwa. Additional Chief Medical Officer and nodal officer, Dr Rishi Sahai said, 'The Health department has conducted containment exercise in Lukerganj, Saidabad and Bhaluha village (Koraon) as these patients were residents of these areas.'

The sanitisation exercise of their homes and pockets have also been conducted and Health department teams were compiling details of the residents in these areas. Testing of all people living within one km radius of the city area (Lukerganj) and within three km radius area of rural areas (Saidabad and Koraon) would be completed at the earliest, Dr Sahai said.

Meanwhile, the wife of Covid-19 patient found in Lukerganj on Friday is also

infected with the coronavirus taking the Prayagraj's tally of Covid-19 cases to nine on Sunday. When the sample report came on Saturday night, it was found that the coronavirus report of the wife of the civil engineer patient is also positive. After her report came positive, she was immediately taken from the quarantine centre to Kotwa CHC Covid Level-1 Hospital.

At the same time, the report of the brother-in-law of the civil engineer and his wife has come negative. Other family members have also been quarantined. Their sample will also be tested in turn. Now the number of corona virus infected patients in the district has gone up to nine.

On the other hand, corona positive civil engineer found in

Lukerganj has been admitted to SRN from Kotwa CHC on Saturday night. The patient had high blood pressure as well as high fever.

On Friday, when the report of the civil engineer of Lukerganj came positive, he was admitted to the Level-1 Kotwa Bani CHC. He had a high fever since Saturday morning due to which the doctors also got upset. Under this situation, superintendent of Kotwa CHC, Dr Amrit Lal Yadav informed the high officials about his deteriorating conditions. After this, the patient has been admitted to Level-3 Hospital Swaroopani Nehru Hospital. Doctors engaged in treatment said that the patient has high fever and blood pressure. He is being treated, Lal added.

NCR completes important safety, maintenance & operational efficiency works during lockdown

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

North Central Railway (NCR) has successfully executed a very important and critical work of shifting of 132 KV double circuit Dadri-Sahibabad with GZB Meerut RRTS (Regional Rapid Transit System corridor of NCRTC).

Apart from ensuring supply chains of all essential commodities running through parcel trains and freight trains, backend warriors of North Central Railway have successfully executed many important safety, important maintenance and operational efficiency work during this lockdown period with all precautions and social distancing etc. Some of the important works done by North Central Railway are as under:

Modern heavy-duty Track Maintenance Machines along with track, signal & Overhead Equipment (OHE) maintainers have worked regularly for 1089 machine days to complete track

maintenance of 766 km plain track & 461 nos. of turn outs. Health of the track has been monitored through periodic runs of Oscillation Monitoring System (OMS) for 10796 kms. of track and 26 peak locations were attended for safety and riding comfort.

Ultrasonic flaw detection (USFD) of 4419 kms of track and 1336 rail welds has been carried out with USFD machine for safety in train operation. Critical summer precaution activities like de-stressing of long welded rail (LWR) which involved huge manpower has been taken up with a new procedure for carrying out the work with ensuring social distancing norms. 120 kms of de-stressing of LWR has been done.

To ensure safe running of freight and parcel rolling in examination involving visual inspection, temperature recording etc done in 2790 trains. To keep passenger coaches service ready 842

coaches maintained in washing line besides major attention in IOH shed in 55 coaches. More than 4000 signals, over 15000 track circuit/ axle counters and close to 5000-point machines were maintained for safe train operations.

Integrity test of interlocking at station which ensures that all signalling gear are working as per designed logic and no unsafe movement is possible due to any human error in station panel operation. This important work done at 20 stations over NCR.

For reliability improvement cable meggering to assess its health done for close to 20000 Kms cable length. Despite working with bare essential staff, foot patrolling of 10000 Km length OHE done and identified defects rectified. Similarly, over 2500 Km electrified section checked by tower wagon.

Over 3000 mandatory maintenance schedules of electric and diesel locomotives com-

pleted to run essential freight and parcel trains. 321 CCTV, 444 public announcement systems, 15 escalators, 6 lifts etc. were also maintained during this lockdown.

A very important and critical work of 'Shifting of 132 KV Double Circuit Dadri-Sahibabad transmission line due to infringement with GZB-Meerut RRTS (Regional Rapid Transit System) corridor of National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC)' has been successfully executed by TRD team of Prayagraj Division along with Delhi Division and NCRTC. To carry out this work, shutdown of both 132 KV lines was required. It was very difficult during normal traffic as Sahibabad Traction Substation (TSS) remains fully loaded during normal traffic and it feeds important lines in National Capital Region. Therefore, it was planned during lockdown period and successfully completed today.

'Achieve wheat purchase target'

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

All wheat purchase agencies should make payment to farmers against wheat purchased within the time fixed by the government. All wheat agencies should take the zerox copies of Aadhaar and pass-books in order to avoid unnecessary delay in making payment to them.

These instructions were issued to officials by Commissioner Chitrakootdham division Gaurav Dayal during a review of the progress of wheat purchase and payment in entire division in Mayur Bhawan meeting hall here on Saturday.

He said that delay in making payment to farmers would be dealt strictly. On the occasion instructions were issued to the officials to start wheat pur-



Commissioner Chitrakootdham division Gaurav Dayal reviewing the progress of wheat purchase in Mayur Bhawan, Banda

chase at the remaining 22 wheat purchase centres in Chitrakootdham division within three days. Commissioner Dayal found that PCF and UP Agro had made payment to less number of farmers against the wheat purchased from them.

Commissioner Dayal directed the officials to speed up the work of wheat purchase and its payment to the farmers in the entire division. Dayal directed them to achieve the target of wheat purchase in Chitrakootdham division.

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

Commissioner directed the officials to receive custom milled rice (CMR) from rime millers within 15 days. Commissioner directed the divisional food controller to pay special attention to it. Commissioner Dayal told *The Pioneer* that he along with Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Chitrakootdham range Deepak Kumar was inspecting the wheat purchase centres in the entire Chitrakootdham range and was issuing essential instructions to facilitate farmers during purchase of wheat and their payment. Among those present in this meeting were Additional Commissioner Administration Chandrashekhar, Divisional Food Controller Sanjeev Kumar, Deputy Director, Information, Bhupendra Singh Yadav and other officials.

Route march conducted

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

A route march was conducted under the leadership of District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police from Padoa Chauraha to Bahadurpur Road under Mughalsarai Kotwali on Saturday evening. After Sujabad village was declared a hotspot Chandauli and



Varanasi district administration was on high alert. Under the leadership of DM Navneet Singh Chahal and SP Hemant Kutiya the route march was conducted on the Padoa Chauraha Bahadur Road. On seeing a large number of police personnel, people went inside their houses. The route march was conducted in Mughalsarai town, Dulahipur etc. DM Navneet Singh Chahal said that people should stay at homes to avoid coronavirus. He said that social distancing guidelines should also be followed in homes. They should take care of cleanliness in and around your homes. He said that if they wanted to avoid this infection they would have to stay at home. He said that one should not loiter unne-

sarily. During this period, the police rout of Additional SP, CO, Kotwali police as well as other police stations were took part in the march.

Meanwhile the Balua police took out a route march to create awareness about novel coronavirus pandemic. Led by Balua police station incharge Sanjay Kumar Singh his vehicle, three PRVs, police jeeps, bikes, and force of four police outposts i.e. Moharganj, Marufpur, Kailavar and Mahuar after passing through Chahania township, Ramauli, Moharganj, Ramgarh, Maroofpur, Tandakala, Mahuar, Majeedha and other places reached the Balua police station. On the occasion making the people aware SHO Sanjay Kumar Singh said urged them to stay in their houses to prevent coronavirus. He told them that they should leave their houses without any work. He said that action would be taken against those found roaming about unnecessarily or crowding.

THEFT IN HOUSE

A gang of unidentified thieves targeted a house in Bhojpur Naibasti village under the Jalipur outpost in Kotwali at night and took away gold jewellery, ₹10,000 in cash etc from there recently. The theft took place when Mayank Verma (27) was sleeping with other family members in a room situated in the back side of the house. All their belongings were kept in the front room there.

Three end lives

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

Three persons, including two women, committed suicide in different parts of the district recently.

According to a report received here, a 27-year-old youth, Zameel, son of Sakoor Ahmed, committed suicide with the help of a rope from the ceiling of his room in Hardauli Mohalla in Banda city on Saturday. On getting information police reached the spot, took body of the deceased into their custody and sent it for the post-mortem examination. The father of the deceased told the police that Zameel, who worked as a labourer, was unmarried. His father said that he depressed due to the lockdown. However he could tell the cause of the suicide. In another incident, Vandana Sahu (26), wife of Vinay Sahu, committed suicide with the help of a rope in her room in Badokhar Bujurg village under the Girwan police station here. SHO Girwan Shashi Kumar Pandey said that she was married to Vinay Sahu in 2014 and was ill since long time. Pandey said that he had sent her body for the post-mortem examination.

Pandey said that he has not received any complaint from the family members of the deceased so far. In third incident, Renu (30), wife of Devnath, committed suicide by consuming a poisonous substance in Tindwara village under City Kotwali area. She was admitted to Government Allopathic Medical College Banda for the treatment where she died during the treatment. The police have sent the body for the post-mortem examination. SHO City Kotwali Dinesh Singh said that petty dispute between the couple was stated to be the cause of suicide. SHO said that he has not received any application from the family members of the deceased so far.

Ramesh Babu takes over as director (operations) NTPC

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Ramesh Babu V has assumed charge as director (operations) of NTPC. His appointment to this post was effective from May 1 this year. This information was given by Adesh Pandey, Public Relations Officer (PRO), NTPC, Singrauli, while talking to *'The Pioneer'* on Sunday.

Babu graduated as a mechanical engineer from NIT Srinagar and completed his masters in Thermal Engineering from IIT Delhi. He joined NTPC as executive trainee (12th batch) in 1987 and has more than 32 years' experience in managing large power stations in the areas of operations and maintenance,



NTPC director operations Ramesh Babu

efficiency of power stations. His experience in power sector includes senior management-level exposure as a business unit head of NTPC Talcher Kaniha and NSPCL Durgapur. As Director (Operations), NTPC, Ramesh Babu will be responsible for overall planning of safe, reliable and efficient operations of all power generating stations of the NTPC Group while ensuring fuel security and environmental compliance of these power stations. Prior to his appointment as director (operations), he was the executive director to the CMD while also working on system improvement activities and strategies related to the operational excellence of NTPC power plants.

renovation and modernisation of old units as well as in the domains of efficiency and systems improvement of thermal plants. Babu as a professional manager and strategic planner has led several initiatives for improving reliability and effi-

Two injured

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAULI

Two persons, Ramashankar Singh and Ramashray, were injured when two motorcyclists were collided head on in front of Kali Mandir on Grand Trunk Road in Mughalsarai city on Saturday.

Corona warriors' commitment commendable

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Continuous measures are being taken by the employees of the North Eastern Railway (NER) to check the spread of coronavirus during the lockdown. During this crisis the railway personnel besides discharging their duties are also contributing to the measures being taken to prevent novel coronavirus infection. In order to boost the morale of the employees working in such a situation some railwaymen are being honoured by being declared the 'Corona Warriors of the Day' by the railway administration. In this sequence three railwaymen were honoured on May 1, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

Sanjay Kumar Pandey working as sub-inspector/Railway Protection Force (RPF) at Chhapra Kacheri station, provided as many as 550 packets and water bottles to helpless and poor persons in areas near the station in Dahiya Tola, Mohannagar, etc besides the circulating area of Chhapra Kacheri station. In addition Pandey distributed masks to women workers and children. In view of these works Pandey was declared the 'Corona

Warrior of the Day' of Varanasi division. Anil Kumar Mall, working on the post of senior section engineer/track (USFD)



Sanjay Kumar Pandey, S-I RPF, Chhapra Kacheri Varanasi division.

Lucknow division. Likewise Subhash Chandra Yadav, who works as inspector incharge of Railway Protection



Anil Kumar Mall, SSE (USFD) Lucknow division

of the Day' of Izatnagar division. In order to boost the morale of railway workers during the lockdown period the



Subhash Chandra Yadav, inspector incharge RPF, Badaun, Izatnagar division

00553/00554 Gorakhpur-Kathgodam-Gorakhpur parcel special trains being operated in the North Eastern Railway zone, CPRO Pankaj Kumar Singh said. Reports said that 00553 Gorakhpur-Kathgodam parcel special train on May 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14 will depart from Gorakhpur at 07.00 hours, from Basti at 08.05 hours, from Gonda at 09.35 hours, from Lucknow at 11.40 hours, from Bareilly at 15.30 hours, from Rampur at 17.00 hours, from Rudrapur City will leave Kathgodam at 17.50 hours and reach Kathgodam at 19:00 hours.

On the other hand, during the return journey 00554 Kathgodam-Gorakhpur parcel special train will on May 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 depart from Kathgodam at 07.00 hours, from Lucknow at 07.40 hours, from Rudrapur City at 08.15 hours, from Rampur at 09.30 hours, from Bareilly at 10.40 hours, from Lucknow at 14.30 hours, from Gonda at 16.35 hours and from Basti at 18.00 hours and reach Gorakhpur at 19.00 hrs. There is an appeal to all interested traders, institutions and individuals to take advantage of this facility being provided by the railway administration.

Officials meet policemen at checkpoint

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

In the fight against Covid 19 National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Singrauli Project was producing uninterrupted power there making the country capable. Along with it people around the projects were being made aware about novel coronavirus pandemic. As an immediate aid, ration kits, masks and soap for hand washing etc are being provided constantly. NTPC Singrauli Super Thermal Power Station is also contributing in it. Besides power generation and providing relief materials to the people special care was being taken of corona warriors doctors, police and media personnel who were in the frontline in the fight against coronavirus.



Deputy General Manager (HR) Parshottam Lal interacting with the police personnel deployed at the checkpoint

On behalf of NTPC-Singrauli management, Deputy General Manager (HR) Parshottam Lal along with his departmental colleagues and others went to the checkpoint made near Telagawan village on the border of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh,

met the police personnel posted there and became aware of their problems. For the medical staff and police force deployed at the post care was being taken for ensuring for refreshment, food etc. who provided strength to the security force in the summer season.

Helping the needy, poor

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

Ration kits were distributed among 50 poor and needy people by SO Jaspura police station Alok Singh in Barehata, Kuti Dera and Shivrampur villages on Sunday. SO Alok Singh told *The Pioneer* that he had observed during his routine rounds of these villages that 50 families were facing the problem of livelihood. He said that therefore he decided to distribute ration kits among them. SO Singh said that it was our responsibility that not a single person in the locality or the neighbourhood remained hungry. He said that these ration



SO Jaspura Alok Singh distributing Ration kits among the poor and needy in village kuti in Jaspura town in Banda

kits were being arranged with his personal funds and cooperation of police station staff. SO Singh said that he had advised them to remain at home and follow lockdown guidelines for their own welfare. He said that he had given them his mobile number and told them to call him during emergency. He said that efforts were being made to get guidelines of ongoing lockdown implemented in Jaspura town. SO said that he was giving a regular feedback to police chief Banda about legal action being taken against the people who had violated the lockdown guidelines.

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

On the directive of police chief, Banda, circle officers marched on foot in their respective areas in order to get lockdown implemented strictly in the entire district on Saturday.

Superintendent of Police Banda Siddharth Shankar Meena had issued instructions to all COs to conduct foot march and ensure vehicle checking at the police checkpoints/barriers in the entire district. CO Banda City Alok Mishra, SHO City Kotwali Dinesh Singh along with heavy



CO Sadar Raghvendra Singh visiting a shelter home in Pailani, Banda

force marched on foot in the city area and checked more than four dozen vehicles and

challenged two dozen vehicles for violation of lockdown guidelines. CO City Mishra

also interrogated more than two dozen people wandering on the roads without any work. Similarly CO Sadar Raghvendra Singh along with Pailani police marched on foot in Pailani town. Later he visited the shelter home established at Girls' Inter College Pailani. CO Sadar directed the policemen deployed at different points in Pailani town to keep themselves safe from coronavirus infection by taking all preventive steps and perform their duties honestly. CO Sadar directed them to ensure social distancing among the people in shelter home and

public places. CO Sadar also checked two dozen vehicles during the foot march in Pailani town. He challenged half-a-dozen vehicles for violating lockdown norms. CO Atarra Triveni Prasad along with Atarra policemen marched on foot in city area and instructed the policemen to get lockdown implemented strictly in Atarra area. CO Sadar Raghvendra Singh said that lockdown was being implemented in his circle. He said that he had made an appeal to the people to wear masks while coming out of their houses in case of emergency.

People made aware about coronavirus, given masks

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

District president of Indian Youth Congress Ashutosh Kumar Dubey Ashu made people aware about coronavirus and distributed masks in Tiyanayak village in Robterganj development block recently. District president Ashutosh Kumar Dubey said that the Youth Congress was getting the work of getting masks prepared and distributing them among people



District Youth Congress president Ashutosh Kumar Dubey distributing masks among people in Sonbhadra

with the support of people they were also being requested to use them. office-bearers of all blocks, Vidhan Sabha and the district. Under the Mask Pehno India programme being run by national president Youth Congress Srinivas the Sonbhadra Yuva Congress was also extending its cooperation to in this campaign and creating awareness among people about maintaining social distancing, ensuring cleanliness and washing hands at regular intervals. While giving masks to

Lunch packets, ration kits given



CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

MLA Prakash Dwivedi said 300 ration kits were distributed among the poor and needy people in Balkhandi Naka and Katra areas of the city on Sunday. Those who distributed these ration kits were former district president Youth Morcha BJP Pushkar Dwivedi, Rajat Seth, office incharge Anurudha Tripathi Dadda,

Soaps distributed



CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

On International Labour Day the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Vindhyaachal distributed soaps among contractual workers to ensure cleanliness to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus pandemic. On the occasion, general manager (Human Resources)

Uttam Lal, AGM (HR) Snehshish Bhattacharya, DGM (HR) Rohit Kumar and other employees were present. Right from the beginning the project in association with Singrauli district administration, Red Cross Society and various NGOs has provided relief to the people of surrounding areas in this hour of coronavirus pandemic crisis.

Maha liquor shops to open with rider

Uddhav Govt announces relaxations in Red, Orange, Green zones

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid the extended lockdown, alcohol consumers living in the red zones of Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and the areas under the Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Malagaon Municipal Corporations had something to cheer on Sunday, as the Maharashtra Government ordered the re-opening of liquor shops in all areas excepting in containment zones from Monday onwards, with "certain conditions".

A day after it notified the extended lockdown guidelines, the State Government announced certain relaxations, under which it allowed re-opening of any number of stand-alone shops vending essential commodities and five non-essential shops, including one liquor shop, on a particular road/lane, from Monday onwards.

"There is no restriction on the number essential shops. In the case of non-essential shops, only five can remain open in one lane. Among the five non-essential shops, there can be one liquor shop," a senior government official said.

In its notification amending its earlier notification, the State Government said: "As malls, market complexes and markets shall remain closed in urban areas. However, shops

selling essential goods in markets and market complexes are permitted"

"All stand-alone (single) shops, neighbourhood (colony) shops and shops in residential complexes, without any distinction of essential and non-essential, are permitted to remain open in urban areas excluding containment zones. However, in areas under the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) and Malagaon Municipal Corporation (MMC), if there are more than five shops in a lane/road then besides all shops selling essential goods, up to a maximum of 5 shops selling non-essential goods in that lane/road will be permitted to remain open," the amended notification read.

"All shops in rural areas, except in malls, are permitted to remain open, without any distinction of essential and non-essentials. Social distancing will be maintained in all cases," the notification added.

The MMR, where relaxations have been announced, comprises Mumbai, satellite towns like Thane, Kalyan-Dombivli, Navi Mumbai, Panvel, Vasai-Virar, Mira-Bhayandar and Ulhasnagar. The State Government has

permitted supply of goods, all essential supplies shops and movement for medical emergencies have been permitted in all - Red, Orange, Green Zones, besides containment areas and also within civic bodies.

