

**NATION 4**  
14 MIGRANTS FOUND CRAMMED  
INSIDE CEMENT MIXER OF TRUCK

**MONEY 6**  
RBI GOVERNOR MEETS  
MD OF BANKS

**SPECIAL 7**  
LET'S  
MEET

VIJAYAWADA, SUNDAY MAY 3, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



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INDIA

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## JEWELLER TURNS VEGETABLE VENDOR TO SURVIVE LOCKDOWN

A jeweller for 25 years, Hukumchand Soni would not have imagined in his wildest dreams there would come a time when he will have to sell vegetables to earn a living. But then these are no ordinary times. His shop-counter, which once remained covered with expensive ornaments, is now occupied by green vegetables and the jewellery scale now weighs potatoes and onions. The GP Jewellery Shop in Jaipur's Ram Nagar has undergone a radical transformation to adapt to the new set of customers who visit it daily. It's been four days since I started selling vegetables. This is the only way I can survive (the lockdown), Soni told.



## HIMACHAL ALLOWS LIQUOR VENDS TO OPEN FROM MONDAY

The Himachal Pradesh government on Saturday allowed liquor vendors to operate in the state from May 4, the day the third phase of the coronavirus lockdown begins. Himachal Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Bhardwaj told reporters that the decision was taken during a state cabinet meeting on Saturday. Giving some relaxations, the Union government had on Friday extended the lockdown by two weeks till May 17. The second phase of the nationwide lockdown will end on Sunday. Bhardwaj said it was decided not to charge any licence fee from liquor vendors for the period (March 22 to May 3) these remained closed due to the coronavirus lockdown.



## NEARLY HALF OF GLOBAL WORKFORCE AT RISK OF LOSING LIVELIHOODS: ILO

Nearly 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy – that is nearly half of the global workforce – stand in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has warned, adding that more than 436 million enterprises face high risks of serious disruption globally. In its latest update on global job losses, the ILO said that the drop in working hours in the current (second) quarter of 2020 is expected to be significantly worse than previously estimated. Compared to pre-crisis levels (Q4 2019), a 10.5 per cent deterioration is now expected, equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs (assuming a 48-hour working week), according to the 'ILO Monitor' third edition: COVID-19 and the world of work.



## ODISHA WARNS OF LICENCE CANCELLATION IF HOSPITALS DENY SERVICE TO NON-COVIDS

The Odisha government has issued a warning to all hospitals and clinics, particularly those in the private sector, to ensure essential critical services to non-Covid-19 patients or face cancellation of their licenses, official sources said on Saturday. It has come to the notice of the authorities that some hospitals in the private sector are hesitating to provide critical services such as dialysis, blood transfusion, chemotherapy and institutional deliveries to their regular patients, the health and family welfare department said in an order on Friday. "All private hospitals and clinics are directed that every non-COVID patients should keep a designated isolation unit to accommodate critically ill suspected COVID patients until their condition is stabilised," the order said.



# AP tests more than most nations, TS lags behind

MIR QUADIR ALI  
VIJAYAWADA

Health department officials on Saturday told Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan that the state is conducting an average of 2,030 tests per million population for Covid-19. If the officials figures are genuine, and there is no reason to doubt them, it means that Andhra Pradesh is carrying out more tests than 50 other countries in the world.



In comparison, Maharashtra, with a far larger population than Andhra Pradesh, has conducted just over 1,51,000 tests by Friday. Uttar Pradesh, the most populated state in the country, has conducted only 82,000 + tests by Friday. The Andhra Pradesh Health Department had ramped up testing across the state after importing one lakh rapid test kits (RTKs) from South Korea in mid-April. From then on, Andhra Pradesh has reported a gradual increase in the number of positive cases, anywhere between 60 to 75 per day. Special Chief Secretary (Health) K S Jawahar Reddy had said that Andhra Pradesh plans to ramp up testing of Coronavirus cases to 17,000 per day. Compared to this, Telangana state has more or less decided to test only Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) patients. Though this decision

SOME OF THE 50 COUNTRIES AP HAS OVERTAKEN	
HIGHEST TEST COUNTRIES	
Japan	1,377
Brazil	1,597
Philippines	1,050
Sri Lanka	1,099
Argentina	1,361
LOWEST TEST COUNTRIES	
Nigeria	76
Algeria	148
Indonesia	395
Mexico	707
Egypt	879
<b>India</b>	<b>708</b>

has not been officially communicated to health workers, they have been told that they would require the permission of the director of Telangana Health and Medical Education to test anyone other than SARI patients.

# Row over TTD chairman's darshan during lockdown

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Controversy erupted on Saturday, a day after TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy had darshan of Lord Balaji at Tirumala along with his family members on the occasion of his birthday. Social media soon erupted, with the TDP taking the lead, crying hoarse about violation of lockdown and that of Tirumala temple rules by none other than the TTD Chairman. In Tirumala, darshan of the deity has been suspended in view of the Coronavirus threat. The priests have been conducting the various rituals without devotees. It was not only the darshan by Subba Reddy and his family



ly that incensed some, it was also violating the lockdown rules to reach the temple. Under normal circumstances, the TTD chairman having darshan is no big deal. But, at a time when darshan of deities in all temples across the

country has been suspended, Subba Reddy's decision to have darshan along with family members has drawn attention. The chairman and TTD board members have special privileges but they are applicable only at certain times alone, netizens said. TDP national general secretary Lokesh Naidu responding on the issue through his Twitter account, questioned how could the temple remain open for Subba Reddy and his family members while the common man was not allowed anywhere near the premises. When the seven hills wore deserted look, is it right to celebrate a birthday by a relative of former CM YS Rajasekhara Reddy in the presence of deity, he asked.



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Coronavirus lockdown is an exam we have to pass: Naidu  
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Bank transfer of 2nd installment of Rs 500 from tomorrow  
**6**

**TODAY**  
**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Kartik and Shukla Paksha Panchangam  
Tithi : Dashami: 09:08 am  
Nakshatram: Puna Phalguni: 09:42 pm  
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)  
Rahukalam: 04:58 pm – 06:33 am  
Yamagandam: 12:13 pm – 01:48 pm  
Varjyam: 07:01 am – 08:29 am, 07:00 pm – 05:38 am  
Gulika: 03:23 pm – 04:58 pm  
Good Time: (to start any important work)  
Amritakalam: 03:50 pm – 05:18 pm  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:47 am – 12:38 pm  
**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**  
Forecast: Sunny  
Temp: 41/28  
Humidity: 51%  
Sunrise: 05:49 am  
Sunset: 06:37 pm  
Current Weather Conditions Updated May 02, 2020 5:00 PM

# Every village secretariat to have quarantine facility

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government will set up one lakh beds in the state with quarantine facilities that can accommodate 10 to 15 patients simultaneously at every village secretariat across the state. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy gave instructions to this effect during a review meeting held here on Saturday. The issue came up during a discussion on the safe return of people from the state stranded in various places and measures to be taken after their return. The Chief Minister said that Anganwadis, Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA), and Panchayat Raj should collaboratively implement the Covid-19 preventive measures across the state. He directed officials to modify at least 500 RTC buses into mobile vans for the delivery of daily essential goods and equip buses with freezers to transport perishable goods like milk, curd, eggs, and fruits.



## CM seeks MEA help to bring back Telugus stranded abroad

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Saturday wrote to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar seeking his help in bringing back non-resident Indians (NRIs) from the state currently stranded in the Gulf countries due to the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown. The Chief Minister requested Jaishankar to make necessary arrangements for the evacuation and repatriation of Telugu expatriates currently stranded in countries like Kuwait and Dubai. Jagan sought to inform the foreign minister that the registration process for the return of the Indians has been initiated in Kuwait and Dubai. But most of the Telugu people from Andhra Pradesh are facing difficulties to fulfil the process of registration, the Chief Minister stated in his letter. Jagan urged Jaishankar to direct the embassies of these countries to address the issues pertaining to registration and help the Telugu people have a hassle-free exit from those countries.

## 62 more positive cases detected in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With 62 more people testing positive in the last 24 hours, the number of Covid-19 infections in the state rose to 1,525, according to a health bulletin released on Saturday. The number of active cases in the state was put at 1,051, as 441 people have made a complete recovery from the virus and have been discharged from hospitals while 33 have succumbed to the infection. The discharge rate was put at 27.55 per cent, higher than the country's average of 26 per cent. Meanwhile, the number of new cases is also on the decline compared to last week that was around 80 cases per day has come to 60.

1,525	positive cases reported so far
441	patients discharged after recovery
1,051	active cases
33	deaths reported in the State

# AP High court gets three new judges

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court Justice Jitendra Kumar Maheswari administered the oath of office to Justices Boppudi Krishna Mohan, Kanchi Reddy Suresh Reddy and Kanneganti Lalithakumari as judges of the court in Court Hall No 1 here on Saturday. President Ram Nath Kovind appointed the three, thereby taking the total number of judges in the court to 21, including the Chief Justice. Earlier, Registrar General in-charge B Rajsekhar read out the appointment order issued by President of India Ram Nath Kovind appointing the trio as judges to the AP High Court. Justice Krishnamohan, Justice Suresh Reddy and Justice Lalitha Kumari alias Lalitha signed the roster soon after they were sworn in. The ceremony was attended by senior advocates, judges and family members of newly-appointed judges and others.



## Naidu slinging mud on Govt out of jealousy, says Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Advisor to the State Government Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Saturday charged former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu with slinging mud on the state government out of jealousy for its effective functioning.



# Five Vijayawada journalists show Coronavirus symptoms

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Five journalists from Vijayawada city were found to have symptoms of Covid-19 in a screening test jointly organised by the Indian Medical Association and Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists here recently. A good number of journalists and their family members attended the camp to undergo

a screening test. The doctors collected the samples and sent them to the lab in the government hospital. The reports are awaited. "Symptoms were observed in the five journalists," said Dr Tummalala Kartik, secretary of the city unit of the IMA. However, the comprehensive PCR tests should be conducted once again before confirming that they are infected, Dr

Kartik said. Representatives of TV channels were among the victims, he said and added once if it is confirmed that they are infected, they would be shifted to a government hospital for treatment. Dr Kartik said that the journalists need not worry about Covid-19 since the best of healthcare facilities are available in the city.

# Patnaik seeks help from AP for Odias' safe return

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Saturday sought cooperation from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to ensure safe return of Odias stranded in the southern states due to the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

Patnaik made the request during separate video conference with Chief Ministers of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh BS Yediyurappa and Y S Jaganmohan Reddy respectively. Union Petroleum and Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also took part in the discussions.

# Silent Covid patient killer hypoxia worries doctors

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The emergence of a worrying new trend, as defined by hitherto unseen new symptoms and factors, are leaving doctors treating Covid-19 infected patients in despair. Doctors are noticing that in spite of low blood oxygen saturation levels, patients are not showing any signs of breathlessness. Pulmonologists describe this condition as 'silent hypoxia'. Describing the new challenge, Civil Surgeon and



Residential Medical Officer (Retd) at Government TB and Chest Hospital, Visakhapatnam, Dr SA Bhavani says it is basically

reduced oxygen levels in blood cells. "This leads to resistance to treatment. Since Covid-19 affects the lungs and the respiratory system, it is common for patients to experience hypoxia. The virus silently causes injury to air sacs in the lungs thus blocking oxygen from reaching the cells. Such patients need assisted breathing and need to be taken under hospital care urgently. If doctors recognise silent hypoxia early enough, it can be treated with oxygen therapy (through nasal tubes, a face mask, or a tube placed in

the windpipe)," Dr Bhavani said. Doctors say that normal saturation level shows oxygen level in the body at 95 per cent. For Covid-19 patients, the oxygen level can drop to 60 to 50 per cent resulting drying up of oxygen supply to different organs and eventually organ failures happen. This is the reason why most of Covid-19 deaths don't happen due to what doctors call acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) - commonly breathlessness - or pneumonia.

# Are Telangana and Andhra veering towards herd immunity?



After a good run initially when it earned encomiums from different quarters, the Telangana government is fast yielding its place among the leaders fighting against coronavirus effectively. This trend may not be reflected in the actual numbers, but the under-testing and consequently under-reporting of cases have dismayed the medical fraternity.

This is in contrast with its swift footwork in designating Gandhi Hospital as a speciality institution for Covid-19, creating infrastructure elsewhere, establishing a tertiary care hospital in a record time of 15 days at Gachibowli sta-

dium and, above all, remaining one step ahead of the Centre in enforcing lockdowns. Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu was himself the object of open praise for his lucid articulation of the core issues and for laying down a clear-headed policy framework.

Moreover, Telangana has been priding itself on following WHO guidelines and sticking to ICMR's protocols. Ever since it declared novel coronavirus as a pandemic, WHO's mantra has been 'testing, testing and testing'. For Health Minister Etela Rajender to now reject the necessity of rapid or random testing, ostensibly because the guidelines are unclear, constitutes a reversal and may put lives to risk.

Many justifications are being given for limiting tests to SARI (Severe Acute Respiratory Infection) cases

**Some critics of India even allege that for every recorded case, nearly 60 others may have gone unrecorded. These were either asymptomatic or the patients had symptoms but did not require hospitalisation as they were less than 40 years of age**

and diluting the excellent work done earlier in contact tracing and identifying secondary contacts. This new path is ridden with risks as new evidences are emerging about the asymptomatic nature of the virus, certain hitherto unknown symptoms like loss of taste and smell and sudden death.

The Government Maternity Hospital in Telaburji witnessed the sudden cardiac failure of a patient who was stable a little while earlier. Five other atypical deaths in this

hospital highlight the importance of testing to catch asymptomatic cases. As the Centre is easing the lockdown in each phase, more testing is needed. This provides data without which we simply cannot respond to the threat.

Tap any friend or relative residing in the US or UK and you will find their response to India's low number of cases and deaths typical and unanimous. "This is because of poor rate of testing in your country". This is borne out by



**S NAGESH KUMAR**  
Former Resident Editor,  
The Hindu

statistics. As on May 1, India tested 0.65 samples per thousand people, UK 11.23 and USA 18.82.

It would be stating the obvious to say that testing needs to increase as the virus spreads. Some critics of India even allege that for every recorded case, nearly 60 others may have gone unrecorded. These

were either asymptomatic or the patients had symptoms but did not require hospitalisation as they were less than 40 years of age. The satisfaction expressed by the Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) over Telangana's strategy of containment by conducting just 19,278 samples till April 28 has surprised doctors.

Neighbouring Andhra Pradesh is sailing in the same boat but its helmsman, Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, has got other priorities too like shifting the State capital and holding elections to local bodies, policies that weaken the war against coronavirus. While the rest of India was reeling with fresh cases, AP had virtually no caseload until the sudden spurt now.

AP conducted over 95,000 tests, but factors like poor observance of social distanc-

ing norms, lack of will to stop religious gatherings, and political rallies have spoiled its copybook. AP today has more cases and deaths than Telangana. Jagan seems to have come to the conclusion that herd immunity is the only way out of the crisis as the vaccine may take a year or more to reach the market.

Without being explicit about its intentions, the Telangana government seems to be favouring a similar route of herd immunity, though for different reasons like cost-cutting and the countering the economic cost of the lockdown which will remain in place for another fortnight.

The topmost priority of the Centre and the States now is to consolidate the gains achieved from the 40-day-long lockdown. These are considerable. The doubling rate of cases has increased from four days to 11 days, the

recovery rate has improved to a heartening 25 per cent, the curve of rising cases is not exponential though not flat either and the six weeks' time has been well utilised for putting in place an enviable medical infrastructure. Unacceptable mistakes have been made like neglecting the plight of crores of migrant labourers and homeless people.

But, from the health point of view, a common national policy is needed without individual States pursuing fancy ideas like herd immunity. The United Kingdom is a classic example of how the policy of herd immunity failed. Prince Charles as well as Prime Minister Boris Johnson were laid low by the virus. We need a model different from the UK and where safeguards are in place to protect the vulnerable sections.

## Migrant workers bear brunt of lockdown

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The world came to a standstill due to the lockdown. Many people, including students, workers, tourists et al, were stranded in their respective places, as there is no transportation. Especially, migrant workers are feeling the heat and appealing to the State governments to arrange transport for returning to their respective States though the governments were providing amenities.