The Government has also permitted opening of medical clinics, out-patient-departments, posts and couriers, banking and finance, agricultural activities, e-commerce essential goods, urban industries, industries with access controls.

The State Government has permitted cars on a driver-plus two passengers basis in all three zones, including red Zones, while it has allowed plying of two-wheelers without a pillion rider. Taxis and aggregators have been barred.

In Red Zones, only Government offices shall continue to work with 5 percent staff as in the past two lockdown periods even in lockdown 3.0.

However, relief has been granted for government and private offices in Green and Orange Zones which can start work with 33 percent staff.

Industrial activities continue to be banned in the Red Zones comprising MMR, PMR and MMC, though private construction sites having in-situ labour can resume activities in this zone.

AERIAL SALUTE TO CORONA WARRIORS

Petals showered in Tamil Nadu, Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI/CHENAI

For the entire medical fraternity in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Sunday, May 3, 2020 would remain as a day to be remembered throughout their life.

The helicopters of Indian Air Force showered petals on Covid warriors, the doctors, nurses, para medical staff and all healthcare workers engaged in fighting the spread of the pandemic.

In Chennai IAF helicopters flew over the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and the Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital and showered flowers over the hospital staff waiting outside.

Many of the doctors and

nurses could be seen showing the victory sign with their fingers as a mark of appreciation to the country's Forces and the respect they showed on the hospital staff.

At Thiruvananthapuram, Brigadier Seshadri, head of the Army Unit accompanied by officers and soldiers drove down to the Police Head Quarters and expressed their gratitude to the members of the Kerala Police who have been working round-the-clock as the frontline guards to fight coronavirus.

The Government General Hospital at Ernakulam witnessed some emotional scenes as the doctors and nursing staff from Sanjeevani, the Navy's hospital at the Head Quarters of the Southern Navy



Command called on their counterparts to hand over a 'big thank you' message.

These doctors, nurses and para medical staff deserve all our respects and love because of the kind of job which they are doing since the outbreak of this pandemic. This is an extraordinary situation and that's

kind recognition and acknowledgement I am getting. This will rekindle and rejuvenate our energy," said a nurse in the Government general Hospital.

But there were dissident voices too. Dr Rajesh Kesavan, adjunct professor, SRM Institute of Technology and Science said there was no need of such a grand show just to express gratitude.

"The medical fraternity needs dignity and freedom to work. The smile of the patients who get discharged from the hospital after they are cured are our trophies," said Dr Kesavan.

Some of the medical staff who stood outside the hospital building in the scorching sun of May were heard complaining that not even a single petal fell on them.

35 new cases surface in J&K, total over 700

PNS ■ JAMMU

With 35 fresh cases of coronavirus, the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir Sunday crossed the 700 barrier. On the other hand, the Government on Sunday listed all 10 districts of Kashmir valley as red districts along with three districts of Jammu, Samba and Kathua from Jammu division.

Four districts of Reasi, Udhampur, Ramban and Rajouri were categorised as Orange districts and only three districts of Doda, Kishtwar and Poonch were categorised as Green districts.

Meanwhile, the testing capacity in Jammu and Kashmir has been further increased up to 2500 tests per day.

According to the media bulletin, 35 new positive cases of novel Coronavirus (Covid-19), 01 from Jammu division and 34 from Kashmir division, have been reported on Sunday thus taking the total number of positive cases in Jammu & Kashmir to 701.

According to the bulletin, out of 701 positive cases, 406 are Active Positive, 287 have recovered and 08 have died.

Moreover, 33 more Covid-19 patients have recovered and discharged from various hospitals- 02 from Jammu

Division and 31 from Kashmir Division. Earlier, in the day Indian Armed Forces organised multiple events to show solidarity and gratitude to these Corona Warriors across J&K.

Indian Army organised events in Kashmir valley, in Rajouri, Akhnoor, Jammu, Samba, Kathua and felicitated all agencies involved in the fight against Covid-19 by organizing Military Pipe Band Displays as a token of appreciation and goodwill gesture at many places. In Jammu Tiger Division organised events at: Govt Medical College Jammu, J&K Police lines Gandhi Nagar, Govt Hospital Gandhi

Nagar, Police Station, Bari Brahmana, Employees State Insurance Corporation Hospital, Bari Brahmana. Banners with encouraging slogans were displayed and senior army officials greeted and interacted with counterparts from other agencies. Miran Sahib Brigade also presented Hand sanitizers manufactured by Brigade EME workshop and Greeting cards from children to the Corona Warriors in Govt Medical College Jammu. In Rajouri, Corona Warriors were honoured by Ace of Spades Division at District Police Lines, Civil Hospital, Government College and Army Hospital.

Covid milestone: 10 lakh RT-PCR tests conducted

75,000 tests daily, but ratio still as low as 758/million

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has completed 10 lakh real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests to identify people infected with coronavirus. According to officials, this is a major milestone in India's fight against coronavirus. But at 758 per 10 lakh tests, India's testing ratio has been one of the lowest in the world. India has decided to ramp up its testing number to one lakh per day soon.

The milestone comes amid the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s attempts to increase the number of testing. The biomedical research agency has ramped up tests to more than 70,000-75,000 samples per day. According to the officials, testing for Covid-19 has been scaled up significantly over the last two months.

They said, till March 31, 47,852 samples were tested, which increased to a total of 9,02,654 samples as on April 30. From May 1 till May 2 evening, 1,37,346 tests were done.

A RT-PCR test is a laboratory technique combining reverse tran-



scription of RNA into DNA that detects the virus while the antibody tests, which use blood, detect the body's response to the virus, experts said.

Starting with one single laboratory, the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune and having 100 laboratories in the beginning of the lockdown, the RT-PCR test facility is now available in 292 Government and 97 private facilities across the country, officials said.

Considered to be the most-effective diagnosis, RT-PCR is a throat and nasal swab test. It detects the virus early on, which is helpful in identifying and isolating an infected person.

Meanwhile, domestic manufacturers of RT-PCR kits have been asked to ramp up production. Against a demand of 35 lakh RT-PCR kits, orders have been placed for 21.35 lakh kits, out of that orders for 2 lakh kits have been awarded to the domestic manufacturers.

In Government labs, the tests are free but at private laboratories, it costs ₹4,500.

203 new case in TN, total mounts to 3,023

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

It turned out to be a Black Sunday for Chennai as the number of persons tested positive for coronavirus in the metropolis increased by 203 in a single day, according to the medical bulletin released by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

The total number of persons tested positive for the pandemic in the State crossed the 3,000 mark by Sunday evening and reached 3,023 by 7.15 pm. The day saw 266 persons testing positive for coronavirus all over the State.

This is the highest number of persons testing positive in the State in a single day which prompted medical expert like Dr Ranjith Vijayahari to designate Chennai as a "very very hotspot" and termed the situation highly critical. With 203 persons testing positive on a single day, Chennai city alone has 1,458 active covid-19 patients. One more person succumbed to the pandemic on Sunday making the total number of deaths to 30.

What is causing concern is Chennai emerging as Tamil Nadu's epicenter of coronavirus even as the State Government



has decided to relax the regulations and make things easy for industries and business establishments to function from May 4. "The only option before the Tamil Nadu administration is to identify, isolate and quarantine the persons testing positive. The State has to ramp up the testing. The contacts of all the 203 persons tested positive have to be identified and tested and if need arises, they have to be isolated," said Dr Vijayahari who prefers a total close down of the hotspots with stringent regulations.

Earlier in the day, the Greater Corporation of Chennai passed a legislation taking over all marriage halls and halls in the city to accommodate the coronavirus patients whose numbers are rising by the day. The perception of the general public towards the

norms declared by the Government need to be changed, according to Dr Rajesh Kesavan, a medical doctor.

"The fact that we have seized more than 3 lakh vehicles for violation of the prohibitory orders and collected more than ₹3.5 crore as fine shows that there is no let up in the attitude of the city residents. Now we have to see what impact the new order enacted by the Tamil Nadu Government to arrest and imprison persons loitering around would make," said a police officer in Chennai.

The lack of coordination between the State and Central Governments with regard to the availability of quarantine facilities came out on Sunday. The Southern Division of the Railways had worked overtime and converted 575 rail bogies into temporary hospital facilities. "Each compartment/bogie could accommodate eight persons and if the need shoots up, we can put 16 persons in a single coach. But the request has to come from the State Government. We are ready with a buffer arrangement," a senior Railway Official told The Pioneer.

Two more deaths in Dharavi, total cases 590

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Spotlight once again turned onto Mumbai's Dharavi slum on Sunday, as two more persons succumbed to Covid-19 and Asia's largest slum recorded highest-ever day's tally of 94 infected cases, taking the total number of positive cases to 590.

With two fresh deaths, the total number of deaths in this densely populated slum has risen to 20.

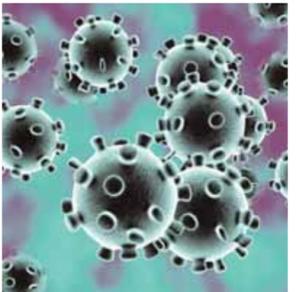
A day after it had witnessed 89 - which thereto the biggest-ever surge in Coronavirus infections in a single day, Dharavi witnessed an alarming 94 new infected cases on Sunday.

That the pandemic has spread all over Dharavi could be evidenced from the fact fresh cases are being reported from majority of the areas of this slum.

On Sunday, as many as 11 new cases were reported from Matunga Labour colony, while there were 10 new cases in Valmiki Nagar.

The following are other areas where a big surge in infections was witnessed: Indira Nagar (7 cases), Cross Road (seven cases) 60 feet Road (six cases) and Mukund Nagar (four cases).

There were three children - aged three, nine and ten years -- among the newly infected persons. Eighty three old woman from Ajmera chawl is the oldest woman among the persons who tested positive for Coronavirus on Sunday.



Sunday was the fourth occasion when there have been substantial number of cases. Earlier on April 23, one death and 25 cases had been reported from Dharavi in a single day. Later on May 1, there were 38 new cases.

Spread over 240 hectare area, Dharavi is one of the Covid-19 hotspots in Mumbai.

Ever since first few cases of Coronavirus were reported in the early first week of April, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is closely monitoring the situation in Dharavi where the health authorities have clamped a total lockdown.

Located between Western Railway's Bandra-Matunga and Central Railway's Sion-Matunga stations in north-central Mumbai, Dharavi is home to more than 4 lakh people.

HRD: Fresh dates for NEET, JEE on May 5

New Delhi: In a relief for engineering and medical aspirants, the HRD Ministry will announce fresh dates for competitive exams - JEE and NEET - on May 5.

The exams were postponed due to nationwide lockdown announced to contain the Covid-19 spread.

"The fresh dates will be announced by HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on May 5. This will put an end to uncertainty for the aspirants. The Minister will also interact

with students online the same day," a senior ministry official said.

While Joint Entrance Exam-Mains (JEE-MAINS) is conducted for admission to engineering colleges across the country, the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) is held for medical colleges.

More than 15 lakh students across the country have registered for NEET this year, which is the gateway to medical colleges in India, whereas more than 9 lakh have registered for

JEE Mains, the entrance exam for all other engineering colleges except IITs.

The JEE-Mains is considered as a qualifying exam for JEE-Advanced.

The HRD Ministry's National Testing Agency (NTA) had also given students an option to change their opted centres for the two tests as students have moved to different places since the lockdown.

Universities and schools across the country have been closed since March 16 when

the centre announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as one of the measures to contain the Covid-19 outbreak. Later, a nationwide lockdown was announced from March 25, which was extended till May 17. There is however, no clarity yet on when the pending board exams for class 10 and 12 will be conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

The board had announced that it will conduct pending exams in 29 subjects crucial for

promotion and admission to higher education institutions.

The death toll due to Covid-19 rose to 1,301 and the number of cases climbed to 39,980 in the country on Sunday, according to the Union health ministry.

The number of active Covid-19 cases stood at 28,046, while 10,632 people have recovered and one patient has migrated, the ministry said. The total number of cases include 111 foreign nationals.

Delhi to resume flights from T3

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commercial passenger flights at Delhi airport will initially operate from Terminal 3 after the lockdown ends, said a senior official of its operator DIAL on Sunday, adding that entry gates, self check-in machines and check-in bays will be allocated to airlines to avoid overcrowding. The airport will use "ultraviolet disinfection tunnels" for all incoming baggage, said according to their plan.

It will keep all food, beverage and retail shops open to avoid overcrowding at one place, says the plan prepared by the GMR group-led Delhi International Airport Ltd.

The plan said the passengers of Vistara and IndiGo would enter the airport through gates

1 and 2 only.

These two airlines will have check-in rows A, B and C among them, it said. AirAsia India and Air India passengers will use entry gates 3 and 4. These passengers will then go to rows D, E and F where the staff of these two airlines would assist them check-in, according to the plan.

SpiceJet and GoAir passengers would enter through gate 5 towards the staff of these two airlines at rows G and H for check-in. Passengers of all other domestic airlines will enter through gate 5 and will head to row H, the plan said. All international airlines' passengers would be entering the airport using gates 6, 7 and 8. The staff of these airlines would be sitting at rows J, K, L and M for check-in at Terminal 3.

FROM PAGE 1

SALUTING CORONA WARRIORS FROM AIR, LAND, SEA

The planes and helicopters then showered petals on India Gate and Red Fort besides performing similar feat at all the hospitals treating Covid-19 patients. These hospitals included All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), BR Ambedkar Hospital, Max Saket, Gangaram Hospital, Deen Dayal Hospital and some others.

A similar exercise was conducted over Srinagar's Dal Lake, Chandigarh's Sukhna Lake and Lucknow. In Mumbai, fighter jets conducted a flypast over the Marine Drive and dropped petals over the King Edward Memorial Hospital and Kasturba Gandhi Hospital, among others.

In all, 35 aircraft were utilised including ten fighter jets, four transport aircraft and 20 helicopters.

The IAF helicopters dropped flower petals in 20 cities and 58 hospitals across India.

Appreciating the unique efforts of the Armed forces, Defence Ministry quoted Defence Minister Rajnath Singh as saying, "The Armed Forces today organised several activities to express gratitude to the corona warriors who are battling against the pandemic. These frontline warriors are doing commendable work in strengthening the morale of all those involved in India's fight against Covid-19."

The Indian Navy personnel onboard the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya expressed their appreciation by forming a human chain saying Indian Navy salutes corona warriors.

"Personnel onboard Indian Navy Ships mission deployed from the West to East in Indian Ocean Region, expressed their appreciation and salute the Corona warriors including doctors, nurses, other health workers, sanitation staff and police personnel who have been relentlessly fighting against the COVID pandemic," the Navy said in a statement.

In all, 25 Indian Naval warships across nine port cities including in Andaman and Nicobar Islands carried out illumination from 7:30 pm till midnight. In addition, four mission deployed ships also took part to express their gratitude while 15 helicopters and aircraft took part in showering flower petals and flypast in coastal cities.

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ships were illuminated at 25 locations covering the entire coastline of the country, including far flung island territories of

Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep and Minicoy Islands. A total of 46 Coast Guard ships and 10 helicopters took part in the initiative including dropping petals on hospitals in Chennai and Goa.

Several hospitals thanked the Armed forces for their gesture of showering petals. In a letter to the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, the Resident Doctors Association of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences appreciated the "morale boosting" gesture by the defence services in solidarity with them to fight the pandemic.

In the evening, Navy ships docked at major ports, including Mumbai and Chennai, were lit up. Five warships were illuminated in Mumbai off the Gateway of India in Mumbai displaying banners like "India Salutes Corona Warriors" and sounded the siren and fire

flares in the evening. The Eastern Naval Command illuminated two ships at anchorage from 7.30 pm to midnight at Visakhapatnam coast.

LOCKDOWN 3 BEGINS WITH 2K CASES SOARING TOTAL TO 42K

patients were cured from the highly contagious novel coronavirus disease in the last 24 hours. This has taken the recovery rate in the country up to 26.59 percent.

He said the recovery rate of Covid-19 patients has steadily increased which shows that more and more of these patients are getting better and going back to their homes.

"Till now around 10,000 Covid patients have recovered and have joined their normal life. Majority of patients in other hospitals are also on the road to

recovery. It reflects the quality of care provided by our frontline health workers in India. It is heartening to see the high morale of our health warriors in these testing times," he said.

Talking about opening up of the various activities, he said, "Slowly and gradually the economic activities would be opened up one by one. There is detailed planning according to which various industries like drug, pharmaceuticals etc. are being assisted to return back to normalcy as soon as possible."

"The rate of growth of new cases has also been steady for a while. As per the data received today, for the past three days, the doubling rate is 12.0, for seven days, 11.7 and for 14 days, it is 10.4," he said.

Also, he stressed on need to adhere to strict physical distancing and basic hand hygiene etiquettes properly to take lockdown 3.0 to a logical end.

Stone-pelters shield terrorists during encounter

Faced with this re-emerging threat, security forces are now redrawing their tactics to control crowds at encounter sites

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

The incident of stone-pelters resurfacing in Pulwama and attacking forces engaged in an encounter with terrorists has alarmed the security establishment. It has come about after a long gap and that too, amid a stringent Covid-19 lockdown in the Valley and the continued presence of security forces in full strength since the abrogation of Article 370 giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir last year.

Faced with this re-emerging threat after it nearly died down in 2019, the security forces are now redrawing their tactics to control crowds at encounter sites. Officials have mentioned that there has been "no major incident of stone pelting at encounter sites" in 2020. Hence, the Pulwama incident has understandably alerted the security establishment.

The stone-pelting incident has also coincided with the surge in militant activities leading to increased anti-militancy operations. At least, 62 militants have been neutralized since January one this year with 30 of the total ultras killed in the month of April alone, officials said.

However, at least 15 security men have also died in the last four months including the latest casualties of a Colonel and a Major on Friday. In fact, terrorists barged into the homes of some security men in Kashmir valley and shot them dead before decamping with their automatic weapons.

The sequence of events in Dangerpora, Pulwama, saw heavy stone pelting commencing as the security forces were approaching the houses where the militants were hiding. This was to delay the cordon and search net to get in place and give ample warning to the



ultras to escape. Reports said while two militants were killed in the ensuing firefight, the other two managed to escape in the confusion due to stone

throwing. Radicalised elements, especially in four districts of South Kashmir, used to resort to stone throwing whenever

the security forces were closing in on hiding militants in various hamlets, sources said here on Sunday.

The phenomenon peaked into a major disruptive activity during the encounter with the Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani in 2016 and it continued for the next couple of months.

After giving a tough time to the law enforcement agencies, stone pelting instances nearly came to an end in late 2019 after the Centre's Article 370 move. Prior to that, the erstwhile State witnessed 1,999 incidents in the same year. This figure had crossed 2,650 in 2016 following Wani's killing. More than 1,450 incidents were reported in 2018 while 1,410 incidents occurred in 2017.

With almost negligent incidents in the last many months, security forces are taking the Pulwama incident

seriously as it took place despite lock down restrictions and general improvement in law and order, sources said.

The tightening up of the anti-terror grid will now see generating more real-time intelligence to go after the militants so as to avoid giving any whiff to the misguided locals to gather and throw stones as an obstruction, they said.

Moreover, the focus will be on launching operations in small teams in minimum possible time to avoid leakage of information and getting out of the encounter site as fast as possible. This will make sure that the radicalized elements do not have time and space to marshal their resources, sources said adding any chance of collateral damage will also be reduced to a large extent.

On the sudden spurt in the number of fire-fights, officials said Pakistan-backed militants are now trying desperately to

infiltrate from the mountain passes in North Kashmir. While many attempts were foiled, some militants managed to sneak in and the encounter in Keran some weeks back and the latest engagement in Handwara are clear indicators, they said. Both these places are in North Kashmir.

Five para-commandos were killed in Keran in early April while five security personnel including two officers fell on Friday.

With snow melting in the higher reaches of North Kashmir, the anti-infiltration grid is now fully geared to thwart determined attempts by Pakistan to push in militants into the Kashmir valley.

According to an estimate, nearly 300 well trained ultras are lodged in more than 25 launch pads across the Line of Control (LOC) and sources did not rule out the number of encounters on the LOC and in

the hinterland going up in the coming days.