In this backdrop, Krishna District Joint Collector K Madhavilatha submitted a report to the State government stating that 6,670 migrant workers from various States are eking out their livelihood in Krishna district.

During a video conference with Principal Secretary to Higher Education Satish Chandar and Principal Secretary to Transport Department T Krishnababu, the Joint Collector said that 3,122 from Maharashtra, 452 from Madhya Pradesh are



■ Since the farm work was completed, they wish to get back to their respective States though they were provided with shelter to stay, she said. Farmers have paid wages to these labourers. It would be better if they were provided transport, she suggested.

■ Krishna District Joint Collector said 54 workers from Tamil Nadu, 523 from Telangana, 137 from Uttarakhand, 72 from Karnataka, 687 from Odisha, 555 from Uttar Pradesh, 266 from Bihar, 56 from Rajasthan, 20 from Gujarat, 199 from Chhattisgarh, 22 from Chandigarh, 361 from West Bengal, 65 from Jharkhand, 23 from Assam, 13 from Delhi, eight from Kerala, 452 from Madhya Pradesh, 3,122 from Maharashtra and one each from Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab are working in the State.

working in chilli fields of Tiruvuru, Chatrayi and Gampalagudem in the district. Since the farm work was completed, they wish to get back to their respective States though they were provided with shelter to stay, she said. Farmers have paid wages to these labourers. It would be better if

they were provided transport, she suggested.

T Krishna Babu instructed officials to prepare a micro report, which would be taken to the notice of the Maharashtra Covid Control Room by the State Covid nodal officer Arja Srikanth.

She also said that 54 work-

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from Assam, 13 from Delhi, eight from Kerala, 452 from Madhya Pradesh, 3,122 from Maharashtra and one each from Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab are working in the State.

She said that Odisha workers are working in an industry and though they are given good facility to stay, they wish to go back to their State. Satish Chandar instructed officials to prepare an action plan to send back migrant workers to their States.

Krishna Babu suggested that migrant workers should be divided into four categories—migrant workers, pilgrims, students and others—while preparing the action plan. Additional Joint Collector Mohan Kumar, MEPMA Project Director N Prakash Rao, district industries centre general manager Sudhakar, crime branch DSP Ch Murali, migrant workers nodal officer, social welfare deputy director Saraswati and others were present.

## Cigarettes, gutka cost a bomb

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Cigarettes and gutka are being sold at exorbitant prices in Vizag as those who have the habit of smoking cigarettes and chewing pan are ready to buy at any cost.

While the small grocery shops (kirana shops) and some milk outlets with some grocery items are the selling cigarettes since the shops meant for pan and cigarette remained shut for over a month due to the Covid-19 lockdown, these retailers are selling the cigarette packets at Rs 80 to Rs 120 more than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) citing a huge gap between demand and supply.

"I developed the habit of smoking cigarettes during my college days and continue even today. Due to the lockdown, I am shelling out Rs 250 for a Gold Flake Kings pack of 10, which was around Rs 165 before the lockdown," said K Akash.



Gutka or Betel Quid prices have shot up to three to four times over the past one month. Prior to March 31, the rates were reasonably priced by the black-marketers at one-and-a-half times the usual black market price per pouch or sachet. After the first extension, the black market prices of gutka, Khaini and tobacco-masala doubled and have gone up

steadily over every week. By the end of May, the chewing tobacco is now being priced at three times the market rate.

"Before the lockdown, I paid Rs 5 per sachet of gutka and now paying Rs 30 for the sachet. With no other option, I have cut down my consumption from 10 packets to 5 packets in a day," said a regular consumer P Naresh Kumar.

## SCR transports record food grains

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The importance given by the South Central Railway (SCR) during these critical times to ensure uninterrupted supply of food grains to various States has resulted in the Zone being able to transport almost six times more food grains during April compared to last year.

Towards fulfilling this endeavour, SCR General Manager Gajanan Mallya has chalked out plans for effective utilisation of freight and parcel trains mainly focusing on food grains traffic. Accordingly, South Central Railway officials took proactive steps to coordinating and assisting the FCI, local authorities and private traders for movement of food grains by trains in addition, implementation of innovative measures like running of Jaikisan trains.



Gajanan Mallya, SCR General Manager

All these efforts resulted in the Zone loading a record 457 No of food grain rakes and transporting 12.3 lakh tonnes during April, which is almost more than six times loading done during the same period in April 2019. These food grain rakes were loaded from different segments of the Zone.

Gajanan Mallya expressed his happiness for the collective efforts of officers and staff in transporting a record number of food grain rakes to balance the food supply across the nation in the hour of need.

## RT-PCR kit for Covid-19 testing developed by CSIR-IICT

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research-India Institute of Chemical Technology (CSIR-IICT) on Saturday announced that it has developed indigenous RT-PCR kits for Covid-19 testing in partnership with Genomix Biotech.

CSIR-IICT developed an affordable reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) kit indigenously using recombinant technology for production of several enzymes used in the kit and optimised the reagent conditions to match the regulatory requirements.

Genomix Biotech will optimise the kit for COVID-19 diagnosis by adding the Taqman probes. CSIR-IICT and Genomix Biotech plan to approach Indian Council of



Medical Research (ICMR) or its recognised laboratory for validation to launch the product in a couple of weeks.

Hyderabad-based IICT said that this collaboration will enable production of affordable quality RT-PCR kit and help meet the huge demand of the country during this COVID-19 pandemic. The availability of RT-PCR

kits in the market has serious limitations as most of them are currently imported. Furthermore, the RT-PCR kit developed by CSIR-IICT can also be used in various other disease diagnostics of humans, animals and plants. This technology is also expected to bring down the overall cost of RT-PCR based diagnosis in the country.

## Pension arrears to be disbursed to beneficiaries

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Panchayat Raj principal secretary Gopalakrishna Dwivedi on Saturday made it clear that the state government will disburse pensions to those who were unable to collect it in March and April on account of lockdown.

Speaking to the media here, Dwivedi said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has issued orders in this regard. Pensioners from the state who have been stranded in other states need not worry about their pension as the government has taken measures to ensure disbursement to all, he said. In spite of Coronavirus crisis in the state, the state government has taken disbursement of pension among the beneficiaries as a challenge and was successful in meeting the goal, Dwivedi said.

The state government is handing over pension to the beneficiaries on the first day of



Gopalakrishna Dwivedi

**Pensioners from the state who were stranded in other states need not worry as the govt has taken measures to ensure disbursement to all**

every month with the help of the volunteer network. From Friday morning onwards, the volunteers started distributing pension in their allotted 50 houses.

## CM releases anthology on Budaraju Radhakrishna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A compilation of Telugu poetry on linguist, lexicon writer and mentor for scores of Telugu journalists Budaraju Radhakrishna entitled 'Guru Smaranalo' was released by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at the camp office here on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister lauded Budaraju penning many books and lexicon useful for journalists. He received a doctorate from Andhra University for his thesis entitled 'Historical Grammar of Early Telugu Inscriptions'.

The compilation of poetry was brought out by P Madhusudan, Muni Suresh Pillai and S Ramu, who call themselves as 'Bura Brundam'.

# Vaccinate everybody by 2021, say experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Population genetic analyses of SARS-CoV-2 genomes have indicated that these viruses evolved into two major types (designated L and S), which show nearly complete linkage across the viral strains sequenced till date.

But with mutations, there are other strains of this virus, which may have different virulence. Therefore, it is essential to vaccinate everybody by 2021 before the virus acquires any significant mutation, say experts.

Neha Gupta, consultant, Department of Infectious Disease, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, said that through genomic sequencing of the virus, researchers have found that Covid-19 is mutating, but most



mutations are silent mutations, and very slowly accumulating.

"This looks like good news for the success of vaccine. So, if we can vaccinate everyone by early 2021, it can build up protective immunity for a couple of years before the virus acquires another significant novel mutation," Gupta said.

Citing US health advisor Anthony Fauci, she said the vaccine may be available by September 2020, but the accessibility to the vaccine may be an

issue. "We know about L&S strains of novel Coronavirus. But now, we know that with mutations, there are various other strains, which have different virulence," added Gupta.

Coronaviruses have been causing problems for a long time and their several versions have been known to trigger common colds. Recently, two types have set off outbreaks of deadly illness: Severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) and Middle East respiratory

**Neha Gupta, consultant, Department of Infectious Disease, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, said that through genomic sequencing of the virus, researchers have found that Covid-19 is mutating, but most mutations are silent mutations, and very slowly accumulating.**

syndrome (Mers).

But, their impact has been placid compared to the menace let loose by the SARS-CoV-2, which led to the Covid-19 pandemic. Responding to a query on how long the protection will last, Neha Rastogi Panda, Senior Resident, Infectious Disease, Department of Medicine & Microbiology, AIIMS, said that it is another big unknown.

"The recent comments pub-

lished in the Lancet Journals state that the best estimate comes from the closely related Coronaviruses and suggests that, in people who had an antibody response, immunity might wane, but it is detectable beyond one year. Immunity against Mers Coronavirus, however, can be detectable for four years," said Rastogi.

She added that human interventions play an important role to select out strains. It can

probably become less aggressive (S-type) over the period of time. However, considering the novelty of this virus and the rate of mutations, it is still unknown and unpredictable.

Citing the study, 'On the origin and continuing evolution of SARS-CoV-2', published in the National Science Review (Oxford Academic), Panda added that the more aggressive L type of Coronavirus was found more in the early stages of Wuhan outbreak, but its frequency decreased due to human intervention.

"The L type might be more aggressive and spread more quickly. On the other hand, the S type, which is evolutionarily older and less aggressive, might have increased in relative frequency due to relatively weaker selective pressure," added Panda.

## A song of hope praising spirit of Indians released

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The HDFC Bank has released 'Hum Haar Nahi Maanenge' (we will not give up), a collaborative song of hope. The song is a tribute to the indomitable spirit of India and millions of Indians, who are standing together to fight against Covid-19 pandemic.

The song was conceptualised as a clarion call to spread hope, positivity and motivation. The powerful, emotional track reminds people that they are together in fight against the virus and will get through it together. The song brings to the fore many moments of kindness, hope, support, courage and care that are shining through in these challenging circumstances.

HDFC Bank will add Rs 500 to the PM-Cares Fund every time this video is shared. It may be recalled that the HDFC Group has donated Rs 150 crore to the PM-Cares Fund.

Tirupati, Khatija Rahman and Abhay Jodhpurkar. Country's premier percussionist Sivamani, sitarist Asad Khan and bass prodigy Mohini Dey are also part of this esteemed project.

The song was conceptualised as a clarion call to spread hope, positivity and motivation. The powerful, emotional track reminds people that they are together in fight against the virus and will get through it together. The song brings to the fore many moments of kindness, hope, support, courage and care that are shining through in these challenging circumstances.

HDFC Bank will add Rs 500 to the PM-Cares Fund every time this video is shared. It may be recalled that the HDFC Group has donated Rs 150 crore to the PM-Cares Fund.

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**CM announces Rs 5 lakh ex gratia to village volunteer**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Saturday announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh to the family of a village volunteer, who breathed her last, while discharging her duty during the lockdown.

Village volunteer was identified as G Anuradha (26) died of heart attack, while distributing old-age pensions at Tumpadu village in Paderu mandal of Vishakhapatnam district.

After learning about the tragic death, the Chief Minister has immediately responded and announced the ex-gratia to the kin of the deceased. He also ordered the Vishakhapatnam District Collector to immediately hand over the amount to the family members. Paderu MLA Kottagulli Bhagya Lakshmi visited the family of Anuradha and handed over Rs 10,000 as immediate financial assistance.

**TRANSPORTATION FOR STRANDED MIGRANTS**

**Kishan says train fare to be Rs 50 irrespective of distance**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The decision to extend the ongoing lockdown till May 17 was taken with the consensus of the Chief Ministers of all the States, disclosed Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy.

He made it clear that all the Chief Ministers had agreed for the extension of the lockdown. He said that they had issued orders to all the State governments for the strict implementation of the lockdown in all the Red Zone areas. He also said that they had asked the State governments to focus on the areas, which are reporting fresh cases.

Speaking to the media in New Delhi on Saturday, Kishan Reddy said that they had framed fresh guidelines to avoid any kind of problems to people due to the lockdown. He said that they had divided the different districts of the country into Red, Orange and Green Zones based on the reports of the State governments.

He said that considering migrant workers problem from a humanitarian angle, he the



Central government had given Rs 12,000 crore to all the States and added that they are plying 300 trains to transport them to their native places.

"Curfew has been imposed in containment zones by controlling the movement of the vehicles. Not a single positive case was registered in 26 districts in the past 28 days. There is no single case for the last 21 days in 40 districts. The government has concentrated on

the areas where new cases are being registered," he informed.

"We framed guidelines providing relaxation to people. There are 2.52 lakh beds and 27,000 ICU beds in Covid-19 hospitals across the nation. "We decided to collect 2.22 lakh PPE kits. We are preparing 30 crore hydroxyl chlorine tablets. We plied six trains on Friday itself to shift the stranded migrant labourers. We will shift the workers, stu-

dents, tourists and pilgrims stranded across the nation to their native places. The nodal officers would identify the persons for shifting. We are running more than 300 trains to shift the migrant labourers from Friday. We will allocate trains demanded by the States. Irrespective of distance, the train ticket will be Rs 50. The State government or the company they are working with will have to pay the fare of train

"Curfew has been imposed in containment zones by controlling the movement of the vehicles. Not a single positive case was registered in 26 districts in the past 28 days. There is no single case for the last 21 days in 40 districts. The Centre has concentrated on the areas where new cases are being registered," Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy disclosed

The Union Minister's office dismissed the rumours of Kishan Reddy being in quarantine. Officials concerned said that the latter is hale and hearty

ticket. In the last 24-hours, 2,290 Corona positive cases were registered across the nation," he said.

Meanwhile, the Union Minister's office on Saturday dismissed the rumours of Kishan Reddy being in quarantine. Officials concerned said that the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs is hale and hearty.

**SALUTING COVID WARRIORS**

**Navy's chopper to shower petals on Covid hospitals**

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Saluting the Corona warriors, a naval helicopter from INS Dega, will shower petals on the hospitals treating Covid patients in Vishakhapatnam. Two Indian Navy ships will also be at anchorage off RK Beach and illuminating from 7.30 pm to midnight on Sunday (May 3).

With these activities, the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) will be joining the Armed Forces across the country to show solidarity with the Corona warriors.

On Sunday morning, Naval Officer-in-Charge (Andhra Pradesh) will be visiting Government TB and Chest Hospital and GITAM Hospital, which are the designated Covid hospitals in Vishakhapatnam and felicitate the medical fraternity for their efforts. This will be followed by a host of events to be organised by units under the ENC to pay tributes to all Corona warriors, including doctors, nurses, other health workers, hygiene and sanitation staff, police personnel and media personnel, who have been risking their lives and relentlessly fighting the Covid and containing the spread of the pandemic.

On Sunday morning, Naval Officer-in-Charge (Andhra Pradesh) will be visiting Government TB and Chest Hospital and GITAM Hospital, which are the designated Covid hospitals in Vishakhapatnam and felicitate the medical fraternity for their efforts

The Navy will also salute the Corona warriors through traditional Naval ceremonies. Two ships of ENC will be at anchorage off the Marina Beach in Chennai to honour and salute these Corona warriors by illuminating and traditional Naval ceremonials

The Navy will also salute the Corona warriors through traditional Naval ceremonies. Two ships of ENC will be at anchorage off the Marina Beach in Chennai to honour and salute these Corona warriors by illuminating and traditional Naval ceremonials. In addition to illumination, the ships will also be firing Green flares signifying our good wishes for the health of our citizens.

**Fuel ration in Guntur to curb lockdown violation**



PNS ■ GUNTUR

Guntur Urban Superintendent of Police PHD Ramakrishna has imposed ration on fuel for two and four-wheelers from Saturday onwards. According to directions issued to fuel stations, the maximum volume of fuel to be sold for cars is only two litres while it is only half-litre for two-wheelers.

pretext or the other violating the lockdown rules for trivial reasons".