Army Chief General M M Naravane, who visited Srinagar in late April after the five commandos were killed, had said focus on anti-infiltration measures on the LOC will continue. "As far as fighting terrorism in the hinterland is concerned, we will approach it through the joint mechanism instituted for the purpose. We have a high level of synergy between all the forces operating in the Valley," he had said.

The Army Chief had also said the security forces will give proportionate response to Pakistan to all acts of infringement of ceasefire and his support to terrorism. The onus remains with Pakistan to bring peace in the region. "Unless Pakistan gives up its policy of state sponsored terrorism, we will continue to respond with impunity and precision," Naravane said.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

High mortality: Cancer patients soft Covid target

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cancer has emerged as one of the major risk factors responsible for increased mortality due to Covid-19, according to a study published in latest journal of Cancer Discovery. It is the largest study so far to assess outcomes for patients with cancer who have also been infected with the deadly contagion.

As a group, said the study, Covid-19 patients with blood cancers, such as leukemia and lymphoma, has the highest mortality rate.

"Our findings emphasise the need to prevent cancer patients from contracting Covid-19 and if they do to identify and closely monitor these individuals for dangerous symptoms," said co-lead author of the study, Dr Vikas Mehta, a surgical oncologist at Montefiore and associate professor of otorhinolaryngology--head and neck surgery at Einstein.

Dr Mehta added, "we hope that our findings can inform states and communities that have not yet been so severely struck by this pandemic about the unique vulnerability cancer patients face."

The study involved 218 cancer patients who tested positive for Covid-19 from March 18 to April 8, 2020 at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, New York City, one of the regions in the United States hit hardest by the pandemic.

A total of 61 cancer patients died from Covid-19, a dramatically high case-fatality rate of 28 per cent.

"A key element is that mortality appears to be more closely related to frailty, age,

Disability rights organisations protest AIIMS director's order

Director, AIIMS, Rishikesh, had threatened its employees, including faculty, with compulsory retirement if they are unable to perform duties due to physical or mental disability

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Disability rights organisations are up in arms against the recent order of the Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Rishikesh, threatening its employees including faculty, with compulsory retirement if they are unable to perform duties, due to physical or mental disability, which interferes with efficient discharge of duties.

The organisations have now sought intervention of Dr Harsh Vadhan, Union Health Minister and Thawar Chand Gehlot, Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment to intervene in the matter, seeking withdrawal of the "blatantly discriminatory order."

"Any employee (including faculty), if unable to per-

form duties, due to Physical or mental disability, which interferes with efficient discharge of duties, will be compulsory retired, as per CCS rules," says the official order dated 9 April 2020 signed by Dr Ravi Kant, Director, AIIMS, Rishikesh.

The National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD) slammed the move, saying that "the memo does not specifically state which section of the CCS rules makes a provision for such "compulsory" retirement.

"On the contrary, the Central Services (Pension) Amendment Rules, 2018, states, "The case of a government servant acquiring a disability, where the provisions of Section 20 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (49 of 2016) are applicable, shall be governed by the

provisions of the said section," said Muralidharan Vishwanath, Secretary, NPRD. He also cited various provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 which protects the right of the PwDs while in duty.

"Despite progressive legislation to empower people with disabilities, the AIIMS, Rishikesh is passing an office order which is not only unfair, discriminatory but also unlawful," said disability rights activist and founder of Doctors with Disabilities, Dr Satendra Singh.

Dr Singh also said that the order will have adverse impact on the morale of disabled staff at AIIMS, Rishikesh during Covid-19 pandemic times when all efforts are being taken to boost the morale of the employees.

and co-morbidities than to active therapy for cancer," said co-senior author Balazs Halmos, director of the Multidisciplinary Thoracic Oncology Program at Montefiore and professor of medicine at Einstein.

"Our data suggest that we should not stop lifesaving

cancer therapies, but rather develop strategies to minimise potential Covid-19 exposures and re-evaluate therapies for our most vulnerable cancer populations," explained co-senior author Amit Verma, director of the division of hemato-oncology at Montefiore and professor of

medicine and of developmental and molecular biology at Einstein.

The time period during which these patients were treated was earlier in the epidemic when testing was almost exclusively done in sicker, symptomatic patients who required hospitalisation.

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CSC announces to actualise Modi's 'Gram Swaraj'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his vision for self-reliant and sustainable villages, the Common Service Centres (CSC), the digital arm of the Government, on Sunday announced to fulfil the nation's needs for assimilating the spirit of self-reliance at rural level.

From the new age e-commerce to realising direct benefit transfers (DBT) to providing loans and imparting online education to villagers, the CSC has all in its basket to play a significant role in nation's goal of achieving Gram Swaraj, CSC CEO Dr Dinesh Kumar Tyagi said.

The Prime Minister had on Panchayati Raj Day on April 24 emphasised the need for assimilating the spirit of self-reliance and advocated that panchayats and villages can play a significant role in nation's goal of achieving Gram Swaraj.

The PM highlighted the role of the digital economy (CSC) and internet connectivity (Bharat Net) in facilitating self-reliance and meeting these emerging challenges encountered by the country in today's context like the corona pandemic scare.

The CSCs, under the

Ministry of Electronics & IT of Government of India, is a significant pillar of the Digital India Programme. This pan-India network is operated and managed by the Village Level Entrepreneurs and is closely aligned to the spirit and vision of Gram Swaraj. Currently, over 3 lakh VLEs are managing the CSCs in rural and semi urban areas of the country.

"The core components of Gram Swaraj centered on self-reliance and socio-economic dignity, especially for the marginalized communities, are being addressed and delivered by the CSCs. Through technology, enabling policy and digital infrastructure, CSCs are contributing to Gram Swaraj through digital literacy, awareness about Government and other schemes contributing to social empowerment; digital entrepreneurial opportunities and infrastructure contributing to economic empowerment and citizenship services that contribute to inclusion and political empowerment by providing easy access to services and schemes," said Tyagi.

Tyagi said the fact that Sarpanchs (Panchayat representatives) of different Gram Panchayats from across the country sitting in villages con-



nected with the Prime Minister digitally through video conference itself establish the power of digital infrastructure and support the vision of decentralized democracy and citizens' active participation in nation building.

Other significant tenets of the Gram Swaraj concept is the focus and ability for meeting community needs utilising locally available resources. During the COVID 19 pandemic the innovative CSC Grameen e store are not only meeting the requirement of the

citizen but also supporting the farmers to sell its produce or an artisan to market its products.

"This localised e-commerce CSC Store is transforming the rural economy and making them self reliant beside general economic development of the village," Tyagi said.

CSC has also started in a limited way the Rural BPO, which has a huge potential for employment generation and can reverse/contain the Rural migration, he pointed out.

1K genome sequencing of SARS-Cov 2 virus launched to decode Covid-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Union Science and Technology Ministry has announced the launch of 1,000 Genome sequencing of SARS-Cov 2 virus to understand viral and host genomics of COVID-19 outbreak. The deadly contagion has swept across the nations killing over 2 lakhs worldwide. In India, the virus has claimed over 1,320 lives.

Under the study, the scientists will sequence 1,000 SARS Cov-2 genomes from the clinical samples to understand the evolving molecular phylogeny of the virus and the emerging mutations in the viral RNA as well as identify the host genetic variations which correlate with transmission, susceptibility and disease severity.

The samples will be collected from across India to study the emerging mutations in the virus and how they change the symptoms of the infectious disease that has killed at least 235,000 people across the world, as per a statement here.

This study is being coordinated by National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG) in Kalyani, West Bengal. The institute has already sequenced about five Sars-CoV-2 genomes.

Other partners include Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics - Hyderabad, Institute of Life Sciences - Bhubaneswar, National Centre for Cell Science - Pune, Institute For Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine - Bengaluru. Other DBT laboratories will also contribute in sample collection and sequencing from across the country. The Indian Institute of Sciences is also likely to join the project.

The analysis of the data will also help the researchers understand how genetic variations in the human host relate to the severity and transmissibility of the infection and the susceptibility to it.

The findings of this study will also assist development of efficient diagnostic assays, vaccine and drug candidates and help formulate policies for containment of the outbreak.

WAR AGAINST DEADLY CORONA

States, UTs told to prepare second line of defence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising number of coronavirus cases in the Central Armed Police Forces and concerns over several policemen contracting COVID-19, the Centre has advised the States for preparing an effective second line of defence to contain the spread of the pandemic.

In a separate letter to all the Chief Secretaries of States/UTs and DGs Prisons, the Ministry advised them to strictly follow guidelines and protocols for managing Covid-19 in prisons.

In its communication to all the States and Union Territories, the Union Home Ministry said the police chiefs may consider the option of 'work from home' for personnel not deployed on frontline in hotspots and containment zones, and wherever feasible.

"To meet the challenge of COVID-19, and to ensure sustenance of control strategy for COVID-19, police forces need to prepare an effective second line of defence to make up for the police personnel who may be rendered ineffec-

People in prisons and other places of detention, living in closed and crowded environment, are likely to be more vulnerable to the coronavirus disease

tive due to COVID infection during the pandemic," the home ministry said.

The Ministry has also reiterated guidelines and protocols for security personnel engaged in managing public during the continuing lockdown.

As for writing about the guidelines for prisons, the Home Ministry said the novel coronavirus is a global health crisis and has affected a huge population the world over.

The virus which causes the disease is highly infectious and even pre-symptomatic people can infect others and any person who is in close contact with someone who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is at risk of contracting the disease, it said.

"People in prisons and other places of detention, living in closed and crowded environment, are likely to be

more vulnerable to the coronavirus disease," the Home Ministry said.

Moreover, it said, experience shows that prisons, jails and similar settings where people gather in close proximity may act as a source of infection, amplification and spread of infectious diseases within and beyond prisons.

Prison health is, therefore, widely considered as public health. Any control strategy for COVID-19 in the community which does not encompass the prison context will not be sustainable, the ministry said.

It is, therefore, considered essential that health-care teams of States and UTs should work with the custodial and detention staff in prisons and other places of detention, following the national guidelines and protocols on the subject issued by the government of India from time to

time," it said.

The home ministry said certain inmates in a prison were tested COVID-19 positive.

In view of this, it is considered expedient to issue these guidelines to reiterate the precautions and measures to be taken, the ministry said.

In a separate development, the ministry has sought a report from the CRPF on why there has been an upward spiral in the number of Covid-19 cases.

The BSF has also reported 42 Covid positive cases till so far.

In 31 Battalion located at a camp here, as many as 140 persons have been tested positive for the disease even as test reports of others are awaited.

Another company was quarantined on Saturday following detection of a corona virus positive case. On Sunday, the CRPF headquarters was sealed after detection of a Covid-19 positive case and all 40 personnel traced to have been in contact with the infected official have been quarantined.

CJI directs officers in ranks of dy registrar and above to attend office from May 4

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India S A Bobde has directed that Supreme Court officers in the ranks of deputy registrar and above or their equivalent in the registry shall attend office from May 4.

The apex court has restricted its functioning since March 23, days before the nationwide lockdown started from March 25, and is presently hearing urgent matters through video-conferencing.

An office order, issued on Sunday by the top court's secretary general Sanjeev S Kalgaonkar, said that remaining staff members shall continue to work from home as per terms and conditions as notified earlier.

"In partial modification of orders referred above, the Chief Justice of India has been pleased to direct that all the officers in the ranks of deputy registrar and above, or

their equivalent, in the registry shall attend office with effect from Monday, May 4, 2020," it said.

"The remaining staff shall continue to work from home on such terms and conditions as notified earlier, by the orders under reference, however, concerned registrar(s) may direct any other subordinate officer/staff to attend office to meet any urgent requirement(s) and, on such direction, such officer and/or staff shall report for duty at office on the date and time so directed," it said.

The office order said all officers and staff, while commuting to and from office and also while at work, shall strictly follow all precautions as per advisory and guidelines issued by the Government and the apex court registry from time to time towards preventing the spread of COVID-19, like practising social distancing and wearing face masks.

PAPER WITH PASSION

Lockdown 3

Curbs have been eased but with existing chains broken, a stimulus and a new work code won't perk up the economy



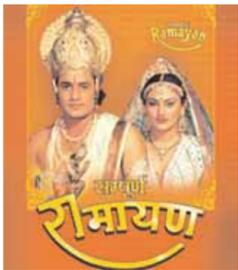
Certain truths are too glaring to ignore. Like the fact that most metro cities are on a virus spiral and are fully red, which means they need to be contained if we do not want an apocalyptic slide into chaos. Unlike most world cities, Indian ones have a high population density. Toying with herd immunity, like the way Sweden has done, moving a younger population outside while keeping the vulnerable indoors, is too huge a risk to take and monitor. But lockdown 3 also means that the economic activity, which has been enabled with

easing of restrictions, won't quite pick up pace because the disease hotspots also happen to be the country's economic hubs. And while the rural economy has got a push in disease-free zones, MGNREGA work has seen record enrollment and returnee migrants are signing up for village schemes and infrastructure, the urban economy is still some time away from whirling back to life. Now the ease of doing business is still too sporadic to have any accelerating impact on the economy. Cities can only avail essential goods and services, so the big push that consumption was supposed to get isn't happening because suppliers have a limited range to operate within, non-essential goods strictly off the list for the time being. Non-essential single shops are allowed to be open only in safe zones, that too with truncated hours. Certainly not in red clusters. And although the Government has allowed 33 per cent staff of industrial units and firms to be operational even in red zones, the protocol is yet to be figured out in different States, so implementation and synergising a work flow within new rules and codes are not only time-consuming but slow down movement. This logistical mismatch is one of the reasons why even those who can run businesses are feeling hemmed in. Of course, the reverse migration has meant a chronic shortage of labourers and they are not likely to return in the near future. In fact, businesses will now have to offer other incentives and living quarters to hold back labourers. Then there are issues like sourcing of raw material, movement of products, supply chain disruptions due to the forced closure of factories of suppliers and ancillaries, all of which are just about lurching forward in fits and starts. Even while a third economic stimulus is in the works, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally looking to put the economy back on keel, industry and investors are not finding enough confidence yet. Experts are worried that the foreign capital outflow taking place from India is bigger than from any other emerging economy, \$15 billion leaking in March alone. With the private sector choked, global players are leveraging other economies. The rupee is weaker than ever before and we must seem convincing enough as a future market.

Meanwhile, the Government has a tough task opening up the economy without risking a health disaster. Any meaningful stimulus would need a minimum ₹6 lakh crore as we stare at a prolonged trough till the disease curve flattens out. While dry rations may not be a problem, even usual consumer goods are now in short supply. While we have been able to rush essentials for a while given existing stocks, the cessation of production, the lack of packaging and processing and breakage in the logistics chain mean that consumer goods are going to be available in limited numbers. Nearly 43 per cent of the 157 units owned by FMCG majors are in the Coronavirus red zones in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. Besides, with asymptomatic carriers going around, distancing, hygiene and other protocols at our factories need to be executed with military precision and precaution. So if green zones are opened and anything between 25-83 per cent people are asymptomatic carriers, infections will spike. Monitoring markets and *mandis* poses a huge challenge, so a rotational format of days when these will be open along with staggered times must be worked out before hand. Most importantly, every local administrative authority down to the panchayat level will have to be empowered to run territories with efficiencies. The first lockdown gave us some time to prepare healthcare facilities for an expected surge. This lockdown should be about creating an enabling atmosphere and inculcating discipline and compliance among people. For without adherence to exit protocols, there would be no economy left at all. The problem is not of choice but the will to get going.

Good old DD

Ramayan, Mahabharat and old TV hits find takers in this generation seeking the comfort of nostalgia



Every crisis brings with it an opportunity and the present pandemic has resurrected the nearly-dead public service broadcaster founded by the Government in the late 50s, *Doordarshan (DD)*. Time was when *DD*, as it was colloquially called, was the only channel in the country and people used to wait the whole week for their all-time favourites, *Chitrahaar*, *Krishna Darshan* and, of course, the Sunday movie. Then *DD* began expanding its fare with Sunday and prime-time treats like *Star Trek*, *Secrets of the Sea*,

Here's Lucy, *Yes, Minister*, *Different Strokes* and so on. But of course, these were watched mostly by the urban, English-speaking viewers and not by the masses. Then in the 80s came the era of the mega soaps, like Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan* and BR Chopra's *Mahabharat* and the whole of India was hooked to *DD* like never before. No one had ever attempted something on such a huge scale before and, of course, the mythological content was lapped up by everyone in urban and rural India alike, because we in India wear our religion on our sleeves. People actually used to factor in their social commitments around *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*, such was their hold on the imagination. Then came the era of Direct to Home channels with slick productions powered by money and unfettered use of better technology, something that *DD*, bogged down by red-tapism and babudom, could not compete with. But in Corona-weary times and a distraught nation seeking solace and comfort in the simple joys of nostalgia, *Ramayan* and other old hits have rescued *DD* yet again as a leader of content. In fact, March 25 onwards, most TV channels actually had a "captive" audience, viewership rising by 37 per cent.

And as live soaps began drying up due to actors being unable to arrive for shoots due to the nationwide lockdown, *DD* dug into its archives to pull out its hit shows of the 80s and had the nation hooked again. In the first week of April 3, a whopping 545.8 million viewers tuned in to *DD National* to watch reruns of *Ramayan* while 145.8 million watched *Mahabharat* on *DD Bharti*, says a report by Broadcast Audience Research Council. Reruns of *Shaktimaan* on *DD National* attracted 20.8 million viewers, while *Byomkesh Bakshi*, *Shrimaan Shrimati*, *Buntyaad*, *Dekh Bhai Dekh* and *Circus* also witnessed a similar rise in viewership. Shows that when it comes to content, *DD* did have a spark at one time. Maybe it will reinvent itself, post-lockdown, prizing quality once again.

Maintain the fine line

The requisitioning of the armed forces in Corona operations is premature and not in consonance with the principle of last resort. It may endanger the fighting ability of the sword arm



BHOPINDER SINGH

As the "sword arm" of the nation, the armed forces are the ultimate arbiters of national sovereignty and security. Constitutional wirings of the country have mapped out clearly defined roles, restraints and interplay mechanisms among the various specialist arms of governance. In pursuance of the defined realms, recruitment, equipment and training are afforded onto each institution to work independently and occasionally, complement each other, exceptional exigencies aside. Herein, the principle of requisitioning the armed forces as only the "last resort" is implied when the said exigency is believed to be beyond the specific capability or assets of the defined specialist institution and all other alternative civilian and non-military (including those of centrally policing armed forces) assets. Therefore, for all internal exigencies like riots, mob control and armed insurgencies among others, various States and specialist Central police forces are responsible.

Similarly, to manage natural disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis or floods, organisations like the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) have a National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team of trained 13,000 personnel. Even the Government's medical ecosystem (not private) is said to have over 35,000 hospitals with well over 7,00,000 beds to cumulatively address any medical exigency, like the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Yet, it is disconcerting to see the frequent invocation and requisitioning of the armed forces towards all sorts of exigencies with increasing regularity.

At one level, it speaks volumes about the faith the citizenry affords on the institution of the armed forces to conduct the tasks with clinical efficiency. On the other hand, it reflects the abysmal and repeated failure of other arms of governance to cope with their respective callings. While handling internal insurgencies in Kashmir or the North-eastern States is now almost assumed to be a military task (when it ought not to be), the thoughtless beseeching of the military into virtually any civil predicament is unhealthy for the institution as also for the nation. A few months back, the lazy clamour, seeking military intervention on the streets of Delhi to restore peace amid communal violence was automatically triggered, interestingly by both sides of the conflict. The disciplined, apolitical and agenda-less moorings of the armed forces beget the much-needed reassurances of fair play and non-partisan protection.

Involving the armed forces into internal strife dilutes the fundamental ethos of the military, which is to protect the nation from external threats and provide support in natural disaster relief. This calls for an unmatched organisation, the ablest body and the most disciplined personnel — all of whom are driven by a sense of national service beyond their principal mandate. But they



should never be seen taking on their own citizens, however misguided they may be, as that would willy-nilly dilute the perception of political agnosticism of the armed forces. Civil strifes are complex with shades of grey that could entail some genuine grievances and missteps by the Government, too. A couple of years ago, a "godman" had held Panchkula hostage with his followers and the might of the State police had embarrassingly capitulated — it took just six columns of an Army detachment to immediately restore order. Such instances have led to the convenient assumption of "calling out" the Army at the drop of a hat, like now in the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

This pandemic has led to multiple civic and control issues that are challenging for the police. However, to suggest its intervention is premature and not in consonance with the principle of "last resort." Neither are the police understaffed, under-equipped or underexposed to deal with such issues *vis-à-vis* the armed forces, nor should the nation tap into the "last resort" and reservoir of able-bodied personnel safeguarding the sovereignty of the country. Already, the military domain has been roped in to organise quarantine set-ups. That brings the risk of infection within its "barracks" — the haunting spectre of two suddenly impoverished ships of the US Navy (aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* and the

“ INVOLVING THE ARMED FORCES IN INTERNAL STRIFE DILUTES THE FUNDAMENTAL ETHOS OF THE MILITARY, WHICH IS TO PROTECT THE NATION FROM EXTERNAL THREATS AND PROVIDE SUPPORT IN NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF. THIS CALLS FOR AN UNMATCHED ORGANISATION, THE ABLEST BODY AND THE MOST DISCIPLINED PERSONNEL — ALL OF WHOM ARE DRIVEN BY A SENSE OF NATIONAL SERVICE ”

destroyer *USS Kidd*) ought to posit the real risk of the realm onto conventional weaponry and personnel. Around 122 jawans at a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) battalion in Delhi have already tested positive for Coronavirus.

As it is, the working conditions of the armed forces necessitate certain commune-style living and operations. To add the additional burden of COVID-19 imperatives means double taxation. The ongoing challenges of managing insurgency in Kashmir (additionally borne due to "supporting" the policing forces) have not diminished. News columns regularly carry the casualty toll in the ongoing insurgency.

The potential (willful) decapitation of the military wherewithal with Corona risks, without maximising the various governmental or even private alternatives available, is unfair. With its budgetary allocations, the existing medical ecosystem of the armed forces is already well stretched to attend to normal requirements of the serving and veteran fraternity, for which it is primarily intended.

In a deeply polarised society, unfortunately, even an unprecedented tragedy like COVID-19 has subliminal political and religious undertones that beset any potential involvement. The armed forces cannot saunter into the societal minefield of community management as it is inflicted with perception

"divides" of regional, ethnic and worse, religious denominations. The management of the times requires "civic engagement", which is fundamentally different from the blunt kinetic training of the Army. The Army should not "untrain" itself to adjust to the policing imperatives as that dilutes the principal task of a military soldier.

Last, such requisitioning also militates in the eyes of the servicemen, who could feel that the nation has taken them for granted, to be used as and where, and then forgotten with meaningless platitudes. They are remembered the next time when some other arm of governance fails. Beyond the condescending inanities, the armed forces have witnessed an unprecedented dilution of budgets, precedence and work conditions.

The same cannot be said about various other governmental institutions to which the armed forces provide regular "support." Such trying times offer an invaluable opportunity to introspect the strategic preparedness, planning rigour and institutional efficacy of all governmental arms. To casually requisition the armed forces is a willful and regrettable shortcut. It endangers the fighting ability of the sword arm and ensures that other institutions and domains remain perennially sub-optimal.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

SOUNDBITE

State Governments and district authorities must step in to make optimum use of these services by Railways so that farmers do not incur losses.



Vice President — M Venkaiah Naidu

Truth in my opinion is absolute. I'm lucky to have learnt not to sweat the small stuff, there are bigger issues out there that need actual discussion.



Actor — Sobhita Dhulipala

The world has learned from China and we need to continue to learn from Wuhan on how they are lifting measures, how they are bringing society back to normal, or a new normal.



WHO official — Maria van Kerkhove

I think the worst is over. But till the time the disease is not completely contained, we should continue to follow all precautions and guidelines.



Union Minister — Prakash Javadekar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mired in confusion

Sir — The Government's decision to extend the lockdown for two more weeks with limited relaxations in red, orange and green zones so as to exit from the shutdown in a staggered manner while also reopening the economy is welcome. The business community, while welcoming this decision, pointed out that a partial relaxation of the lockdown won't be enough to repair the fractured supply chain.

Most activities that call for mass gathering remain suspended. Schools, colleges, malls, cinema halls and restaurants will remain closed. This sounds stringent but the relaxations allowed in green and orange zones offer some relief to businesses keen to get back to work. The Government's intent behind this move, which is to resume the economy, cannot be doubted. But a Byzantine set of guidelines is sure to create confusion among the people. Who's going to define what's allowed and what's not? Further, the rules themselves vary from place to place.

Mayank Khatri
Ujjain

Memories are all that we have

As the wider society was preoccupied fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, news came from Mumbai one after the other that caused grief to film buffs. Bollywood lost two of its finest actors, Irrfan Khan and Rishi Kapoor. The wide variety of roles these versatile actors played in films was a testament to their exceptional talent. Acting for them was as natural as breathing. It was their true passion and they pursued it with commitment and grace. Both endeared themselves to those who worked with them. Irrfan Khan made it the hard way via the National School of Drama, TV soap operas and side roles. His talent made up for the "ordinariness of his looks", normally not associated with a Bollywood star. Perhaps the adage, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" was alien to Bollywood. Irrfan was often hailed as one of India's few exports to Hollywood. He was internationally known for his roles in *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Life of Pi*, *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *Jurassic World*.

Popularly known as the "evergreen romantic hero", Rishi Kapoor was a quintessential Bollywood star. He starred in blockbusters with gusto and his performances in films like *Khel Khel Mein*, *Karz* and *Chandni* won rapturous applause. Films like *Mera Naam Joker*, *Bobby*, *Anar Akbar Anthony* and *Agneepath*, too, won him

Be patient with Corona

Sir — This refers to the report, "Diluted lockdown till May 17" (May 2). The only ideal way to prevent the spread of Coronavirus now seems to be physical confine-

ment. This is why the Ministry of Home Affairs' decision to extend the nationwide lockdown for two more weeks didn't come as surprise.

It is a fact that despite taking every possible precautionary

measure, the deadly virus continues to spread among the people with a sheer rapidity. This manifests that our battle against the pandemic is going to continue for a longer period of time. Even now, people are seen



Tushar Anand
Patna

New crisis brewing

Sir — With lakhs of migrant workers wanting to travel back home, in a post-COVID world when economic activity resumes, many States would be staring at a labour crisis. Already, the shock it has dealt to an already vulnerable economy has been immense. Home to about eight lakh migrants, excluding the IT sector, Bengaluru is heavily dependent on them to keep its economy going. Not to forget, the country was already suffering from an economic crisis. A labour market crunch can further aggravate problems and easily turn into a nightmare.

MN Qasmi
Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Take lockdown fatigue well

Pragmatic thinking should be the order of the day and we must not let emotions cloud our minds



ANIL GUPTA

The nationwide lockdown has been extended again till mid-May and there are different opinions emerging across the country, depending upon one's means of livelihood, place of residence and political affiliation. But one thing is for sure, people are fed up of the shutdown. The prevailing scenario reminds one of the days spent at the National Defence Academy (NDA) at Khadakwasla, near Pune, as a young cadet. In those days career options in India were very limited. Doctor, engineer, IAS, IPS, journalist, lawyer or teacher, were the preferred choices but they involved long years of study after school (class 10), before one could join the chosen profession. On the other hand, within four or five years of joining the NDA, people barely out of their teens became Commissioned Officers of the armed forces, drawing a handsome salary package apart from the thrill of wearing starched uniforms with stars on the shoulders. Most of us, apart from other motives, preferred to join the forces under a notion that it would mean an end of academic studies and we would be spared the cumbersome burden of reading books and passing exams. But after joining the respective services all our dreams were shattered when confronted with voluminous studies during various professional courses of training, for passing compulsory promotion exams, which were mandatory not only for promotion but also retention in service. Incidentally, these exams proved the Waterloo for many officers who were compulsively discharged from service.

The training in NDA was spread over three years and was divided in six half-yearly terms referred to as "spring" and "winter" terms. The tough academic and training regime included a foreign language, physical fitness, hobbies and outdoor training with emphasis on discipline. The official training regime was laced with the unofficial regime known as "raggatha" (punishment) which was the privilege and prerogative enjoyed by senior termers and appointment holders. This part of the training aimed at making us "men from boys" and was meant for mental toughening, building tolerance and developing unflinching camaraderie. Thus, every cadet wished to finish the rigours of training, pass mandatory academic tests, keep a clean disciplinary record for the entire term and look forward for moving to next term with his batchmates (known as course mates). Any faltering could lead to the dreaded "relegation" which implied repeating the term along with the junior batch. At the beginning of each term, one enthusiastic cadet would take it upon himself to maintain a record of "Days Left to Go Home (DLTGH)" which signified the end of term. It began with 180 and everyone eagerly waited for it to reach zero. They also hoped to qualify for the next term, till they reached the sixth term and finally passed out from the NDA. This meant moving on to service specific institutions like the Indian Military Academy, Naval Academy, Indian Airforce Academy before realising the cherished dream of becoming a Commissioned Officer.

Before the end of each term, many cadets suffered from what was commonly known as "end of term fatigue." To overcome this fatigue, the seniors used to increase the frequency and quantum of "raggatha." This kept most of us motivated to pass out and avoid relegation. But there were a few who were overtaken by the "end of term fatigue", leading to lax performance. This, in turn, meant sure-shot relegation. The after-effect of it was realised only in the next term, which meant joining a junior batch, making new friends and above all spend additional six months at the NDA.

These days our nation is also going through a similar phase of lockdown fatigue. The voices for lifting the lockdown have increased each day and this extension is certainly not helping calm frayed nerves. The economy is definitely on the downtrend and unlikely to pick up in the near future. The Government is faced with a very tough situation. It has no choice but to keep the lockdown in place to protect the nation from the onslaught of the Coronavirus. But the fact remains that we have still not succeeded in flattening the curve. There is no vaccine against COVID-19 as yet. Whatever success we have achieved so far is due to pro-active administration, self-discipline, social distancing and the lockdown. Can we afford to remove all these restrictions and allow free mixing of the population once again? Overtaken by fatigue, if we slacken now we may have to repeat later and may have to suffer endless lockdowns. Pragmatic thinking should be the order of the day and we must not let emotions cloud our minds.

In the Army there is a popular saying, "The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war", meaning sacrifices made during the time the going is good pay rich dividends in the hour of crisis. We should be prepared to follow the same. So, my fellow citizens, let the lockdown fatigue not overtake you. Prepare yourself mentally, physically, emotionally and financially (tough but can be achieved through better self-management) for difficult times ahead. How long these unpredictable times would last is very difficult to predict at this stage. But go through the history of the world and you would realise that great nations have emerged stronger at the end of each adversity. Our nation is undoubtedly great and is blessed with great leaders, too. Let us be of good cheer during this lockdown 3.0, in national interest and work with determination to make up for lost time once the shutdown ends. After all, when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

(The writer is a Jammu-based veteran, political commentator and columnist)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I WANT THE CENTRE TO RECONSIDER AND PUT THIS (IFSC) DECISION ON HOLD. THIS IS NOT SABKA SAATH, SABKA VIKAS (DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL).
 —SHIV SENA MP
 ARVIND SAWANT



MUMBAI COULD BECOME AN ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SERVICES CENTRE, IN ADDITION TO THE HEADQUARTERS IN GUJARAT.
 —FORMER MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER
 DEVENDRA FADNAVIS

A scientific responsibility

During an outbreak, the scientific community has an obligation to learn more in order to shape the public health response and for proper evaluation of new interventions being tested



DEEPIKA BHASKAR FEROZ KHAN SURI

There is a general understanding that pandemic preparedness requires not only the involvement of the health sector but the whole society. However, until there is scientific intrusion in the decisions at each level, the preparedness and responses will be partial. This increases the scientific responsibility manifold with a commitment to fast track information and solutions that will ultimately influence life sustenance. During an outbreak, there is a moral obligation to learn more, as quickly as possible, in order to shape the public health response and for proper scientific evaluation of new interventions being tested. Such an approach improves preparedness for future outbreaks.

This requires carefully-designed and ethically-conducted scientific research and release of correct scientific information. Evaluation of diagnostics through rapid methods, probable treatments through suggested drugs and vaccines require clinical trials and regulatory control. Research for suggesting preventive measures and social behaviour including epidemiological, social science and implementation studies can play a critical role in reducing morbidity and mortality.

The world is looking at national and world health systems for an emergency response to this pandemic and at the same time expecting the scientific fraternity to come up with a scientific preparedness plan in the form of prevention, management and treatment. There is no paucity of expertise and technology available to carry out crisis-related research. Using the available infrastructure and management framework, the resources can be rapidly mobilised to come up with rapid solutions.

Science for response coordination: Preparing for and deploying emergency responses will require coordination not only of scientific research activities but for associated policy and administrative decisions, too. A coordinated scientific response is the key to collaborate and integrate the efforts to ensure that other than scientific expertise, a complete spectrum is covered, including epidemiologists, data managers, laboratory technicians, emergency management and risk communications specialists, public health managers and medico-legal personnel. Active participation and cooperation of representatives of different sections of the community will be an absolute must for tackling the situation. The Preliminary Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) of the India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project has elaborated the requirement for strengthening pandemic research and multi-sector, national institutions and platforms for "one health." This is in the form of a separate component of the strategic plan which seeks to develop core capacity to deliver the "one health" approach to monitor, detect and manage infectious disease outbreaks in animals and in humans. India is uniquely positioned to play a key role in research on viruses, other disease pathogens and vaccines for its own emergency response and for global public good.

This component will support research on COVID-19 by Indian institutions working in collaboration with the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR). It will support biomedical research to generate evidence to inform the short-term and medium-term response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The component will build capacity for research at Central and State levels to position India to better respond to pandemics.

Scientific information availability for research: Availability of credible information on a global platform is crucial for scientists for their research and to avoid duplication of efforts. It typically takes time

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 THE WORLD IS LOOKING AT NATIONAL AND WORLD HEALTH SYSTEMS FOR AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THIS PANDEMIC AND AT THE SAME TIME EXPECTING THE SCIENTIFIC FRATERNITY TO COME UP WITH A SCIENTIFIC PREPAREDNESS PLAN IN THE FORM OF PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT. THERE IS NO PAUCITY OF EXPERTISE AND TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE TO CARRY OUT CRISIS-RELATED RESEARCH. USING THE AVAILABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK, THE RESOURCES CAN BE RAPIDLY MOBILISED TO COME UP WITH RAPID SOLUTIONS
 ”



to organise scientific research efforts and/or access the data generated. To address this, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has created a platform to integrate the global research information on COVID-19. This platform provides updates on research activities, international clinical trials registry platform for vaccines and therapeutics and solidarity clinical trials.

The platform also provides access to the WHO's COVID-19 database that provides global literature on the disease. It is a valuable information resource and is of great importance to the global scientific fraternity conducting research on the virus. The National Institute of Health (NIH), Office of Data Science and Strategy, too, is hosting a platform to provide open access data and computational resources to address the health emergency. It is an important resource to access information on genomics, clinical studies, digital images, expression counts, bioactivity data, case studies, visualisation tools, epidemiology, community participation and participant-level clinical data. Several countries, including India, are providing such platforms to their scientists. There is an effort to find cohesive groups internationally so that such collaborative groups can come up with quick alternatives to the global pandemic.

Scientific solutions through samples: The COVID-19 represents a great challenge for our healthcare systems. The situation and the working conditions are difficult in many places and direct patient care has the highest priority. The next challenge, however, is to support those who are finding a cure for it. Biobanks are crucial in the run towards a vaccine and/or treatment. Biobanks can provide key services to researchers, such as efficient and high-quality storage of samples in clinical and research settings, samples from healthy individuals and standards for targeted identification, collection and conservation of important samples.

Biospecimens offer researchers opportunities to understand the pathogen bet-

ter and develop diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive measures, that may mitigate the damage by similar outbreaks in the future. At the same time, long-term storage of biospecimens involves potential risks to individuals and communities. These risks can be managed through adherence to guidelines relevant to the long-term storage of biological specimens collected during infectious disease outbreaks. Only biobanks and researchers with the appropriate equipment, training and facilities can collect, share and handle samples from COVID-19 affected patients. India has set up a number of biobanks but all positive samples are required to be transported to ICMR-NIV, Pune for the purpose of maintaining a biorepository for health research purposes.

Scientific efforts that will shape the future: The WHO has pooled in resources and scientists from across the world in its search for a potential vaccine and several scientific endeavours all across the globe are shaping social, economic and political decisions on managing the disease and behavioural patterns. India is also playing a big role in association with WHO and independently for tackling the disease burden and its spread. In addition, thousands of researchers around the world are offering their expertise, time and help through international platforms such as Crowdflight COVID-19 to fight against the contagion. Scientists are connecting through social media apps such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn to provide their services voluntarily.

With no vaccine in sight for at least the next 12-18 months, it seems the fight for rescuing humanity from this deadly virus has only just begun. With no real global consensus on the response mechanism, each nation is finding its own way to protect its citizens.

While India's "containment/lockdown" approach to fighting the pandemic is happening on one side, the slowdown in trade between India and the world is counter-productive. This disruption in trade is hitting the supply chains of many

essential commodities needed for the fight. This includes COVID-19 testing kits, masks, alcohol-based sanitisers, personal protective equipment (PPEs), dress materials for frontline health workers, ventilators and so on. All efforts at global and local levels are being made to hasten the availability of the essentials so that humanity does not suffer.

India has set up a 'COVID-19 Task Force' for mapping virus-related technology capabilities in start-ups, academia, research and development labs and industry. The capacity-mapping group consists of representatives from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Department of Biotechnology (DBT), ICMR, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEIT), Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MMSME), Startup India and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). This task force has identified over 500 entities in the areas of diagnostics, drugs, ventilators, protection gear, disinfecting systems and so on. The solutions identified include masks and other protective gear, sanitisers, affordable kits for screening, ventilators and oxygenators, data analytics for tracking, monitoring and controlling the spread of outbreak through Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things-based solutions, to name a few.

Many research groups are focussing on basic science and other social aspects of this pandemic like virus morphogenesis and development, sequencing of local strain, virus-host interaction, genetic variants linked with virulence, evolution and transmission pattern, pathogenesis studies and collection of epidemiological data. These studies are necessary for development of vaccines and therapeutic drugs against COVID-19. In the end the scientific community has a responsibility to find a solution to this pandemic soon. (Bhaskar is Registrar, Regional Centre for Biotechnology, Faridabad and Suri is with the IIM, Jammu)

The disruption of populism during a crisis

In times of disruptive changes that have complex and overlapping reasons, populists tend to boil it down to one or two explanations to suit their ends



NADEEM PARACHA

The most repeated cliché in advertising and marketing circles is the word "disruption." It implies breaking away from the norm and using jarring ways to attract the attention of potential consumers towards a product or a service. But as with most post-modernist ideas this, too, became an automated norm that lost its meaning beyond being just an exciting word to throw around. Nevertheless, American author David Von Drehle explains this idea of disruption as being part and parcel of a mindset

that eventually aided the rise of neo-populism.

He sees "disruption" as a glorified recklessness which may excite and even enrich hip, young entrepreneurs, but isolates those whose livelihoods are still dependent on what is wrecked in the name of such disruption. Drehle equates this with the nature of populism ruling various countries, especially the US, India, Brazil, Hungary, Italy, the UK, the Philippines, Venezuela, Pakistan, and do on.

Populism gains currency in times of major economic and social changes. Such changes can trigger an optimistic outlook, as they did with the rise of science and brand new economic and political ideas, which aided the growth and influence of the middle classes from the 18th century onwards. But these changes also leave behind a trail of failures which can dramatically transform an optimistic outlook

into a more paranoid one.