To check the menace, the Guntur Urban SP imposed the ceiling on sale of fuel, as "seizing of vehicles and imposing challans has no apparent impact on the violators".

Moreover, the number of Covid-19 cases in Guntur has been increasing. Though officials allowed people to venture out only from 6 am to 9 am to purchase essential commodities, there is no let up in people venturing out at all hours.

**Conman relieves YSRCP MLA of Rs 2 lakh**

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

A high-profile conman has duped the YSRCP MLA to the tune of Rs 2 lakh by posing as an officer in the Secretariat's Finance Department in Amaravati asking him to deposit Rs 2 lakh in his bank account as a precondition to release funds towards settling accounts of contractors, who have executed various works.

Claiming to be saddled with the responsibility of allocating funds constituency-wise, he called up the MLA and said the Finance department is slush with funds and convinced him that the constituency did not receive enough funds and offered to release funds to settle the pending bills.

Walking into the trap set by the white-collar criminal, the MLA transferred the amount demanded by the conman from his account to that of the fraudster's account.

Even two days after transferring the funds, there was no



response from the Finance department "Official".

Calls made to the mobile returned stating that the mobile was switched off. Enquiries made by the conman with the Finance department revealed that there was no such officer in the department. Moreover, they expressed doubt over Finance department receiving funds.

Lodging a complaint with the local police revealed the true face of the "official", who conned many MLAs in the same fashion in various districts.

Many MLAs and MPs deposited funds in his bank account giving credence to the fraudster's glib-tongued

Police registered a case based on a complaint lodged by the YSRCP MLA and looked for his whereabouts and at last traced him in a quarantine centre in Bhimavaram.

People are aghast knowing that the fraudster operated from a quarantine facility

words.

Moreover, the conman was stated to have collected hand loans from many MLAs claiming to be PA of a particular MLA and did not return the amount.

Police registered a case and looked for his whereabouts and at last traced him in a quarantine centre in Bhimavaram.

People are aghast knowing that the fraudster operated from a quarantine facility.

**Railway warriors ensuring essentials reach all**

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Waltair Division has geared up its machinery to take comprehensive measures on prevention of Covid-19 virus as well as ensuring uninterrupted supply of essential commodities.

For uninterrupted freight trains operations to ensure availability of essential commodities during the lockdown, it carried more than 12,88,799 metric tonnes of coal from ports to various places by 327 trains, 1,20,000 tonnes food grains loaded from its jurisdiction

supplied to different places, 560 tonnes of milk, edible oil, onions, fruits, vegetables, medicines and medical equipment supplied apart from operating more than 1,000 trains carrying iron and steel, petroleum products and fertilizers across the country.

The railway staff are working at various goods sheds, stations and control offices on 24/7 basis to ensure that the supply of essential items for the nation does not get affected. Loco pilots and guards are

efficiently running the trains. The important maintenance employees of the railway track, signalling, overhead equipment, locomotives, coaches and wagons working relentlessly for maintaining the infrastructure to ensure smooth running of goods and parcel trains. Furthermore, Indian Railways announced several sops to transporters during the lockdown.

Since freight operations are running 24x7 to maintaining essentials and goods supply, operation and maintenance employees are working round-the-clock. To ensure safety of the staff and boost their morale, following is being ensured at all workplaces:

Masks and hand sanitisers are being made available to all staff discharging their duties. These are also being ensured for contract labourers, coaching depot, loco sheds by locally made sanitisers and masks to supplement supplies. More than 30,000 masks and 1,200 litres of sanitisers have been provided for the staff.

**Naidu slinging mud on Govt out of jealousy, says Sajjala**

Continued from Page 1

In a statement, Sajjala said that earlier, Naidu had accused the government of not conducting enough tests to trace Covid-19 patients, but now that the government has stepped up tests, he has changed his tune and cribbing that the number of those who tested positive has increased.

"During the past one month, the number of laboratories conducting Covid tests increased from one to nine. The number of tests conducted so far has crossed one lakh. The government is able to rein in the spread of the virus. The positive cases rate in the state is 1.41 per cent as against the nation's 3.82," Sajjala pointed out.

He said that similarly, the deaths due to Corona virus is 2.16 in the state as against the 3.28 at the national level.

**Every village secretariat to have quarantine facility**

Continued from Page 1

With concern to the cluster zones, the Chief Minister instructed the officials to issue a pass to only one person per household to buy essential goods. Moreover, doctors, ANM, Asha workers, and medicines should be available with the mobile unit, he said.

Based on the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on further extension of the lockdown, the Chief Minister directed officials to identify containment zones and prepare a procedure to be followed besides issuing Standard Operating Procedure at the permitted shops to avoid public gatherings and maintain social distance.

Briefing the Covid-19 situation in the state, the officials said so far, 1,08,403 tests have been conducted, at an average of 2,030 tests per million population in the state. Of this 5,943 tests were conducted on Friday alone. The Covid-19 positive rate for the country is 3.82 per cent and for the state, it is 1.41 percent, they pointed out.

The Covid-19 mortality rate in the country is 3.28 percent and for the state, it is 2.16 percent. The Chief Minister sought details on the feedback of quarantine facilities and the improved facilities after the feedback.

Meanwhile, the officials told the Chief Minister that they have made preparations to start Matyakara Bharosa on

May 6.

With regard to the agriculture-related sector, the officials told the Chief Minister that they are working to start Rythu Bharosa centres on May 30 and strengthening the market intelligence system.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to prepare SOP for the setting up of State, Mandal, and Village-level Agriculture Advisory boards and collaborate them with Rythu Bharosa Centres.

All details regarding the purchase of crop by the government should be provided besides ensuring the availability of equipment to measure the moisture of the paddy at these centres, said the Chief Minister.

**CM seeks MEA help to bring back Telugus stranded abroad**

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister also requested the details of the Telugu expats who applied for registration so that the state government can make necessary arrangements for their quarantine besides providing other facilities on their return.

**Five Vijayawada journalists show Coronavirus symptoms**

Continued from Page 1

Earlier, a Telugu TV channel reporter in New Delhi was also found to be infected. It is believed that he recently interviewed Union Minister of State G Kishan Reddy also.

TUWJ-TJF president Allam Narayana appealed to the journalists to take care of themselves while discharging their duties. He said that the journalist who was tested positive was admitted to hospital and Rs 20,000 monetary help has been given to him. He said that the other journalists who were in quarantine were also given Rs 10,000 each.

**Patnaik seeks help from Karna, AP for safe return of Odias**

Continued from Page 1

Pradhan agreed to coordinate between the states for smooth movement of the people stranded in the south Indian states to Odisha.

The Chief Minister also thanked both Yediyurappa and Jagan for looking after the Odia people stranded in their states.

Patnaik requested his Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh counterparts to facilitate smooth and safe journey of Odias who wish to return to Odisha, an official in CMO said.

Both Yediyurappa and Reddy pointed out that works in several sectors have already resumed in their respective states. Therefore, Odia people

who desire to remain and work in their states can do so and those wishing to return to their home state will be provided with all help and cooperation, the two Chief Ministers promised.

During the discussions, Pradhan sought the cooperation of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh CMs for facilitating online registration of Odia people in Odisha governments portal before their return.

Several issues relating to health screening, registration and arrangements for the return journey of the Odia people were also discussed during the discussion.

A large number of people including migrant workers, students and professionals are stuck in different parts of

Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh unable to return to Odisha due to the lockdown.

Earlier, Patnaik had spoken to the chief ministers of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu where a large number of Odia people are also stranded because of the lockdown imposed across the country to contain spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

Patnaik's talks with Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh CMs have come after several migrant workers returned from Gujarat by specially arranged buses, while a group of students also came back to Odisha from Kota in Rajasthan. A special train carrying around 1200 people is also on its way to Odisha from Kerala, officials said.

**AP tests more than most nations, TS lags behind**

Continued from Page 1

Random testing, contact tracing and identifying secondary contacts has been completely stopped in Telangana.

This is one of the main reasons behind the less number of positive cases over the last week or so, doctors say, on the condition of anonymity.

"Effective quarantine is essential for tackling the Coronavirus and this cannot happen without extensive testing for Covid-19," says World

Health Organisation assistant director general Bruce Aylward.

A peculiar problem with Covid-19 is that up to 80 per cent of those infected may have only mild or moderate symptoms or are asymptomatic. Testing is the only way governments can identify infections and contain the spread of the virus, the WHO has been repeatedly stressing.

Meanwhile, the Andhra Pradesh Medical and Health Department is also going in for

pooled sample testing, wherein one sample could determine the condition of five people.

"The ICMR has suggested this method where 100 tests will give the result of 500 people. We are initially doing the pooled sample testing in Vijayawada city," Jawahar Reddy had said.

As part of community surveillance measures, (blood) sample collection, tracking and results would all be monitored online through a new MIS module.

**Silent Covid patient killer hypoxia worries doctors**

Continued from Page 1

These patients are dying of cardiac problems, kidney failure or similar other conditions. Lungs get damaged to certain extent in severe cases, with doctors attributing the damage to the release of iron from haemoglobin by the virus.

To nip the problem in the bud, the state government supplied more pulse oximeters to detect low oxygen levels for patients in Covid designated hospitals in the entire state, apart from augmenting requisite infrastructure to meet the

demand. Some patients, who have tested positive for Covid-19, show no symptoms. They were identified during contact tracing and isolated. "We see that they are doing fine during rounds. On the second or third day, they develop breathlessness when they walk. So, for patients who are ambulant, we are using finger pulse oximeters once in two to three hours. This way, we are able to find the oxygen saturation in the blood. We can pick up early signs before their condition deteriorates," said a doctor involved in the treatment of Covid-19.

**62 more Covid positive cases detected in Andhra Pradesh**

Continued from Page 1

Kurnool district reported 25 new cases in the past 24 hours, Krishna 12 cases, SPS Nellore six, YSR Kadapa, Anantapur and

Visakhapatnam four each, East Godavari three, Guntur two, while Prakasam and West Godavari districts reported one case each. No deaths to the virus were reported in the last 24 hours in the state.

Among the 38 patients discharged after recovery in the

past 24 hours, 19 are from Guntur, seven each from West Godavari and Krishna, two each from Anantapur and Chittoor and one patient from SPS Nellore district.

Meanwhile, the government has issued notification to fill 284 General Medicine, 282 Pulmonologist and 269 Anaesthesiologist posts in Covid hospitals.

The government has also decided to fill 84 obstetrics and Gynaecology (OBG), 32 Paediatrician, 11 ENT, 45

Radiology, 9 Microbiology, 23 Cardiology, 9 Neurology, 2 Nephrology, 9 SPM, 5 TB/C and 6 Emergency Medicine specialists on contract basis.

The mandals declared under Red Zones in the state are 17 in Kurnool district, 14 in SPS Nellore, 12 in Guntur, 9 each in West Godavari and Prakasam, 8 each in East Godavari and Chittoor, 7 in YSR Kadapa, 5 in Krishna and Anantapur while Visakhapatnam district has 3 mandals in the Red Zone.

(This is the second part of the article. The first part was published on May 2, 2020)

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababu Naidu, in his letter of April 11, 2020 to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, suggested to the PM that additional resources (for stimulating the economy through assistance to states) could be generated through quantitative easing (QE) and helicopter money. QE is something that even advanced economies - like US, Europe, China etc. - have done. But helicopter money is a different ball game.

Quantitative easing (QE), despite some of its obvious benefits, is no magic wand. Central banks can't afford to just jump in and do it just like that for various reasons. With all its positive aspects, QE may or may not work.

If a central bank does QE and the economy still does not recover, the damage it does to

public trust and confidence can push the economy into an even bigger downturn. A central bank losing credibility can be economically very damaging.

Further, QE can spur inflation. If QE is not withdrawn in good time; that is, if all the bonds that were bought are not sold back and excess liquidity is not withdrawn, it can result in runaway inflation. Inflation can be a big curse, especially in countries like India.

Hence, central banks hesitate to jump into QE and very few rich countries have tried it so far. Most emerging economies, including India, have not turned to QE ever.

Helicopter money and QE When the central bank decides to do QE, money does

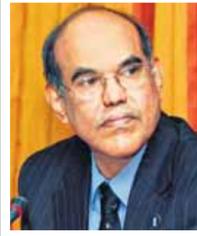
# Quantitative easing no magic wand

**This is where helicopter money strikes a different path. Helicopter money is, metaphorically speaking, a helicopter dropping currency notes from the sky. People run and collect the money and spend it**

not come directly into the hands of the government or the people. All that happens is more money gets into the banking system. And, if the bank lends that money, it goes into the hands of people but as a loan.

This is where helicopter money strikes a different path. Helicopter money is, metaphorically speaking, a helicopter dropping currency notes from the sky. People run and collect the money and

spend it. The expectation is that the spending will stimulate the economy. In practice, what really happens is a central bank (like the RBI) prints additional money and (as KCR has suggested in his letter to PM) simply hands it to the government. The government can then transfer the money to the bank accounts of the people as per a formula evolved to ease the situation. It can decide to give an equal amount to



**DUVVURI SUBBARAO**  
Former Governor,  
Reserve Bank of India

every resident of the country or variable amounts to just the poor households.

The central point though is that money gets into the hands of the people. And, unlike in

the case of QE, this money in the hands of the people is not a loan but a grant, never to be repaid. So, they will be more encouraged to spend it. Thereby the economy gets stimulated. In that sense, helicopter money is a more powerful instrument than QE.

Although powerful, helicopter money carries all the pitfalls and risks of QE. It can also hit the economy more powerfully than in the case of QE. The central bank risks losing credibility which can lead to financial instability. All the benefits of helicopter money can be neutralized by inflation.

Suppose you have Rs.1,000 in your pocket. You can buy Rs.1,000 worth of goods with the money. Suppose the money in your pocket doubles,

it is Rs.2000. If prices remain the same, you can buy twice the amount of goods. But what happens if the money in your pocket doubles but prices also double. You are no better off than before. Additionally, the central bank has lost credibility. That could be the end result of helicopter money.

So, countries should be more wary of doing QE or helicopter money during a crisis like that induced by coronavirus, especially when there are physical constraints on production. That is, you put money in the hands of people, they will demand goods. But due to lockdown, it is not possible to produce more. The result will be inflation. In other words, inflation as a consequence of QE and heli-

copter money is a more realistic possibility during the lockdown than during a regular financial crisis.

It is important to note that no country has ever done helicopter money so far; not even America. In fact, back in 2002, Ben Shalom Bernanke who would later become the chairman of the Federal Reserve went to Japan and gave a speech advising Japan to do helicopter money. Japan did not heed his advice. Subsequently, Bernanke became the chairman of the Fed and the global financial crisis hit the world in 2008. Even though Bernanke advised Japan to do helicopter money, he himself backed off from doing helicopter money in America even in such a deep crisis.

QE, and more importantly helicopter money, might look like attractive options; yet, they should be absolutely the last options and done with extreme caution. (Concluded)

'ONCE UPON A VIRUS'

## China mocks US COVID-19 response in short animation

PNS ■ SHANGHAI

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

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

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

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

"We discovered a new virus," says the warrior.



"So what?" replies the Statue of Liberty. "It's only a flu."

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

"Are you listening to yourselves?" asks the warrior as the

statue begins to turn red with fever and gets hooked up to an intravenous drip.

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

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

The United States and other countries have accused China of misleading the world about the severity of the outbreak,

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

and there are growing calls for an international inquiry into the origins of the virus.

In an interview with Reuters, Trump said he believes China's handling of the coronavirus pandemic is proof that Beijing "will do anything they can" to make him lose his re-election bid in November.

## Uttarakhand issues SOP for bringing back stranded people

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand government on Saturday issued a Standard Operating Procedure to bring back people of the state stranded at different places due to the countrywide lockdown but made it clear that only those who do not show symptoms of COVID-19 will be brought home.

Registered people whose online applications have been approved will be screened at the start of their homeward journey and only those who show no symptoms of COVID-19 will be allowed to travel, the SOP issued by Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority said.

They will be screened once again after their arrival at their respective destinations and will be permitted to proceed to their homes if they are asymptomatic. However, they will have to be quarantined at home for at least for 14 days, the SOP said.

On arrival at their destination, such people shall be screened by the health authorities and kept in home quaran-



time for a minimum period of 14 days, unless there are symptoms which require keeping them in institutional quarantine, it said.