This is the scenario in which populism thrives. When these changes grow roots, they establish their own elite. And it is this elite that are targeted by populists. In his book *The Populism Explosion*, John Judis writes that things remain in check as long as the elected and unelected political elite work to deliver sustained prosperity to the masses and steadily improve the nation's living standards. But if this process is dented by an economic downturn, things can get ugly.

Political analyst Patrick Liddiard writes that populism emerges when political and economic elite leave out vast sections of the polity from the decision-making process. The reaction to this gets compounded during an economic crisis. He adds that, whereas the entry of new players in a democratic process should bode well for a democracy, it in fact ends up shattering it when this process is

initiated and enforced by populists.

According to Drehle, in times of disruptive changes that have complex and overlapping reasons, populists tend to boil it down to just one or two explanations. For example, during the early decades of the 20th century, when revolutions were erupting, wars were being waged among dying monarchies, new political ideas were being shaped and Western societies were rapidly shifting from rural to urban, "the typical populist boiled it down to a problem of corrupt railroad barons and Jews."

Drehle adds that it was the widespread impact of World War II which suddenly eroded populism's appeal. This, followed by competent leadership, broke the back of early 20th-century populism. Many political analysts are predicting that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to play a similar role in eroding the

appeal of neo-populism. Daniel Linsker writes, "Populist governments, reliant on their need to constantly convey positive messaging that bolsters their support, have struggled to take the decisive, forward-looking action that the COVID-19 crisis demands."

Linsker adds, "More than ever, populist leaders now face a credibility problem. Obsession with the spread of the virus is leading the public to seek answers from experts and specialists, and self-isolation provides people with more time to look for information." This is exactly the opposite of what populism seeks from the polity.

The glorified disruption peddled as something revolutionary and anti-elite is likely to devour the disrupters themselves, as the pandemic wrecks economies and lives. Yet, true to form, some populists are trying to win back the initiative by creating a scapegoat.

Perpetrators have simply revived the tactics of a time when the US spent billions of dollars to portray China as an evil entity out to destroy humanity.

Failing to stop the communists from taking over China in 1949 — and after fighting a gruesome war with the Chinese army in Korea — a book appeared in 1951 by Edward Hunter, *Brainwashing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men's Mind*. It quickly became a bestseller. So much so that Hunter soon produced a sequel. In the book, Hunter claimed that the Chinese had invented an elusive brainwashing technique to create a slave race.

Hunter was neither a psychologist nor a psychiatrist. But he still managed to impress the US Government. Hunter's tomes inspired the US Government to spend billions of dollars to understand this brainwashing technique. The US Government also brought

in a host of psychologists to study the files of American POWs in China. All this amounted to nothing in the end.

There is no doubt that the current authoritarian Chinese set-up bungled the handling of the outbreak of COVID-19 in China in its delay to report it. If it had warned the world and not tried to hide the outbreak, the world would not have been in the mess it is now. But to populist leaders around the world, this mistake can be transformed into something a lot more insidious, especially during times of their failing.

For pro-China populist regimes, however, such as the one ruling Pakistan, the guns have been turned towards a provincial Government (in Sindh) that is not headed by the ruling party. Thus far, the Sindh Government seems to be substituting for China as a scapegoat. (Courtesy: Dawn)

More shops expected to re-open but confusion reigns: Retailers

LOCKDOWN 3.0
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retailers and traders expect to re-open more shops from Monday under the new relaxed guidelines by the Government for the extended lockdown period till May 17, although they are still seeking clarity from local authorities. Retailers Association of India (RAI) said it will have to be seen how it works out at the ground as there is confusion, and many States are yet to come up with guidelines to follow the Centre's decision. It has already stated that what constitutes market places could be misinterpreted. Similarly, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) also claimed they will be in a

"dilemma" as there is confusion over "what constitutes a neighbourhood shop and a stand-alone shop", while organised retailers such as Future Group and V-Mart Retail said they are also seeking permissions from local authorities. "Some parts of the businesses will reopen. What we see is that there is the possibility of opening of some standalone stores. We will open wherever we can and we will talk to the local authorities to open. We will have to see how it works out. "In any case individual states will have to come out with clear guidelines. While some states have come out with the guidelines but they are the same as what Centre has said, I think the states are also confused and they are printing

the same thing that Centre is sending," RAI CEO Kumar Rajagopalan told PTI. Expressing similar concerns, CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said, "The traders will be in a dilemma". When asked whether things are expected to change on the ground with the phase 3 of lockdown beginning Monday, he said there is "lack of clarity and confusion over what constitutes a neighbourhood shop and a stand-alone shop". He asserted that the "clarification should come from the right quarters. Not only the Centre, it is the duty of the state governments to issue that clarification because most of the issues are under the domain of the state governments, the law enforcement authorities also function as per their directives".

National General Secretary of the Federation of All India Vyapar Mandal, V K Bansal said, "The biggest problem with the guidelines is that it all depends on the states. The states frame their own policies and do not want to take any responsibility. The Centre wants relaxation but States are restrictive". While wholesale markets are not allowed to open in red zones in Delhi, he said, standalone shops can open but the state government's role was crucial in implementation of the Centre's guidelines. Bansal added that unavailability of migrant labour was a major issue faced by shop owners, restricting their operations. According to the leading retailer Future group, the com-

pany would now start retailing other than non-essential and food items wherever allowed after the new notification. "Inside Big Bazaar, we would be now able to sell not just food and essentials only but also other items such as crockery, kitchenware and general merchandise. Even at Big Bazaar, at certain places we would start selling other products apart from food," said a Future group official. The Future Group, which operates in several formats such as large stores Big Bazaar and neighbourhood store Easyday, said that the company is in the process of obtaining permission to open the stores in the green zone. "Wherever, we have standalone stores in the green zone, we are also figuring out with

the authorities when to start operating," the official said. According to another Future group official, most of its big format stores like Big Bazaar are in malls, which have been kept closed even during the second phase of the lockdown. "The standalone stores of Big Bazaars were already operating. Some of our stores are in non-mall areas and we have written to the local authorities seeking permission for that," he said. Around 80 per cent stores of Big Bazaar are operational with several restrictions such as timing, number of visiting and retailing activities limited only to essential items, the official said. Value fashion and lifestyle products retailer V-Mart Retail also said it is gearing to open the stores in the green and

orange zone but reiterated that there is a need for clarification on the difference between malls and standalone stores, specially in small towns. "We have around 62 stores are in green zone and 98 are in orange, where there are chances that the stores would open. We are in talks with the local administration to allow the stores to open," V-Mart Retail Chairman and MD Lalit Agarwal said. He, however, said it will be a gradual opening as initially people would hesitate to come into the store. "We expect all our stores to be opened in phased manners and in the initial month only 20 per cent customer would visit," Agarwal said. He sought greater clarity from the government on the differentiation between a mall

and standalone retailers. "In the small towns, there are no malls and they (local authorities) misunderstand small standalone stores like us for a mall and prohibit us from operating," Agarwal said. Under the MHA guidelines, malls will continue to remain shut in all zones. In red zone all malls, market complexes and markets will remain closed in urban areas, which are within limits of municipal corporations and municipalities. However, shops selling essential goods in markets and market complexes are allowed. All standalone shops, neighbourhood shops and shops in residential complexes are permitted in urban areas without any restrictions of essential and non-essential.

Covid-19 may hit India's foreign currency earnings from tea exports: Experts

SUJIT CHAKRABORTY ■ GUWAHATI/AGARTALA

Drop in production due to Covid-19 pandemic, nation-wide lockdown, besides Governmental restrictions, may lead to a loss of huge foreign currency earnings as India used to export tea to more than 30 countries, experts said. According to economists and experts, delayed start of various works in the tea gardens, including plucking and processing, besides Government enforced restrictions, are among the key reasons to give a blow to export of tea in over 30 countries. North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) adviser

Bidyandana Barkakoty said: "Exports of India tea may get affected. The Out Of Home (OOH) consumption is almost negligible due to the ongoing lockdown and it would continue even after partial relaxations of lockdown." "There was no harvesting of tea leaves for three weeks followed by skiffing of more than 35 per cent of tea bushes. And now, only 50 per cent of the workforce is allowed to work by the government due to the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore the crop loss may be much more than what was estimated," Barkakoty told IANS. In 2019 (January to December) India exported

248.29 million kg of tea valued at ₹5,610.65 crore with the unit price of ₹225.97 per kg. In 2018, the country sold 256.06 million kg tea worth ₹ 5,335.33 crore abroad, with unit price of ₹208.36 per kg. The NETA adviser said that around 18 per cent of India's tea production is exported whereas the rest 82 per cent is consumed domestically. Quoting the Tea Board's records, he said that the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries, including Russia, imports about 50 million kg of Indian tea followed by Iran at about 40 million kg, China about 12 million kg, USA about 11 million kg, UK about 10 million kg, UAE

about 10 million kg, Germany about 8 million kg, followed by other countries. The NETA has done a SWOT (Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats) analysis of Assam tea industry due to the lockdown impact and related issues, to study both positive and negative attributes, determining how best to sustain in this difficult time. Barkakoty said: "It would take some more time for the supply chain to stabilize. Huge liquidity crunch is facing tea producers. The total revenue loss from March 23 to April 14 is to the tune of ₹1,218 crore. The crop loss in March and April would continue till May because of the necessity of

skiffing of overgrown leaves due to lockdown. The total crop loss would be about 80 million kg. The tea gardens have resumed operations from April 15 with 50 per cent workforce. Therefore, both the crop and the revenue losses would further increase. Tripura Tea Development Corporation Chairman Santosh Saha also echoed Barkakoty's observations. "Since December 15, pruning, tipping, plucking, processing in 22 factories by and large stopped in Tripura due to numerous reasons, including the crisis of coal. From March, owing to Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, no works were done.

'40-day lockdown to inflict \$320bn loss on Indian economy'

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to hit Indian economy with about \$320 billion in terms of daily gross domestic product (GDP) loss after 40 days of lockdown, said a report. The daily GDP of India is estimated to be approximately \$8 billion. The impact has been severe on the travel and mobility sector with unicorns such as OYO, Ola, MakeMyTrip seeing massive revenue decline, said the report from DataLabs by Inc42. The micro, small and

Impact has been severe on the travel and mobility sector medium enterprises (MSME) sector, often called the backbone of the Indian economy, has had to shut small-scale factories, and is working with minimal workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic has decimated the MSME revenue even more, said the "COVID-19 Startup Impact Report - Threats & Opportunities For The Indian Economy". For some sectors, this pandemic has sounded the death knell, but the supply chain disruption has impacted manufacturing everywhere. However, even amid these disruptions, some sectors have risen to the top owing to the behavioural changes in consumers. The sudden surge in demand for services like hyper-local deliveries, media and content, video conferencing and other enterprise tech applications will further enhance revenue prospects of some Indian startups in the coming fiscal years, said the report.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX Audit guidelines need to be reviewed to include video conferencing: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST officers would have to audit and assess taxpayers via video-conferencing instead of undertaking physical visits amid the coronavirus pandemic, and the current guidelines need to be reviewed for this, according to experts. As per the current goods and services tax (GST) audit guidelines, taxpayers have been broadly categorised into three groups based on their annual turnover — large, medium and small. While large and medium units are compulsorily under premises-based audits; for small units, desk-based audit has been suggested. However, in the case of non-cooperative taxpayers or any inherent weakness of the internal control system, officers could shift back to the premises-based audit. Last month, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) issued instructions requiring officers to hold a personal hearing in respect of customs law, central excise and service tax laws through the video-conferencing facility. Experts said that with the audit for the financial year 2017-18, the first year in the GST regime, yet to begin, the tax officers would need to review the audit guidelines and include video conference facility along with strengthening the risk management system to flag risky cases. PwC

Taxpayers have been broadly categorised into three groups based on their annual turnover - large, medium and small India Partner National Leader (Indirect Tax) Pratik Jain said GST audit and assessment for 2017-18 will start soon and the department will have to review the audit guidelines. "The current guidelines talk about physical visits to premises of large business for say 7-8 days and conducting audit. With social distancing being a 'new normal' now, GST officials might have to explore more virtual verifications," Jain said. The government will have to take a re-look at its risk management system and devise better ways of assessing taxpayers, he added. AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said one segment of the CBIC, which is Customs, has already embraced the use of technology, and now it is expected that GST having more than 1.2 crore taxpayers would also introduce such facility in all the departmental functions including assessments, adjudications, appeals, and audit. "Introducing a video-conferencing facility in all the tax laws is imperative to the business continuity plan of the economy, otherwise, this pandemic will result in inordinate delay in the delivery of justice," Mohan added.

NPAs of BoB, Indian Bank surge multi-fold in 6 yrs: RTI data

PTI ■ KOTA

Non-performing assets of Bank of Baroda soared more than six-fold to ₹73,140 crore while those of Indian Bank surged four-times to ₹ 32,561.26 crore in six years, according to a Right to Information reply. The NPA of Bank of Baroda (BoB) rose from ₹ 11,876 crore at March-end 2014 to ₹73,140 crore at December-end 2019, the RTI reply showed. The number of NPA accounts rose from 2,08,035 as on March 31, 2014, to 6,17,306 as of December 2019. The NPAs of Indian Bank surged from ₹8,068.05 crore as on March 31, 2014, to ₹32,561.26 crore as on March 31, 2020. The NPA accounts rose to 5,64,816 as on March 31, 2020, from 2,48,921 as on March 31, 2014, according to reply to Right to Information (RTI) queries on number of NPA accounts and the total amount filed by Kota-based activist Sujeet Swami. The RTI data also showed the state-run lenders earned huge amount from SMS alert service fees, minimum balance charges, locker charges, debit-credit cards service charges, outward, inward, ledger follow charges, among others. According to the reply, Bank of Baroda collected ₹ 107.7 crore through SMS alert fee during April 1, 2018 to February 29, 2020.

CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN INDUSTRY POLL Economic recovery may take more than a year

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The nationwide lockdown has had deep ramifications on economic activity and according to a CEO Snap Poll by the (CII), 44.7 per cent of the corporate chiefs believe that it would take more than a year for the Indian economy to recover. According to the snap poll on the 'Impact of COVID-19 on Economy and Industry', as a majority of the firms continue to anticipate a significant decline in their revenues, they now foresee a delay in economic revival and demand recovery. "The survey results reveal

that the country may experience a protracted slowdown in economic activity as a major proportion of the respondents, around 45 per cent feel it will take more than a year to achieve economic normalcy once the lockdown ends," a CII statement said. Around 36.5 per cent of the corporate bosses feel that economic recovery of the country may be achieved in 6-12 months. Around 17 per cent of the respondents were of the view that recovery would be achieved in 3-6 months, followed by 1.8 per cent who felt that it would require a three-month period. With respect to their own

companies, the respondents anticipate a slightly quicker recovery, with 34 per cent of the respondents indicating a 6-12 month period for recovery of their companies, the survey showed. Further, a major proportion of the respondents anticipate normalcy in domestic demand conditions within 6-12 months, post lockdown. The survey saw the participation of more than 300 CEOs, of which nearly two-thirds belonged to MSMEs. The lockdown brought economic activity to a grinding halt and the survey findings indicate that a significant majority of the firms (65 per cent) expect revenues

to fall more than 40 per cent in the current quarter (Apr-Jun 2020)," it said. For financial year 2020-21, the expectations of a fall in revenue are staggered, with 33 per cent of the firms anticipating a revenue fall of more than 40 per cent, closely followed by 32 per cent of firms expecting a revenue contraction ranging between 20-40 per cent. The survey revealed that while three out of four firms have identified that a complete shutdown of operations was a major constraint being faced by businesses, more than half of them have also indicated lack of demand for products as a hindrance to business activity.

Office space demand 3% down, rent up by 8% in Q1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Office space demand fell 3 per cent during the first quarter of this calendar year but rents increased by up to 8 per cent across five major cities — Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Kolkata, according to US-based property consultant Vestian. The consultant expects decline in demand for office space in the short-to-medium term. The growth in rental values would also slow due to the coronavirus pandemic. According to the data, the weighted average rental values of the five cities moved moderately, on a year-on-year basis, in the range of 0-8 per cent. The monthly average rent rose by 8 per cent in both Bengaluru and Hyderabad at Rs 75.5 and Rs 62 per sq ft, respectively. Chennai saw a 5 per cent rise in rental value at Rs 60 per sq ft a month, while Mumbai witnessed a modest rise of 2 per cent at Rs 125 per sq ft. The average rental value of office space in Kolkata remained stable at Rs 48 per sq ft per month. "The five major cities of Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata saw absorption of approximately 9.18 million sq ft office space during Q1 2020, depicting a decline of just 3 per cent over the absorption observed in the corresponding period in the previous year," Vestian said in a report.

Punjab successfully procured over 90 LMT in just 19 days: Ashu

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Food & Civil Supplies Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu on Sunday said that despite several challenges arising out of lockdown/curfew amid COVID-19 restrictions, the State has successfully procured more than 90 lakh metric tonne of wheat in 19 days, out of a total expected 135 LMT. Congratulating the State's farmers, Arthiyas, labour and other stakeholders for smooth conduct of ongoing procurement operations across the state, Ashu informed that Punjab Government led by the Chief Minister Captain



Amarinder Singh was strictly maintaining social distancing in all more than 4000 purchase centres for the health safety and well-being of those involved in this gigantic task. He said that

it was a matter of great satisfaction that in just 19 days the state has successfully procured over 90 LMT of wheat despite several obstacles including shortage of labour and closure of jute mills. Reiterating the resolve of the state Government to ensure purchase of every single grain of state farmers produce in a hassle-free manner, the Minister also pointed out that in these difficult times more than 4000 purchase centres had been established as compared to over 1800 in 2019 with same strength of employees for the facilitation of farmers. Besides, the State Government has also made elaborate

Out of total expected 135 LMT

arrangements including issuance of tokens to farmers, requisite sanitizers, masks, foot operated water tanks etc. Nevertheless, the scarcity of labour amid lockdown and curfew, Punjab Government has loaded a record 25.77 LMT of wheat and rice through 1031 special trains so far in order to ensure food security of the nation besides assisting the other states said the Minister adding that it was 44% of the total foodgrains supplied, nation-wide. On the lifting front, Mr. Ashu mentioned that the State was also lifting more than 5 LMT daily in order to ensure that no farmer had to wait due to space crunch in mandis.



SRM AP FACULTY DESIGNS A COST-EFFECTIVE SHIELD AGAINST CORONAVIRUS AT THE MINIMUM RATE OF ₹20 EACH Dr Panchagunula Jayaprakash, Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, has designed a FACE SHIELD embedded with 3D printing technology. During this pandemic that has led to an unprecedented global crisis, this face protection devised to protect users from the Novel Coronavirus, is made available at the minimum rate of ₹20 per Face Shield. This face mask alleviates the limitations of the regular masks currently used by doctors, policemen, and journalists. The regular masks barely cover the nose and mouth, whereas the Face Shield will be able to protect the eyes, mouth, nose, and ears so that one cannot get infected by the virus.

Auto industry may cut R&D spending: Deloitte

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic automobile industry might resort to cuts in spending on research and development (R&D) and also exit unprofitable businesses and segments with the coronavirus pandemic taking a toll on companies' revenues and cash flows, according to a report by Deloitte. The reduction in R&D activities may impact progress made in the alternative fuel technologies till now, the report noted. "The COVID-19 lockdown has had a multiplier effect — the industry has been at a complete standstill since March 24. A prolonged truncation of consumer demand

EXIT UNPROFITABLE SEGMENTS DUE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

due to the lockdown is significantly affecting auto sector revenues and cash flows," Deloitte India Partner and Automotive Sector Lead Rajeev Singh said. In response, companies may resort to starving their R&D funding in order to sustain core operations, and potentially set back the progress made on alternative fuel and mobility technologies by 2-4 quarters, he added.

Russia reports 10,633 new cases, highest in a day

Moscow: Russia on Sunday recorded its highest daily rise in confirmed coronavirus cases with 10,633 new cases, bringing the total to 134,687, with more than half of cases and deaths in Moscow.

But the mortality rate has slowed in recent days and remains much lower, in relative terms, than many other countries.

Russia has said its lower mortality rate was because the Russian outbreak occurred later than in many other countries which gave the authorities more time to prepare.

Russia's nationwide death count rose to 1,280 on Sunday after 58 people died in the last 24 hours, Russia's coronavirus crisis response centre said on its website.

Russia has been in partial lockdown since the end of March to curb the spread of the virus. People in Moscow can leave home to visit the nearest food shop or chemist, walk their dog or throw out rubbish but need special passes for other activities.

President Vladimir Putin has ordered the nationwide lockdown to remain in place until May 11 inclusive, when Russia finishes celebrating its Labour Day and World War Two Victory Day holidays.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin urged residents on

Saturday to continue to strictly self-isolate over the long holidays. Sobyanyin said there had been progress in expanding testing, allowing the authorities to treat those in need more quickly.

But he said the number of critically ill patients was rising, albeit not as steeply as worst-case scenario projections. He said he thought 2 per cent of Moscow, with a population of 12.7 million, had been infected, a much higher figure than official statistics show.

"It is obvious that the threat is growing," he said on his website. He told Rossiya-1 TV station that the Moscow authorities might cut the number of digital permits issued for travel across the city if the situation worsened.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Russia's second-most senior official after Putin, told the president on Thursday he had tested positive for coronavirus and was temporarily stepping down to recover. First Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Belousov is now serving as acting prime minister in his absence. On Friday, another Russian cabinet member, Construction Minister Vladimir Yakushev, announced he had been diagnosed with the virus and would be treated in hospital. Dmitry Volkov, one of his deputies, also tested positive, the ministry said. **Agency**

Sidelined by pandemic, Trump campaign turns to digital shows

Washington: The streaming video began and, within minutes, the president's eldest son was musing that Osama bin Laden had endorsed Joe Biden.

Subtle, it was not. Welcome to the Trump campaign, digital edition.

Seven nights a week, President Donald Trump's reelection team is airing live programming online to replace his trademark rallies made impossible for now by the coronavirus pandemic.

Hosted by top campaign officials, prominent Republicans and "Make America Great Again" luminaries, the free-wheeling shows offer reality according to Trump.

The shows are an effort to stay connected with core supporters and maintain enthusiasm for a suspended campaign that has had to rewire itself on the fly. Trump himself has not yet appeared in his campaign's shows.

A review of one week's worth of the 8 pm broadcasts, ending on the final day of April, reveals a concerted effort to test attacks on Biden,



the presumptive Democratic nominee.

But the inherently limited effort also raises questions as to whether the campaign can replace the gold mines of potentially new voter data that the rallies delivered as it attempts to reverse a recent slide in a number of battleground states.

The shows are a proxy for the "Trump TV" network the president considered launching had he lost the 2016 election, and they create an echo chamber for true believers. **AP**

White House coordinator calls lockdown protests 'devastatingly worrisome'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

White House coronavirus coordinator Dr Deborah Birx is calling it "devastatingly worrisome" to see protesters in Michigan and elsewhere not wear masks or practice social distancing as they demonstrate against stay-at-home orders.

Birx was responding to the hundreds of protesters who crowded the Michigan statehouse last week to push for a reopening of businesses.

She tells "Fox News Sunday" that people "will feel guilty for the rest of our lives" if they pick up the virus because they didn't take precautions and then unwittingly spread it to family members who are especially vulnerable to severe illness due to pre-existing conditions or older age.

Protests took place in several states over the weekend amid growing frustration over the economic impact from stay at home orders during the coronavirus outbreak. **AP**

Many lockdowns ease but Russia, UK still struggling

Rome: From the United States to Europe to Asia, the easing of some coronavirus lockdowns brought millions out of their homes to enjoy the outdoors and warm spring temperatures.

Yet the global pandemic is still slicing through the defenses of other nations, causing infections and deaths to march relentlessly higher.

India on Sunday reported more than 2,600 infections, its biggest single-day jump, and new coronavirus cases in Russia exceed 10,000 for the first time.

The confirmed virus death toll in Britain was creeping up near that of Italy, the epicentre of Europe's outbreak, even though the UK population is younger than Italy's and Britain had more time than Italy to prepare before the pandemic hit.

There was also worrying news from Afghanistan, where nearly a third tested positive in a random test of 500 people in Kabul, the capital city.

China, which reported two only new cases, is seeing a surge in visitors to newly reopened tourist spots after domestic travel restrictions were relaxed ahead of a five-day holiday that runs through Tuesday. **AP**

Nearly 1.7 million people visited Beijing parks on the first two days of the holiday, and Shanghai's main tourist spots welcomed more than 1 million visitors, according to Chinese media. Many spots limited daily visitors to 30 per cent of capacity or less to keep some social distancing in place.

Italians are counting down the hours until Monday, when parks and public gardens were re-opening nationwide for strolling, jogging or bike riding. But with sunshine and warm temperatures across the country, many were outside in force on Sunday, walking down streets and chatting on sidewalks. Many had masks, but in Rome, some lowered them to talk with friends or neighbours.

Despite the easing, Italians will still have to stay a metre apart, picnics are not allowed and playgrounds will remain closed. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has warned if the rate of contagion starts rising again, such freedoms will be curtailed.

In Spain, many ventured out this weekend for the first time since its lockdown began on March 14. **AP**

Boris: I could have died if I had refused hospitalisation

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson revealed for the first time on Sunday that there were "contingency plans" in place in case things went "badly wrong" and he died during his treatment for Covid-19 in a hospital here last month.

The 55-year-old leader, who returned to work at 10 Downing Street after his recovery last week, told "The Sun On Sunday" that he was given "litres and litres of oxygen" after going into intensive care at St Thomas' Hospital on April 7.

"It was a tough old moment, I won't deny it. They had a strategy to deal with a

'death of Stalin'-type scenario," he told the newspaper. "I was not in particularly brilliant shape and I was aware there were contingency plans in place. The doctors had all sorts of arrangements for what to do if things went badly wrong. They gave me a face mask so I got litres and litres of oxygen and for a long time I had that and the little nose jobbie," he said as the country reported over 28,000 deaths due to the coronavirus outbreak as on Saturday.

The interview comes a day after his fiancée Carrie Symonds shared a picture on

Instagram with the couple's newborn son, who they named Wilfred Lawrie Nicholas Johnson — with the name Nicholas chosen in a nod to the two doctors who saved the British premier's life.

Johnson admitted that he was "in denial" about how serious his condition was after testing positive for coronavirus and that he really did not want to go to hospital.

"I said I really didn't want to go into hospital. It didn't seem to me to be a good move but they were pretty adamant. Looking back, they were right to force me to go," he said. **PTI**

Texas A&M university starts human testing of tuberculosis vaccine to fight Covid-19

Houston: Researchers in the US' Texas A&M University are asking hundreds of frontline medical workers to participate in a late-stage, phase 4, clinical trial of a widely-used tuberculosis vaccine that could help boost the immune system and blunt the devastating effects of Covid-19.

Texas A&M is the first US institution in the clinical trial to have federal clearance for testing on humans. Researchers hope to demonstrate that Bacillus Calmette-Guerin or BCG mitigates the effects of the novel coronavirus, allowing fewer people to be hospitalised

or to die from Covid-19.

The researchers are seeking to repurpose the vaccine, which is also used to treat bladder cancer. BCG could be widely available for use against Covid-19 in just six months because it has already been proven safe for other uses, the university said.

"This could make a huge difference in the next two to three years while the development of a specific vaccine is developed for Covid-19," said Dr Jeffrey D Cirillo, a Regent's Professor of Microbial Pathogenesis and Immunology at the Texas A&M Health Science Center. **AP**

VIRUS PANDEMIC BEING USED TO CURB PRESS FREEDOM: REPORT

Berlin: An international media rights group said on Sunday the coronavirus pandemic is being used by governments around the world to increase restrictions on press freedoms.

In a report issued to coincide with World Press Freedom Day 2020, the International Press Institute concluded that in both democratic and autocratic states the "public health crisis has allowed Governments to exercise control over the media on the pretext of preventing the spread of disinformation."

It said authoritarian governments have been abusing emergency measures to "further stifle independent media and criminalise journalism," while in

democracies "efforts to control the public narrative and restrict access to information around the pandemic are on the rise."

The Vienna-based organization said it has documented 162 press freedom violations related to coronavirus coverage over the past two and a half months, almost a third of which have involved the arrest, detention or charging of journalists.

The institute's report came three days after the International Federation of Journalists published a survey that found that the working conditions of news reporters around the globe have deteriorated during the pandemic amid job losses and attacks on media freedom. **AP**

Around the Globe

Dhaka: Bangladesh registered its highest single-day increase in the coronavirus cases with 665 new infections in the last 24 hours, taking the total number to 9,455.

Washington: The US Air Force and Navy pilots staged a rare joint flyover in three American cities, including Washington, to salute the frontline coronavirus responders and essential workers as the country, the worst hit by the pandemic, fought a grim battle against the "invincible enemy".

Islamabad: Pakistan's coronavirus tally crossed 19,000 on Sunday after 989 new patients were diagnosed in the last 24 hours. The Ministry of National Health Services said 23 patients died in this period, taking the total toll to 440. So far, 4,817 people have recovered from the deadly virus, the ministry said.

Rome: Rome's infectious diseases hospital has admitted 28 patients from a nursing home who were confirmed to have Covid-19. Spallanzani Hospital, which is the hub for all coronavirus patients in the region that includes Italy's capital, said the patients were admitted Saturday from the Latina Nursing Home Clinic.

Singapore: Singapore on Sunday recorded 657 new coronavirus cases, most of whom are foreign workers, taking the total number of Covid-19 infections to 18,205.

Kathmandu: Nepal on Sunday confirmed 10 new coronavirus cases, taking the total number of infections to 69. Nepal is among the nations that has the least cases of coronavirus as many as 16 Covid-19 patients have been recovered so far, a health ministry spokesperson said.

Faced with 19,000 dead, care homes seek shield from lawsuits

New York: Faced with 19,000 coronavirus deaths and counting, the nation's nursing homes are pushing back against a potential flood of lawsuits with a sweeping lobbying effort to get states to grant them emergency protection from claims of inadequate care.

At least 15 States have enacted laws or governors' orders that explicitly or apparently provide nursing homes and long-term care facilities some protection from lawsuits arising from the crisis.

And in the case of New York, which leads the nation in deaths in such facilities, a lobbying group wrote the first draft of a measure that apparently makes it the only state with specific protection from both

civil lawsuits and criminal prosecution. Now the industry is forging ahead with a campaign to get other states on board with a simple argument: This was an unprecedented crisis and nursing homes should not be liable for events beyond their control, such as shortages of protective equipment and testing, shifting directives from authorities, and sicknesses that have decimated staffs.

"As our care providers make these difficult decisions, they need to know they will not be prosecuted or persecuted," read a letter sent this month from several major hospital and nursing home groups to their next big goal, California, where Gov. Gavin Newsom has yet to make a decision. Other states in their

sights include Florida, Pennsylvania and Missouri.

Watchdogs, patient advocates and lawyers argue that immunity orders are misguided. At a time when the crisis is laying bare such chronic industry problems as staffing shortages and poor infection control, they say legal liability is the last safety net to keep facilities accountable.

They also contend nursing homes are taking advantage of the crisis to protect their bottom lines. Almost 70% of the nation's more than 15,000 nursing homes are run by for-profit companies, and hundreds have been bought and sold in recent years by private-equity firms.

"What you're really looking at is an industry that always

wanted immunity and now has the opportunity to ask for it under the cloak of saying, 'Let's protect our heroes,'" said Mike Dark, an attorney for California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform.

"This has very little to do with the hard work being done by health care providers," he said, "and everything to do with protecting the financial interests of these big operators."

Nowhere have the industry's efforts played out more starkly than in New York, which has a fifth of the nation's known nursing home and long-term care deaths and has had at least seven facilities with outbreaks of 40 deaths or more, including one home in Manhattan that reported 98. **AP**

DESERT OR SEA

Virus traps migrants in mid-route danger zone

AP ■ GUATEMALA CITY

Thousands of desperate migrants are trapped in limbo and even at risk of death without food, water or shelter in scorching deserts and at sea, as Governments close off borders and ports amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Migrants have been dropped by the truckload in the Sahara Desert or bused to Mexico's desolate border with Guatemala and beyond. They are drifting in the Mediterranean Sea after European and Libyan authorities declared their ports unsafe. And about 100

Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are believed to have died in the Bay of Bengal, as country after country pushes them back out to sea.

Many governments have declared emergencies, saying a public health crisis like the coronavirus pandemic requires extraordinary measures. However, these measures are just the latest efforts by governments to clamp down on migrants, despite human rights laws.

"They just dumped us," said Fanny Jacqueline Ortiz, a 37-year-old Honduran travelling with her two daughters, aged 3 and 12. Ortiz reached the U.S.,

but American authorities expelled her to Mexico. The Mexican government in turn abandoned the family on March 26 at the lonely El Ceibo border crossing with Guatemala. Ortiz and other migrants on the two-bus convoy were told to avoid the Guatemalan soldiers guarding the border, which was closed due to the pandemic.

"They told us to go around through the mountains, and we slept in the woods," she recalled.

Over the next few weeks, an activist helped Ortiz and others in her group of 20 find a ride to the next border, in Honduras.

Israeli court hears petition challenging Netanyahu's Govt

Jerusalem: In a rare move, the Israeli High Court on Sunday began hearing petitions against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu forming a Government while facing criminal indictments in a session being broadcast live given its significance.

The hearing, held by an exceptionally large panel of 11 out of the court's 15 justices, focuses on the issue of whether a politician can form a government while under indictment.

Israeli law mandates that cabinet ministers and mayors resign if indicted, but does not explicitly prohibit a politician from becoming a Prime Minister if backed by the majority support in the Knesset (Israeli parliament).

Netanyahu, 70, was indicted earlier this year on charges of accepting bribes, fraud and breach of trust. He has denied any wrongdoing.

His trial was postponed due to restrictions his hand-picked interim justice minister placed on the courts after the coronavirus crisis erupted and is scheduled to commence later

this month. Israel's Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit last week said that while Netanyahu's indictments "raise significant problems," there was no legal basis for barring him from serving while facing criminal charges. Speaking at the opening of the High Court hearing on Sunday, Anar Helman, representing the Attorney General's Office, reiterated the same opinion saying that there is no legal obstacle despite "serious crimes of personal integrity".

"The main consideration that must be taken into account is the realization of the voters' will. This is the democratic system," Helman said, arguing that the law differentiates between a Prime Minister and a Minister, who is not allowed to serve under indictment, due to the fact that the Prime Minister is elected by the people.

"The fact that a person has been indicted for serious crimes of personal integrity does not prevent the Knesset members from recommending him to assemble the government. The Attorney General's Office believes that there is no imped-

iment that Knesset Member Netanyahu will form the next government," Helman asserted.

The court will address additional petitions concerning Netanyahu's power-sharing deal with his main rival, former military chief Benny Gantz, on Monday. Netanyahu and Gantz signed the agreement to a national Government last month after an unprecedented third round of polls which again did not give anybody a clear verdict to form the government.

The deal allows Netanyahu to serve the first 18 months as Prime Minister after which Gantz would assume power for the next 18 months.

Israel could plunge into a deep political chaos if the court decides against Netanyahu forming a government under indictment. Protesters opposing Netanyahu's continued rule have been taking to the streets despite the ongoing lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. Last week saw counter-protests from Netanyahu supporters who demonstrated against "court's interference in a democratic process". **PTI**

S Korea says troops exchange fire along N Korean border

Seoul: North and South Korean troops exchanged fire along their tense border on Sunday, the South's military said, blaming North Korean soldiers for targeting a guard post.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul said in a statement that North Korean troops fired several bullets at a South Korean guard post inside the heavily fortified border. South Korea fired two rounds in response after issuing a warning broadcast, it said.

South Korea suffered no casualties, the military said. It's unknown whether North Korea had any casualties. The North's official Korean Central News Agency hasn't reported about the incident.

It comes a day after North Korea broadcast images of leader Kim Jong Un reappearing in public after a 20-day absence amid intense speculation about his health.

KCNA said Kim attended Friday's ceremony marking the completion of a fertilizer factory near Pyongyang along

with senior officials. State TV showed Kim smiling and walking around factory facilities.

Kim earlier vanished from the public eye after presiding over a Politburo meeting of the ruling Workers' Party on April 11 to the coronavirus.

Speculation about his health began swirling after he missed an April 15 event commemorating the birthday of his grandfather and state founder, Kim Il Sung, something he had never done since inheriting power upon his father Kim Jong Il's death in late 2011.

The Koreas are split along the 248-kilometer (155-mile)-long, 4-kilometer (2.5-mile)-wide border called the Demilitarized Zone that was originally created as a buffer. But unlike its name, the DMZ is the world's most heavily fortified border. An estimated 2 million mines are peppered inside and near the DMZ, which is also guarded by barbed wire fences, tank traps and combat troops on both sides. **AP**

South Korea: Kim did not have surgery amid lingering rumours

Seoul (South Korea): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un did not undergo surgery or any other medical procedure, a South Korean official said Sunday, amid speculation about his health that continues to linger even after he reappeared publicly in recent days.

North Korea had said Saturday that Kim attended the completion of a fertilizer factory near Pyongyang on Friday, in his first public appearance in about 20 days.

While North Korean video showing a smiling Kim moving around, cutting a red ribbon and smoking quelled intense rumours that he might be gravely ill or even have died, some media outlets and observers still raised questions about his health, citing moments when his walking looked a bit stiff at the factory.

A senior South Korean presidential official told reporters Sunday that the government had determined that Kim did not have surgery or any other procedure, according to the presidential Blue House. **AP**

Egypt says security forces kill 18 militants in Sinai

Cairo: Egyptian police forces killed 18 militants in a raid on the restive northern part of the Sinai Peninsula, the Interior Ministry said on Sunday.

The Ministry said security forces exchanged fire with Islamic militants as they stormed a hideout in the small Sinai town of Bir al-Abed.

No casualties were reported among the police. The ministry, which did not say when the raid took place, said police found weapons, three explosive devices and two explosives belts.

The details could not be independently corroborated as Egyptian authorities heavily restrict access to that part of Sinai.

On Thursday, an explosion hit a military armored convoy causing at least 10 casualties among Egyptian soldiers who were participating in a campaign against an Islamic insurgency in the volatile region.

The military spokesman, Tamer el-Refai, did not specify the number of soldiers killed by the improvised explosive device. **AP**

But other officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said 10 soldiers died, including an officer, and three others suffered shrapnel wounds.

An affiliate of the Islamic State group based in northern Sinai claimed responsibility for Thursday's attack, which took place during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, after sundown when the faithful break their daily fast.

El-Refai said Friday that the military killed two militants who were hiding in a farm in northern Sinai.

Egypt has been battling militants in the northern part of Sinai Peninsula for years, but the insurgency became far more deadly after the 2013 military ouster of Mohammed Morsi, an elected but divisive Islamist president amid nationwide protests against his brief rule.

An Islamic State affiliate based in the Sinai has carried out high-profile attacks in recent years, mainly targeting security forces and Egypt's Christian minority. **AP**

Trend Slazer

I am not a born composer: Shreya

SHREYA GHOSHAL's singing is always on point. But not many know that she's also a composer.

Just before the Coronavirus lockdown in India in March, she had unveiled a single *Nah woh main*. "I was thinking of releasing it later but I was not sure how long the lockdown would go on. So I just released it on my YouTube channel. It's co-composed by me and my brother," she said.

She wants to use the lockdown days to create more content for her YouTube channel. "I am trying to work on some stuff. It takes a little while to crack a good song. I am not a born composer," she added.



'Yes, I am picky when it comes to choosing films. I try to be part of films that I would want to watch. I also

try to pick different roles from what I have done. I started with *1920* and I am very fortunate for that. Actresses in our industry for years don't get a chance to do what I got to do in my debut.'

—Adah Sharma

RANJHA VIKRAM SINGH

who worked in the Tiger Shroff-starrer *Heropanti*, has a heavy frame, and is going on a liquid diet for his forthcoming film, *Fauji Calling*, to look the part of a soldier.