Health conditions of people in home quarantine shall be monitored on a daily basis and there shall be no movement from containment zones, it added.

The nodal officers of concerned states shall ensure strict compliance of MHA and MoHFW guidelines related to social distancing and safety during inter-state movement of people, the SOP said.

In case of inter-state movement, the nodal officers of the

sending and receiving states shall coordinate with each other and mutually agree to the movement of persons as per the schedule, it said.

Those willing to come back should mandatorily get themselves registered on the web portal (<https://dsclservices.in/uttarakhand-migrant-registration.php>).

The nodal officers shall ensure that security personnel are deployed as liaison officers in buses to accompany the passengers. A list of such officers shall be prepared and shared with the respective state governments for effective coordination, it said.

SHORT READS



### SpiceJet operates flight to Bahrain carrying medical supplies

**NEW DELHI:** Amid the coronavirus-induced lockdown, SpiceJet on Saturday said it operated its maiden freighter flight to Bahrain carrying around 17 tonnes of critical medical supplies. In a press release, the budget carrier said its B737 freighter aircraft departed from Mumbai to Bahrain on late Friday night. India has been under a lockdown since March 25 to curb the spread of coronavirus, with more than 1,200 people in the country so far. All commercial passenger flights have been suspended for the lockdown period. However, cargo flights and special flights approved by the aviation regulator DGCA are allowed to operate. Since the nationwide lockdown began, SpiceJet said it has transported over 5,100 tonnes of cargo on more than 710 flights, of which 256 were international cargo flights.

## European, US data can't be extrapolated to project cases in India

PNS ■ BENGALURU

India has a different social structure and tackled the coronavirus much better than other countries, and projections of possible COVID-19 scenario going forward in this country cannot be based on European and US data, biotechnology industry veteran Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said on Saturday.

In an interview to PTI, the Executive Chairperson of biopharmaceuticals major Biocon Ltd also suggested creating smaller red zones instead of classifying entire district as one so that economic activity picks up and supply chain is not cut-off.

She called for empowering district administrations in management of the pandemic with a mandate to test the



population and provide treatment for the needy.

On some reports that COVID-19 would peak in India in June-July, Mazumdar-Shaw retorted: there are so many models doing the rounds projecting so many things and underlined that one has to go with real data.

We are extrapolating too much from other areas (Europe and the US) which

have not done what we have done.

I really don't think we should extrapolate data from European data, or US data or western data, she said.

Mazumdar-Shaw noted that India had declared lockdown when the country had 500 positive cases, while Italy had done so when it had 9,000 cases, and the UK 6,700 cases.

So the burden of disease was much higher in those countries when they enforced lockdown when compared to what we did.

And by the way, the kind of preemptive measures that India took in terms of quarantining, curfew, lockdown, surveillance and adhering strictly to lockdown protocols are something which most countries have not done, she pointed out.

## Functioning of Delhi HC, district courts restricted till May 17

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Saturday decided to restrict its and the district courts' functioning to urgent matters only till May 17, in view of the extended lockdown announced by the Centre in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to government data, the novel coronavirus has so far infected 37,336 people and claimed 1,218 lives in the country.

The Administrative and General Supervision Committee of the High Court, headed by Chief Justice D N Patel, decided that the restriction would be in place till May 17 and only urgent matters would continue to be heard via video-conferencing.

The administrative order said the progress of hearing



urgent matters in the high court has been tremendous and all the courts in Delhi, including the high court, have already dealt with more than 11,427 urgent matters after the announcement of the lockdown.

"Initially, when the hearings started taking place through video-conferencing, it was confined to extremely urgent matters. However, with the experience and after taking

regular inputs from the Bar, presently, all the urgent matters of all kinds are being taken up by the Delhi High Court as well as the courts subordinate to it. The mentioning in High Court is exclusively through a two-tier weblink, a completely transparent mechanism, which ensures contentment for all," it said.

The mentioning of urgent matters will continue to be done through the web link.

The mentioning will be available from 9 am to 10.30 am on all working days to further expedite the listing and hearing.

The order said all the cases listed in the high court, including before the registrars and joint registrars, from May 4 to 17 have been adjourned to the corresponding dates between June 1 and June 15. The matters listed in the district courts during this period will also be adjourned and the information will be uploaded on their websites, the order said.

It said initially, the video-conferencing was started with one division bench and one single-judge bench, and gradually, increased to two division benches and six single benches on all working days, and the number of benches can be increased depending on the workload.

TWEET ON TABLIGHI MEMBERS

## 'Will reply to notice as per rules: IAS officer

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A day after the Karnataka government issued a show cause notice to him over his tweet about coronavirus-cured Tablighi Jamaat members donating plasma

Narendra Modi's helicopter during his visit to Odisha in April. He was deployed as a poll observer.

"More than 300 Tablighi Heroes are donating their plasma to serve the country in New Delhi only. What about #Godi Media? They will not show the works of humanity done by these heroes," Mohsin said in a tweet on April 27.

A 1996 batch IAS officer from Karnataka cadre hailing from Bihar, Mohsin is currently serving as a secretary in the Backward Class Welfare Department.

he saw any conspiracy behind the row.

The officer was in the news last year after the Election Commission suspended him for trying to inspect Prime Minister Narendra Modi's heli-

copter during his visit to Odisha in April. He was deployed as a poll observer.

"More than 300 Tablighi Heroes are donating their plasma to serve the country in New Delhi only. What about #Godi Media? They will not show the works of humanity done by these heroes," Mohsin said in a tweet on April 27.

## COVID-19 lockdown opportunity for tobacco users to quit habit

PNS ■ KOTA

The ban on the use of smokeless tobacco products during the ongoing lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus is an opportunity for tobacco users to get rid of the harmful habit, say health experts.

"The ongoing lockdown and the non-availability of the tobacco products can be turned into an opportunity to free the tobacco addicts from the habit," said Dr R K Jain, senior oncologist at Kota Medical College.

The Union Health Ministry had last month asked all states to prohibit the use and spitting of smokeless tobacco in public places to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

"Chewing smokeless tobacco products, paan masala and areca nut (supari) increases the production of saliva followed by a very strong urge to spit. Spitting in public places could enhance the spread of the COVID-19 virus," the ministry had said in a letter to chief secretaries of all states and union



territories.

Jain said the government's advisory on the tobacco products should be strictly enforced on the ground on the lines of the countries like Singapore and Malaysia and the violators should be heavily penalised.

"There is a widespread culture of chewing paan masala and other tobacco products. It is not only harmful to the health of a person, but the saliva generated by these products can also cause problems for others like it can lead to the

spread of coronavirus infection if a person is COVID-19 positive," said Dr Amit Goyal, an oncologist at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Jodhpur, and Voice of Tobacco Victims (VOTV) State patron.

He said it was the right time for the users of such products to get rid of them. A total of 14.1% of all adults (aged 15+) use smokeless tobacco in Rajasthan, while 13.2% of all adults smoke tobacco, as per the Global Adult Tobacco Survey-2.

## Mizoram Cong alleges irregularities in purchase of PPEs, govt denies

PNS ■ AIZAWL

The Mizoram Congress has lodged a complaint with the state Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB), an autonomous body, alleging that there were irregularities in the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) sets and other safety gears.

The Congress also alleged the sets of the coveralls were "substandard" and "not fit for use", and the materials were not bought from the approved suppliers.

State Health and Family Welfare Board vice chairman and ruling Mizo National Front (MNF) legislator Dr Z R Thiamsanga denied the allegation and said "no public money was wasted in the procurement and none of the

PPEs were rejected".

The state government had spent "Rs 99 lakh for purchasing a batch of 10,900 PPEs and other medical equipment weighing 1,979 kg", Congress leader Lahlriatpuia claimed.

"The consignment was supplied here on March 27 from New Delhi through a cargo flight, and it was a wasteful expenditure as the prod-

ucts were faulty and not fit for use," he said, adding that the party has requested the Anti Corruption Bureau to probe into the matter. The Congress alleged that the government had also spent Rs 16.2 lakh from state disaster management and rehabilitation department for arranging the cargo flight.