"The look is a major part of the preparation for a character, and obviously portraying an Indian army soldier is an extra responsibility. So I went on a liquid diet and cut down on weight and muscle mass," he said.

Directed by Aaryaan Saxena, the film tells the story of a soldier's family who has sacrificed his life in the line of duty. It also stars Sharman Joshi.

Chris joins Instagram

Captain America actor CHRIS EVANS has finally joined Instagram to raise funds for the fight against the novel Coronavirus.

Evans shared that he is taking part in the 'All In Challenge,' launched to help raise money to fight hunger during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his debut video, Evans says, "A virtual hangout with me and five of my closest friends," where he referred to his *Avengers* co-stars Robert Downey Jr, Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson, Mark Ruffalo and Jeremy Renner.

"We can do a private Q&A. You can ask us anything. We'll spill the beans. And then maybe some games."



STRIKE A BALANCE

Stay focussed on positivity and take good care of your health while you prepare for a reformed world when the lockdown is suspended, says SHARAD AGARWAL

Working from home has become the new normal. And it has changed our routine drastically in many ways. Our work patterns have undergone a major transformation due to the current circumstances posed by the global Coronavirus pandemic. The need to adapt to new methods of working around technology has become a crucial component for us to achieve our milestones. However, work from home can prove challenging with the changed surroundings.

Considering the uncertainty looming in our lives, this time, I have adapted to it with many permutations and combinations. Here are some points which are helping me navigate and conduct my business and personal transactions through the lockdown phase, easily:

Optimise your daily task list

I like to start my work day early by organising and planning my task list on priority. This is followed by pre-scheduled calls with the management team,

connecting with our dealer partners and a daily exchange of learning with my teams to refresh our business awareness, among other tasks. We are utilising this time to evaluate, conceptualise and prepare for the changes that we foresee as essential in our customer engagement and approach, especially post lockdown.

I have found it useful and worthwhile to assign a place to work in my house during the lockdown as it supports consistency and discipline while also assisting with productivity.

Re-create the changing wheel

Everything around us will be redefined after COVID-19, wherein the role of digital and adaptation of the existing set up to the changed times would have to be taken into consideration. It is essential to utilise the current period effectively to write the new norms for the business.

We need to understand and strive to engage with our customers despite challenges and should be open to adapting with the changing norms and take

informed decisions keeping them in mind. Therefore, we are undertaking various steps to sanitise our workshops and cars, re-shaping and defining our backend tasks, planning progressive digital launches for forthcoming vehicles and revamping the test drive experience for customers. Businesses are already operating on a new tangent and hence, adaptation is paramount in the current global economic scenario.

Prioritise your roles at home

My time at home during lockdown has inspired me to engage more with my family. Take this opportunity to help them with tasks around the house and take on a more active and supportive role in everyday chores. It is like being in the office where despite your work, you engage in conversations with your colleagues and visitors and help them to find solutions for issues that may not be directly related to the task at hand.

Work from home certainly has its advantages like saving the time of commute, to engage more with your family

ONE COULD ALSO CONSIDER COLLABORATING WITH ONGOING LOCAL AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES, HELPING PEOPLE IN NEED OF SUPPORT DURING THE LOCKDOWN TO NOT ONLY BE CONDUCIVE TOWARDS PERSONAL GROWTH BUT ALSO SPREAD POSITIVITY AROUND

at home, friends and your extended family through various forms of digital communication. The lockdown has made me find my passion for cooking and learning yoga. I also look forward to very engaging and intellectual conversations with my daughters.

Upgrade your skills and acumen

Even though lockdown 3.0 has come with new restrictions and allowances, but as we prepare ourselves to enter a new world post complete freedom from lockdown, one must make all the efforts to upskill and upgrade themselves.

Invest your time in harnessing your skills, which may help you in your line of work or if you have mastered that, learn something new. There are numerous digital courses offered by reputed platforms and universities that one could register and pursue.

With respect to work, office teams can start focussing on individual areas of self-development. Share and discuss your daily learnings over a team call and participating in daily quizzes on various aspects of business is a great team activity for skill upgradation.

Set aside personal time

For many of us, apart from office, working from home may mean added workload with the responsibility of managing household chores. It is crucial that we utilise our time effectively by setting out tasks for the day and allocating time for each accordingly. Finding those 30 or more minutes of personal time amid all of this is very important. And it could be anything that helps you to find your inner calm — reading a book, meditating, exercising, catching up on a web series, conversing with your friend or family member, listening to music, practicing any art form and so on. It allows you to connect with yourself and keeps the emotion of feeling overwhelmed in check.

Future ready

In our fast-paced lifestyle, we forget to stop and think about our lives at length. We constantly keep working to reach our goals but never pause to rejoice in current moments. Well, now is the time.

Make living in the present and empowering yourself for future your top priorities. Renowned psychologist Abraham Maslow had rightly acknowledged, "The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness." However, it is also necessary that we stay focussed on our goals and our dreams for the future during this time. Therefore, take the time to create the wishlist you want to prioritise, and work on them post the lockdown. Give yourself free reign to plan for your future as it is the positive route to establishing a firm hold on your aspirations.

One could also consider collaborating with ongoing local and community initiatives, helping people in need of support during the lockdown to not only be conducive towards personal growth but also spread positivity around yourself.

Striking a reasonable balance between your work and personal life will aid in making this period productive. Stay focussed on positivity and take good care of your health, while you prepare for a reformed world when the lockdown is suspended.

(The author is the head of Automobili Lamborghini, India.)

The box of memories

JUNHO J JEONG talks about how actor IRRFAN KHAN's *The Lunchbox* captured the emotions and sentiments of childhood aptly



We lost two great Bollywood actors this week. One of them brought back memories of lunchboxes.

Irrfan Khan played the lead in a film by the same name — *The Lunchbox*. In the film, like many other office-goers in the city of Mumbai, he'd consume food cooked and delivered to his office by the famous *dabbawalas*. For him, it used to be an everyday, monotonous meal, packed by a local chef until the lunchbox gets mixed up by delivery person, which changes everything. It connected his tastebuds and his destiny to a lady homemaker who'd recently begun cooking lunch for her husband with some tips from her neighbour, and of course, dollops of love. It was then that Irrfan ji's character started waiting for his lunchbox to arrive and opens it with excitement while expecting something new everyday.

The film took me back to my childhood days when other kids and I would carry our lunchboxes to school, unsure of what treasure was hidden inside them. Lunch was a time for discovery. Sometimes, it was joyful, sometimes disappointing. But the fun

of opening the box in the company of friends was thrilling.

As we grew up and a busy lifestyle took precedence, the humble lunchbox disappeared from our lives. So when I came to India, I was pleasantly surprised to see many of my Indian colleagues carrying a personal lunchbox to office, taking it to the cafeteria during the lunch-hour, heating up the food in the smart ovens and serving themselves. I would often be reminded of the taste of the food, which my mother cooked — and all the secret recipes that made it so delicious.

Like many of our colleagues from Korea, I would also wonder about the hundreds of lunchboxes of different shapes, sizes and colours, that lined the walls of the office building as their owners went out for a quick walk post lunch, especially during the winter months. We were intrigued as much as we were touched by this act of love in Indian families.

When someone recommended this film as a "must-watch," our Korean colleagues decided to act on the tip. Some went to the theatres, some watched it at home, while some others organised special screenings for groups of



friends. It was one of the most amazing films I had watched and certainly the best Bollywood one. I also introduced it to my wife when she joined me in Delhi after a few months and several of our friends.

As life's biggest secrets are always unveiled at the theatre, my first Indian film, *The Lunchbox* showed me how an Indian tiffin is prepared at home — with love — handed over to the *dabbawalas*, transported on local trains to far-off offices, and delivered in an effi-

cient manner. The journey of those lunchboxes and people around them taught me how life moves here and reaches its destination — through the beautiful chaos of the metros.

South Korea and India share similar family values. Maybe that is why we love watching Bollywood films, while Korean movies, K-serials and K-pop are gaining popularity with millennials here. While watching the film, we were also reminded of our loved ones back home and our parents. We could understand the ethos and the bonding that exist in Indian families. We also got to know more about the interesting Indian cuisine and its range of *masalas* (spices).

The characters in the film were very real and the actors played them efficiently. I remember how Irrfan ji's character would wait for his lunchbox and later clean it up. He was so natural!

Hearing the news of his demise was shocking. I was very sad. I have watched Irrfan ji's performances in Hollywood films like *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Life of Pi*. He was not just a great actor but also a great example of the "genius Indian" and the "global Indian".

His films will remain etched in my memory. What *The Lunchbox* taught me was that the box carries the same ingredients of care and expectation whether it's made in India or Korea. The only difference is — in India, your lunchbox will find you.

(The author been working in Samsung, India for more than five years now. He loves walking the streets of Delhi to learn more about the flavours of India and to understand life and people here. He still can't speak in Hindi or any other local language, though he can say "theek hai" (alright) easily.)

WEBBED



WORKIN' MOMS: SEASON 4

Maternity leave is over and it's time for four moms to return to work while navigating kids, bosses, love and life in modern-day Toronto. Starring Catherine Reitman, Dani Kind and Juno Rinaldi, the series releases on May 6 on Netflix.



DEAD TO ME: SEASON 2

A hot-headed widow searching for the hit-and-run driver who mowed down her husband befriends an eccentric optimist who isn't quite what she seems. Starring Christina Applegate, Linda Cardellini and James Marsden, season 2 releases on May 8 on Netflix.

JIMMY O YANG: GOOD DEAL

Performed live at the Neptune Theatre in Seattle, the film covers Jimmy's hilarious interactions with immigrant parents, his thoughts on Matt Damon, and whether ghosts will haunt one-bedroom apartments. It releases on May 8 on Amazon Prime Video.



THE REAL DEAL

As people stay at home, nature is flourishing in their absence, albeit temporarily. This is the time to introspect, change our habits and continue practising them once the lockdown is lifted, says ZAKIYA BANOO

The warmer weather brings hope for the inhabitants of Ladakh, the land of high passes, significant cultural heritage and extreme cold weather. This is the time when inhabitants of this snow desert let go of the winter and start planning for summer. People start preparing to resume their work after the long hibernation just like Marmots. But this year was different for people of Leh, just like the rest of the world. As the rays of sun started filtering in from the winter clouds, people of this cold desert learnt about the spread of novel Coronavirus.

India became one of the countries where COVID-19 made its presence felt. On January 30, the first case was confirmed in the southern state of Kerala. In March, the number of confirmed cases from all over the country increased. In Ladakh's Leh district, the first two cases of Coronavirus were confirmed on March 7 with both patients having a travel history to Iran.

As naïve as children are, many expressed happiness about the lock-

down that was implemented to ensure 'physical distancing'. While some, who really were looking forward to returning to college after winter slumber, felt disappointed. However, with time, as cases of Corona grew, the happiness subsided and everyone started praying for the recovery of those affected. Local administration, following the orders of the Central Government, implemented a strict lockdown in the region. Many students and volunteers supported the efforts of administration by reaching out to the public with detailed information about the virus — the symptoms and the precautions they must follow for the safety of their families and society.

The real challenge for us, Ladakhis, is the crucial timing when this virus entered our lives. During summer season, the expectations were to prepare better meals to compensate for the nutrient loss that our community faces in the winter season. People survive winter by having pulses and dry vegetables.

This is the time we look for-



ward to resuming with our normal lives. People who run small businesses like shops were caught completely off guard and had no idea of how to manage their lives. They were worried about how would they find the means to feed their families. During winter, the shops are shut and they don't earn anything and whatever money they had earned last summer, they had already spent it on the winter stock.

Migrants are the worst affected by the lockdown. People from other states like Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, who come here to work, have been left with no food, money or proper shelter. The tourism industry — the fuel of Ladakh's local economy — is severely affected due to stay-at-home orders and so is the life of these workers who depend on these resources for their survival. Both local and central administration is helping the migrant population by providing them food. People of Ladakh have also contributed to the efforts of the administration.

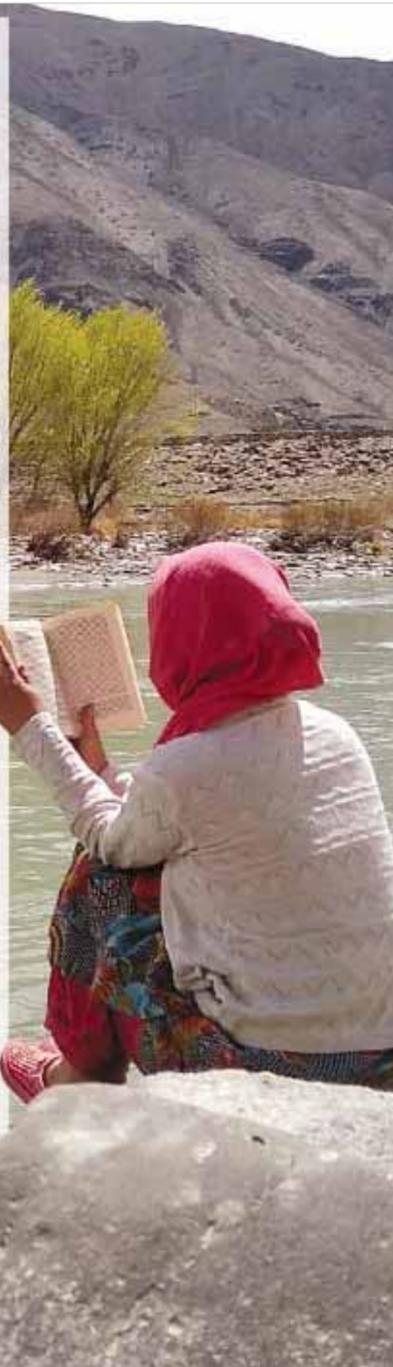
In these tough times, those who have the privilege to survive and stay safe inside their houses should utilise this opportunity to work on themselves. Ladakh, which is already less polluted compared to other places, is now witnessing even clearer skies and fresher air due to temporary shutdown of a lot of industries, factories and small companies. Families are spending time together, especially with the grandparents. Interaction with neighbours has increased. One of the most important changes that have taken place is that people are doing their own work without

being dependent on labourers.

The lockdown days have turned out to be a nostalgic trip down the memory lane of my childhood. I am reminiscing about things that I have not done since childhood as I have started engaging in them again. Along with my family, I am working in the garden and field, spending time with animals and sharing our thoughts. We are utilising the days by learning new things like cooking different dishes, playing board games, watching films and exploring world through the eyes of our elders. Grandparents share stories of their childhood, making us realise how different their times were. During night, while sitting near the bonfire, we sing, dance and solve riddles.

Every day, I sit near the Indus. Everything around this mighty river looks so calm and peaceful. And I ask myself, how quickly will this go back to being polluted once the lockdown is lifted? The river and its environs will be flooded with plastic and all sorts of other waste from our houses, hotels and restaurants. This is the time to introspect, change our habits and continue practicing them once the lockdown is lifted. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has made us realise the importance of things that we always took for granted. Many lives have been lost in our country and around the globe. The times are tough but we should not give up yet. We should be hopeful of a bright future where all of us will play our roles more responsibly. This is the time to prepare ourselves to become better human beings.

—Charkha Features



No to negativity

While the virus might cause a disease, the main culprit is the accumulated toxic matter in our body, which provides a suitable breeding ground for it to mutate, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Health is wealth, an old maxim, is relevant even in this modern age. It's a fact that health is very essential for a happy and natural living. Today, nobody wants to be sick and physically distressed to spend their hard-earned money on doctors and expensive medicines. This is the reason why people all over the world have become more health conscious than they were a few years back.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), health is physical, mental and social well-being rather than merely the absence of disease. Since there is an intimate connection between mind and body, many a times a physical diseases cause some symptoms of ailment in the mind and vice versa. To treat it, there are many systems or pathies as we call them. Usually, the doctors give medicine so that the symptoms of the disease disappear.

However, there are only a few systems which are concerned with the restoration of health. In fact, various systems define 'disease' and its causes differently. Their philosophy of health and disease is very different from that of the others. For example, the Allopathic system of medicine is based on the philosophy that it is the virus which causes a disease and hence, allopaths consider virus as living micro-organisms. They also think that there are many diseases which are caused by bacteria, if not by viruses. So their system attempts to kill these viruses or bacteria to help the body to recover from their attack. But the hygienist school of thought or the nature curists say that viruses are not living entities. They consider viruses as the proteinaceous debris of spent cells that create a condition of intoxication, called toxemia or toxicosis. They say that bacteria have always been with us because they are our symbiotic partners. According to the nature curists, the real culprit is the accumulated toxic matter. Hence, they consider a disease not to be a result of attack by virus or bacteria but the result of the toxic matter, generated within or adopted from outside. They say all diseases are toxemic in origin and most diseases are a remedial effort by the body to purify or repair itself.

Now, if we consider disease as the manifestation of a signal concerning the accumulated debris, waste or toxic matter, then we will have to say that purification of the body is the mother of health. In this purification, purity of mind plays a very great role. Purification of the body requires fasting or eating healthy, avoiding toxic food and having control over sensual pleasures that lead to waste of body-vitality. It also means control over our behaviour and emotions, for these also lead to debility, enervation and unhealthy functioning of our nervous or glandular system. Even if we believe in the existence of virus, bacteria or other micro organisms as the cause of our disease, it would be hard to deny the fact that the main culprit is the accumulated toxic matter in our body as it provides a suitable breeding ground to the virus.

Summing up, it would be correct to say that spiritual and physical purity is the factor that promotes natural health. Hence, without positive emotions of love and enthusiasm, one cannot have the vitality to maintain normal functions of all body-parts. The negative emotions cause a great drain on one's vitality and debilitate the whole organism. It would, therefore, be proper to emphasise that purity is the main ingredient to achieve good health. So while doctors talk of holistic health, hypertension, psychosomatic diseases, drug addiction, we wish that due attention is also paid to the turmoil caused by one's negative thoughts, which are making the atmosphere of the society polluted and unhealthy.



As summer's arrival coincides with government stay-at-home orders, the itch to get outside has turned gardens into a getaway for the mind in chaotic times. Gardeners, who already know that working with soil is a way to connect with nature, say it helps take away their worries, at least temporarily.

"I love to see things grow," Lindsay Waldrop said. "It's incredibly therapeutic." Now more than ever, Waldrop, a resident of Anaheim, California, has an anxiety disorder. Exercise is supposed to help but her new job as a college biology professor had prevented her from getting into a routine. Her grandfather, who introduced her to gardening by showing her how to plant seeds, died about a year ago. "Sometimes I just like to sit and dig holes in the quiet with my own thoughts," she said. "Outside, it takes my mind off. It gives something for my hands to do. It gives you a separate problem to think about than whatever else is going on. It gets you off of social media."

Waldrop and her husband moved last summer from New Mexico, where she didn't have much luck gardening in a scorching climate. At her new home, she got rid of the lawn, installed an irrigation system, and recently planted dozens of tomatoes, eggplant, peppers and other vegetables. Over the years,

Dig, plant, breathe

In chaotic times, families discover that gardening is therapeutic as it gives them hope and purpose

Waldrop converted her skeptical husband, who initially wondered why digging in the dirt and moving things around was considered fun. After tasting his first home-grown tomatoes, he was converted.

Families, too, are discovering that gardening gives cooped-up kids something to do, builds their self-esteem and brings variety to what has suddenly become a lot of time spent together.

In Miami, Annika Bolanos isn't a fan of the south Florida heat and mosquitoes. But going outdoors lately has been a lifeline. Bolanos works at home making cakes and doing book-keeping with her husband's golf cart business. Her three young children add an extra layer of busy, and together they've seeded a variety of vegetables and herbs. "We have always loved the idea of growing our own food," Bolanos said. "It feels good to eat something that you grew yourself. It also helps my kids eat more fruits and veggies since they find it cool to eat what they



have grown."

Her children water the plants daily and concentrate on what's growing. "You're feeling the sun and the breeze and don't have to worry about anything in the moment," Bolanos said.

In Britain and Germany,

there's a premium on allotments — popular parcels of land rented for growing food crops. "Those with a garden are the lucky ones," said Heidi Schaletzky, standing on the lawn beneath a cherry tree in the north of Berlin. Schaletzky and her husband

have been cultivating a plot in the "Free Country" community garden for the past eight years, growing strawberries, salad greens and kohlrabi. So far, access to garden plots remains exempt from restrictions intended to stop the spread of the virus in Germany. "We'll be able to see other people, too," she said. "As long as they stay on their side of the fence."

As the weather warms, garden shops are bustling as other businesses shut during the outbreak. At the Almaden Valley Nursery in San Jose, California, rose expert John Harp has seen a mix of new gardeners and regulars. Customers can't come into the shop, so their online orders are brought to their vehicles in the parking lot. "Around town everyone is gardening right now," Harp said. "They're looking to be a little bit more self-sufficient."

This home-grown attitude goes back to World War II, when millions of people cultivated victory gardens to protect against potential food shortages while boosting patriotism and morale.

Hollie Niblett, who lives near Kansas City, Kansas, hopes the victory gardens come back. Niblett, who has a degree in horticultural therapy, tends to a kitchen garden near her backdoor, perennial flowers, flowering trees and shrubs, and upper

and lower grassy yards connected by a path through an area left in its natural condition.

"There are so many things about it that feed my soul," she said. "Right now, more than anything, my garden gives me hope, gives me purpose and provides a sense of connection to something bigger than myself." For beginners, wonderment awaits. Just south of Atlanta, 10-year-old Ezra Gandy's love for playing baseball has been paused. He and his grandmother, Melanie Nunnally, recently started an outdoor garden, planting strawberries, cabbage, broccoli, kale and asparagus. "I like digging in the dirt because I like to see all the bugs and stuff that's in the ground," he said.

The nonprofit group KidsGardening.org suggests that children grow their own salads or do other activities.

The virus scare could even usher in a new crop of gardeners who start from seed rather than risk the crowds buying starter plants.

Kendra Schilling of Scott Depot, West Virginia, doesn't have space for a sprawling garden, so she's planting potatoes in a bucket and trying to figure out with her teenage daughter what to do with other vegetable seeds. "I usually go buy the plants and stick them in the dirt. But this year we're going to try to do the seeds," she says. —AP

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving. —Albert Einstein

CAN A CANCER DRUG TAME PAEDOPHILES TOO?

Researchers now claim that the risk of some men sexually abusing children can be reduced by a drug that lowers testosterone levels.

Researchers at Karolinska Institutet and Gothenburg University in Sweden have now evaluated the effect of a drug called degarelix, which is approved for the treatment of prostate cancer. The drug acts by switching off the production of testosterone, reducing within a matter of hours the levels of the hormone in the body, and is administered by injection every three months.

Treatment with degarelix was shown to dampen two critical risk factors for committing abuse: high sexual desire and sexual attraction to children. The effects were noticeable within two weeks.

"It's important to be able to offer a relatively fast-acting treatment, and the patients' own experiences of the drug were overall positive," says study leader Christoffer Rahm from the Karolinska Institutet.



HANGOVER IN MORNING? DRINK PLANT EXTRACTS

If you are suffering from headache and nausea after a drinking fiends last evening, read this carefully. A plant extract combination of fruits, leaves, and roots may help to relieve hangover symptoms in the morning, says a study.

The findings contradict the popular concept that hangovers are caused by a lack of electrolytes in the body, a combination of minerals that help balance acid levels. Various natural remedies have been recommended to ease hangover symptoms, but there is as yet no strong scientific evidence for their use.

In a bid to address that, the researchers from Johannes Gutenberg-University in Germany assessed the potential of specific plant extracts, vitamins and minerals, and antioxidant compounds to ease a range of recognised physical and psychological symptoms associated with drinking alcohol.



GENES LINKED TO SPEECH DISORDER DISCOVERED

Researchers have discovered nine new genes linked to the most severe type of childhood speech disorder (CAS) — apraxia, in which a child has difficulty making accurate movements when speaking.

According to the researchers, one in 1,000 children has apraxia, and despite intensive investigation, the genetic origins of this debilitating speech disorder have remained largely unexplained, until now.

Eight of the nine genes are critical in a process which turns specific language genes "on" or "off" by binding to nearby DNA, the study said.

"We found these eight genes are activated in the developing brain. This suggests there is at least one genetic network for apraxia, all with a similar function and expression pattern in the brain," she said.

The researchers said that the new genetic findings would help neuroscientists and speech pathologists develop more targeted treatments for children.



HEART ATTACK RISK DECLINED IN 20 YEARS?

Researchers now claim that the rate of heart attacks, strokes and other cardiovascular complications has improved among people with diabetes over the past 20 years, narrowing the gap in cardiovascular mortality rates between individuals with and without diabetes.

More than 463 million adults worldwide have diabetes, according to the International Diabetes Federation. Adults with diabetes have a two to three fold increased risk of heart attacks and strokes compared to adults who do not have the condition, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). "Our study found that the rate of cardiovascular complications among individuals with diabetes has declined over the past two decades," said senior author Timothy ME Davis from the University of Western Australia.



HIGH BP DRUGS SAFE FOR COVID-19 PATIENTS

Despite concerns expressed by some experts, common high blood pressure drugs did not increase the risk of contracting COVID-19 or of developing severe disease in a new study of 12,594 patients.

Published online in the New England Journal of Medicine journal, the study was launched in response to a joint statement issued by the American Heart Association, the American College of Cardiology, and the Heart Failure Society of America.

It called for research to answer a question: do high blood pressure (antihypertensive) drugs worsen COVID-19 patient outcomes? Led by researchers from New York University (NYU) Grossman School of Medicine, the study found no links between treatment with four drug classes, angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs), beta blockers, or calcium channel blockers, and increased likelihood of a positive test for COVID-19.



Thought of facing Lee took my sleep: Rohit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The thought of standing up to Brett Lee's thunderbolts had taken Rohit Sharma's "sleep away" when he first started out but among the current lot, Josh Hazlewood is one speedster the India swash-buckler "doesn't want to face" in Tests.

Rohit said he will have to be mentally prepared to face Hazlewood when India tour Australia for a Test series later this year, provided the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

Asked to name the toughest pacers he has faced so far, Rohit said, "One bowler is Brett Lee because he didn't let me sleep the previous night on my first tour to Australia in 2007, as I was thinking how to play this bowler who bowls in excess of 150 kmph."

"In 2007, Brett Lee was at his peak. I used to watch him closely and noticed that he was consistently bowling at the speed of around 150-155 kmph. The thought of a youngster like me facing that kind of speed took away my sleep," Rohit said of the former Australian speed merchant on Star Sports' 'Cricket Connected'.

Since making his debut in 2007 as a precocious talent, Rohit has gone on to become one of the world's most prolific batsmen, and his exploits in limited overs cricket are second to none.

Rohit has racked up 29 ODI hundreds and six centuries in Test cricket, besides



"IN 2007, BRETT LEE WAS AT HIS PEAK. I USED TO WATCH HIM CLOSELY AND NOTICED THAT HE WAS CONSISTENTLY BOWLING AT THE SPEED OF AROUND 150-155 KMPH. THE THOUGHT OF A YOUNGSTER LIKE ME FACING THAT KIND OF SPEED TOOK AWAY MY SLEEP."

four three-figure mark in the T20 Internationals.

"Currently, someone whom I don't want to face in Test cricket would be Josh Hazlewood because he's disciplined and does not move away from that length. He does not give you loose balls," he said.

Among the retired lot, Rohit said South African pace great Dale Steyn has also given him nightmares because of his ability to swing the ball at great speed.

"I have two retired favourite bowlers who I never wanted to face, one was Brett Lee and the other was Dale Steyn. I never wanted to face Steyn because playing pace and swing at the same time was a nightmare, it was just unreal."

Rohit said he continues to face quality bowlers in the present day with Hazlewood being among the best.

"I have watched him enough to understand that. I know for a fact that if I have to go to Australia to play a Test, then I have to be mentally prepared to be disciplined while facing Josh," said the scorer of three double hundreds in ODIs.

Rohit has edge over Kohli in white-ball format: Gambhir

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India opener Gautam Gambhir feels that Rohit Sharma has been able to make more impact in white ball cricket compared to Virat Kohli despite Indian skipper's staggering statistics in shorter formats.

Gambhir, however, believes that Kohli will end up scoring more runs than Rohit.

"... For me white-ball cricket is all about impact. Kohli will end up getting many more runs than Rohit, and Kohli is among the greatest right now, but Rohit has an edge over Kohli because of the impact he has," Gambhir told Sports Tak, according to India Today website.

"I think he (Rohit) is the best white-ball cricketer in the world right now. He is not the greatest overall but at the moment he is the best. He is the only player to have hit 3 ODI double hundreds, 5 World Cup hundreds (in one edition) and he is also the only player, who once gets past 100-run mark, people say that he missed a double century."

Talking further about Kohli and Rohit, the 2011 World Cup winner said, "It is very difficult to compare both of them. Virat Kohli is unbelievable. His stats prove that."

"But when your reputation is such that when you get out after a hundred, people say he has missed out on double hundred, that speaks volumes about you."

The 33-year-old Rohit has



scored 9115 runs from 224 ODIs at an average of 49.27 at a strike rate of 88.92. He has 29 hundreds and 43 fifties to his name. In T20Is, Rohit has scored 2273 runs from 108 matches at an average of 32.62 and a strike rate of 138.78.

The 31-year-old Kohli, on the other hand, has scored 11867 runs from 248 ODIs at an average of 59.33 at a strike rate of 93.25. He has scored 43 centuries and 58 half centuries. Kohli has also scored 2794 runs from 82 T20Is at an average of 50.80 and a strike rate of 138.24.

The 38-year-old Gambhir, now a BJP Member of Parliament, gave credit to Mahendra Singh Dhoni for Rohit's successful career.

"Where Rohit is today, it is because of MS Dhoni. One good thing about MS was that he always kept Rohit in the talks, even if he was not part of the team, he was always part of the group. He never let him get sidelined," Gambhir said.

It's the backing of captain that makes or breaks a player, Gambhir said.

"You can talk about the selection committee and team management, but if you do not have the backing from your captain then it is all useless. Everything is in the hands of the captain. How MS Dhoni had backed Rohit Sharma over a period of time, I do not think any player has been given such support."

IPL is where I get most goosebumps: Russell

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

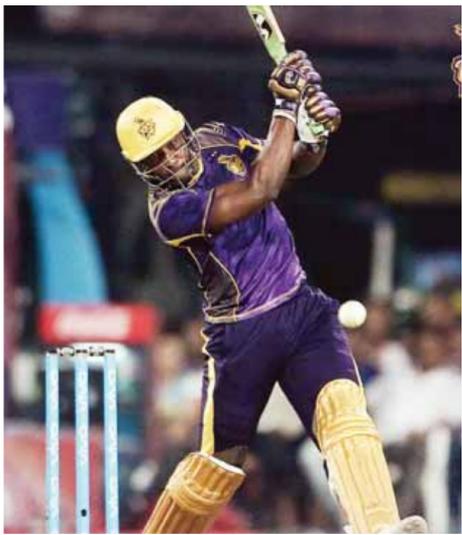
Big-hitting West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell says playing for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL is where he gets the "most goosebumps" and wants to remain in that side till his very last game in the league.

The 32-year-old was speaking to KKR's official 'Knights Unplugged' online show. The Jamaican is currently at home as the IPL has been suspended indefinitely owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Let me confess something, IPL is where I get the most goosebumps. I get that in CPL (Caribbean Premier League) as well but when it comes to playing in IPL, especially Eden Gardens, there is no comparison," Russell said referring to his team's home ground in Kolkata.

"...The welcome I get, that's love. It puts pressure on me but it's good pressure," he added.

Russell said the Eden crowd has been supportive towards him even when he has-



that this will be my last IPL. I have been at KKR for six seasons and I enjoyed every bit of it," he said.

"I know even if I fail two games straight, when I come out to bat for the third game, it is the same deafening reaction I will get from the crowd. It's always a welcoming thing," he said.

Hopeful of playing in the IPL some time this year, Russell also spoke about dealing with being away from his new-born daughter and wife. Both were in Miami when the coronavirus-forced travel restrictions came into force globally.

"She (his daughter) and Jassym, they are both in Miami. I stay connected to them and talk to them. I wish I could have them here, but with all these travel restric-

"It's not really a situation anyone would want to be in. This is affecting the world, it's affecting me, preventing me from hitting sixes. Hope this thing calms down in a month or two and we can go back to normal life again."

n't exactly delivered and that's why it's the one place, he would like to call it quits as and when

he does. "I would love to be at KKR until that moment when I say

Sweat and saliva aren't big requirements in white-ball cricket: Unadkat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There is a raging debate on whether the use of sweat and saliva should be banned once cricket resumes after the COVID-19 pandemic but seamer Jaydev Unadkat feels that these components won't make much of a difference with white ball.

"I think white ball won't be a problem as a whole. Even in ODIs, you will be using two new balls 25 overs each. Reverse swing has never been a big factor in white-ball cricket. Even the new ball doesn't require any sweat or saliva as far as white ball is concerned," Unadkat told PTI during an interaction.

The Ranji Trophy-winning Saurashtra captain said the reason behind that is that the quote of white lacquer requires little or no sweat or saliva for swing.

"White lacquer remains shiny even if you just rub it on your trousers while for red ball, the red lacquer and the red leather demands that we shine it more with saliva and sweat," the left-arm seamer said.

That's the reason, he feels, that in limited over contests, it will be a lesser risk for bowlers and can be started before one gets to the Test and first-class games.



"If we are starting with white-ball contests, we will surely have an advantage as saliva and sweat are as big a factor as it could be in red-ball cricket."

Even for red-ball cricket, Unadkat feels that precautions will be necessary only if cricket starts before the pandemic have subsided completely.

"If we start closed doors, then probably certain precautions will be mandatory." Unadkat says that a prolonged break also means that he will be on even keel with

some of the other bowlers who would be vying for their places in the Indian team for the World T20.

In fact, had the IPL started on March 29, Unadkat would have barely got three weeks rest after a gruelling domestic season where he carried the burden of Saurashtra bowling.

"To be honest, the big break evens out a lot of things as far as team selection is concerned. A lot will depend on who can carry the form through the break and who can come out sooner."

"You can't really judge now as you don't know how big the break will be. Even if I don't get match time sooner, if we get practice time sooner, it won't take much time to get back the rhythm."

While remaining fit has been a requirement, Unadkat has taken time out to pursue another vocation, which is learning guitar.

It was his fiancée Rinny who encouraged him to take up online guitar classes along with her.

"I had done a few classes in the past but then lost touch a couple of years back. Luckily my fiancée is also a guitar fan and has taken lessons in the past and both of us decided to enrol for online classes."

World Test C'ship points system is ridiculous: Holding

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

West Indies fast bowling great Michael Holding has termed the World Test Championship's points system as "ridiculous", where some of the Tests will be rendered inconsequential once teams realise that they can't finish in top two in the points table.

As per the current points system, the value for each Test match win in a two-match series is 60 points a game. However, if it's a five-

match series, the value of a Test match win is reduced to 24. So basically, a team can gain up to 120 points from a series, regardless of the number of matches.

The top two then qualify for the final.

The Test Championship, which is scheduled to finish with a final at Lord's in June 2021, was introduced by the ICC last year in a bid to revive bilateral Test cricket.

"It doesn't work," Holding told Wisden Cricket Monthly during a round

table when asked if the Test championship was achieving what it was designed for.

"First of all the points system is ridiculous. You can't play five Test matches and get the same amount of points if you play two Test matches."

"And secondly, at some point you're going to have teams who know they can't get to the final and so those Test matches aren't going to be all that entertaining. People know it's just another game."

Sports Ministry plans phase-wise reopening of camps: Rijiju

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday said his ministry is devising a plan for phase-wise resumption of national camps for Olympic-bound athletes by the end of this month.

Rijiju said the coronavirus-forced nationwide lockdown, which has been extended till May 17, forced his ministry to delay the resumption of the training camps at Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres. The lockdown was earlier meant to end on May 3.

"The camps will start in a phase-wise manner. First we will start training in NIS Patiala and SAI, Bengaluru where athletes are based currently...By the end of this month training is expected to start in Bengaluru and Patiala," Rijiju said at FICCI's webinar titled 'Corona & Sports: The Champions Speak'.

"The camps will be for those sports which have qualified for Olympics or the sports whose Olympic qualification is in future," he said...We will relax things partially looking at the Olympics," he added.

The national camps were suspended in mid-March when the COVID-19 cases began rising in the country.

De Bruyne believes PL will play to end

AFF ■ BRUSSELS

Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne believes the Premier League season will be finished despite the coronavirus pandemic "because the financial aspect is far too important."

"My feeling is that we may be able to train again within two weeks. The government wants to restart football as soon as possible to give people something. I think this season will be finished," De Bruyne told Belgian daily Het Laatste Nieuws.



"The financial aspect is far too important in the Premier League. If the season is not finished, it will cause serious problems," he added.

Clubs were presented with the league's "Project Restart" plans at a meeting on Friday and were told the remaining 92 matches of the 2019-2020 season must be played at neutral venues.

De Bruyne also said he was optimistic about City's participation in next season's Champions League. UEFA has banned the club from European competition for the next two years for "seri-

ous breaches" of financial fair-play rules.

"The club told us they're going to appeal and that they're almost certain to get their way. I'm waiting to see what happens, but I trust my club," said De Bruyne.

The 28-year-old Belgium international admitted he would be forced to consider his City future if the ban was upheld.

"Once we know more, I will make a decision. Two years without playing in Europe would be long but in the case of one year I might see," he said.

Italy gives Serie A clubs hope with training ruling

AFF ■ ROME

Italy offered Serie A clubs a glimmer of hope on Sunday after it said footballers could take part in individual training sessions as the strictest coronavirus lockdown measures begin to ease.

The interior ministry's go-ahead for players to attend their club's training facilities offered fans in the football mad country the first sign that the 2019-20 season might yet be saved.

Some of the bigger clubs with title aspirations from the less affected regions have been talking about going back to training for weeks.

But Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte only allowed teams to resume organised activities on May 18 — a date that might push back this season's completion into the start of the next.

Several regions that have avoided the worst of the pandemic have taken matters into their own hands and allowed clubs to

open their facilities for players to train on their own.

Teams such as Napoli and Parma have followed the lead of Lazio — trailing leaders Juventus by just a point — and gave the nod for players to return.

They insisted that they were not breaking the rules because Conte has allowed all Italians to start exercising in open public places starting Monday.

The interior ministry bowed to the seemingly inevitable on Sunday and agreed that teams can open their facilities to players for training.

"Athletes, professional or otherwise, of non-individual sports are allowed — just as every citizen — to exercise in public or private areas," the interior ministry said.

But players must "respect social distancing rules of at least two metres and the ban on public gatherings."

Pogba using lockdown to prepare for return

AFF ■ LONDON

Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba is using the coronavirus lockdown to step up his return to fitness after an injury-plagued season.

Pogba had made just eight appearances for United this season before the health crisis forced the suspension of the Premier League in March.

The French World Cup winner hasn't played a single match in 2020 due to his persistent ankle problems.

His last appearance came in a December 26 win over Newcastle, but Pogba has been keeping fit during the virus break



HIS LAST APPEARANCE CAME IN A DECEMBER 26 WIN OVER NEWCASTLE, BUT POGBA HAS BEEN KEEPING FIT DURING THE VIRUS BREAK AND HOPES TO BE READY IF THE PREMIER LEAGUE CAN RETURN IN THE SUMMER

and hopes to be ready if the Premier League can return in the summer. "I have a little home

gym in my house," Pogba told United's website.

"I can do some training, some running, some bike, go outside and do some things with the ball. I am just keeping busy and keeping healthy."

"We have got to stay motivated, there is no other choice. It is a period and we don't know until when it will be like this, but I still have goals in my head and one day hopefully this (pandemic) will stop."

"And then we have to get back on the pitch, so we have to be ready."

"For myself, I have been out for a long time as well, so for me I just want to come back playing football."