### 41 people from same building in Kapashera test positive for COVID

**NEW DELHI:** Forty one people residing in a building in south-west Delhi's Kapashera area tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday, an official said. A case of COVID-19 had been reported from the building situated in theke wali gali on April 18, the official said. "Keeping in mind the high density of population in this particular building, the district administration took the proactive decision of sealing and containing the building on April 19," official said. The guidelines mandate sealing an area when minimum three cases have been reported. Samples were collected of all residents in the building and sent to the National Institute of Biologicals (NIB) in Noida. "Out of total samples collected from the building, some reports have come on Saturday and 41 have tested positive for COVID-19," the official said.

SHORT READS



PM must lay out lockdown-exit plan, economy-back on track

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress on Saturday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi must come forward and address the countrymen to enlighten them on the way ahead in dealing with the coronavirus and the economic situation. Asking when the lockdown will finally end, Congress's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the prime minister must also lay out the exit strategy from it and spell out the goalpost in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and economy. "Will we see another lockdown? When will the lockdown finally end? The Prime Minister must come forward and address 130 crore Indians and enlighten them on the way ahead," he told reporters at a press briefing through video-conferencing. Accusing the government of not handling the issue of migrant labourers in a humane or compassionate manner, Surjewala urged the prime minister and the Centre to ferry the migrant labourers to their home in sanitised trains for free, along with food.

C'garh: Health dept focuses on routine health services

**RAIPUR:** The health department in Chhattisgarh has directed district collectors to ensure that routine health services were not disrupted in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, an official here said on Saturday. In a letter to all collectors, health secretary Niharika Barik Singh said while the state health machinery had given priority to contain the pandemic, other health services like maternal and neo-natal care, institutional deliveries, immunisation, among others, should not get affected, the official said. Doctors and medical staff should not be deputed full time at quarantine centres, as non-coronavirus activities also need to function smoothly in the state, he said, quoting the communique.

Two militants killed in encounter with security forces in Pulwama

**SRINAGAR:** Two unidentified militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, police said. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in the south Kashmir district's Dagerpora in the wee hours of Saturday based on specific information about the presence of militants in the area, a police official said. When the forces were conducting searches in the area, the militants opened fire at them. An encounter ensued as the forces retaliated, he said. Two militants were killed in the gunfight, he added. The official said identity and group affiliation of the slain militants are being ascertained. The search operation is still going on, he said.

# Coronavirus lockdown is an exam we have to pass: Naidu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The "pressing need" to trigger resumption of economic activities has been addressed in 'lockdown 3.0' in a manner that fits with the prevailing situation on the ground, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said on Saturday.

He also said that the announcement of extension of coronavirus-induced lockdown by two more weeks from May 4, with attendant relaxations driven by economic concerns, "marks a landmark" in the nation's collective fight against COVID-19.

"In my view, this decision puts the onus of taking forward the fight against the virus more in the hands of stakeholders, including the people, state governments and concerned agencies, commercial and industrial establishments," he said in a Facebook post.

The way all of us conduct during lockdown 3.0, Naidu opined, will lay the ground for further course of action aimed



**"This window of two weeks will decide the time frame for it. This is a kind of preliminary examination and as a nation, we need to pass in it. I have reasons to believe that we would, as we don't have the option to fail," he asserted**

at returning to total pre-corona normalcy.

"This window of two weeks will decide the time frame for it. This is a kind of preliminary examination and as a nation, we need to pass in it. I have reasons to believe that we would, as we don't have the option to fail," he asserted.

So far, the central government has been at the forefront of formulating the battle strategy in consultation with the

states with focus on lives of the people, he said.

"It has yielded positive results..." he said. The modalities of 'lockdown 3.0', Naidu said, are a clear acknowledgment of the need to balance the twin concerns of lives and livelihoods by kick-starting the economy.

"The pressing need to trigger resumption of economic activities has been addressed in a manner that fits with the pre-

ailing situation on the ground," the vice president wrote.

The green zones to a large extent and the orange zones to some degree should hopefully witness the start of much needed economic revival.

This is where the people, state governments and other concerned stakeholders should put their best foot forward while seizing the opportunity, he opined.

## 14 migrants found crammed inside cement mixer of truck

PNS ■ INDORE

Indore Police on Saturday found 18 people, most of them migrant workers, crammed inside a cement mixer-laden truck headed towards Uttar Pradesh from Maharashtra, an official said.

All of them were sent to a shelter for medical examination and a bus was being organised for their further transit, he said.

A video of workers emerging from the small hole of the cement-mixer in the presence of police has gone viral on social media.

"During the routine check-up at Panth Pipal village, about 35 kms from Indore, we stopped a truck laden with a cement-mixer on suspicion. After opening the lid, we found 18 people inside," Traffic Police sub-inspector Amit Kumar Yadav said.

He said the 18 people included fourteen migrant labourers and four employees of the truck owner.

He said the labourers had been trying to reach their native state Uttar Pradesh from Maharashtra, as they found no



work due to the coronavirus lockdown. Yadav said the workers had boarded the truck on Friday. "They all were sent to a shelter for medical examination. A bus is also being arranged to send them to Uttar Pradesh," he said.

An FIR has been registered against the truck driver under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Yadav added.

The Centre government recently allowed movement of stranded labourers, tourists and students from one state to another on permission of local authorities.

The Maharashtra government on Friday and Saturday ran two special trains carrying migrant workers to Bhopal and Lucknow.



## Parties should shun communal politics & work for economy

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Expressing deep concern over the long-term economic repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis and the lockdown, the Shiv Sena on Saturday said that all political parties should stop playing communal politics in future and instead work towards bringing the economy back on track. The party said the talks held between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan recently over the impact of the COVID-19 shows how grave the crisis is for the economy. It said time has now come to grow wiser. "Congress leader Rahul Gandhi held talks with economist Raghuram Rajan through digital medium. Rajan said that the government needs to spend Rs 65000 crore to help the poor facing hardships due to the coronavirus lockdown.

## Pilgrims from U'khand can visit Kedarnath from May 4

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Pilgrims from Uttarakhand can visit Kedarnath and other Himalayan temples in the state from May 4, Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said on Saturday.

As inter-district movement of people is being allowed with certain restrictions from May 4 especially in districts which fall in the green zone, pilgrims from the state can visit Kedarnath, Rawat said.

However, the chief minister appealed to the people to maintain social distancing while paying obeisance at the temples as their safety is of utmost importance. The portals of Kedarnath were opened on April 29 in the absence of pilgrims due to the extended lockdown.

Asked when devotees from



outside Uttarakhand will be allowed to visit the shrines in the hill state, Rawat said the COVID-19 situation is a roadblock and his government was waiting for things to normalise.

"After the Kedarnath tragedy in 2013, a similar mood of despair gripped people but we overcame it and the yatra was put back on track. I am confident corona will be defeated in the end and the usual glow will return to the temples," Rawat said.

## Right to mental peace for all; marriage entitles equal respect: HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Every human being has a right to mental peace and happiness and marriage, which is a sacrament, cannot be a one-sided affair and both partners are entitled to equal respect and responsibilities, the Delhi High Court has observed while dissolving a couple's marriage on the grounds of cruelty and desertion by the husband.

The high court's observation came while dismissing the husband's appeal challenging a family court's decision to dissolve his marriage on the grounds of inflicting cruelty on his wife and deserting her.

A bench of justices Hima Kohli and Asha Menon, in its judgement, said the continuous badgering of the wife by a very insensitive and selfish



husband is clear as daylight from the testimony of the daughter and nothing more needs to be said.

The court said this is a typical case that showcases as to what would amount to cruel behaviour on the part of one spouse to the utter detriment of the other.

"Every human being has a right to mental peace, happi-

ness and contentment. Marriage is no doubt a sacrament, but it cannot be a one-sided affair. Both parties to the marriage are equal partners and entitled to mutual respect, sharing of duties and responsibilities, affection, emotional bonding, financial and all other support for the well-being of one another.

## Lockdown deaths: Of those who never reached home

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the government readied trains to transport migrant workers to their homes in distant corners, Dharamveer and Tabarat Mansoor gave up on the battle of life, one collapsing while cycling from Delhi to Bihar and the other as he headed from Maharashtra to Uttar Pradesh.

Sheer fatigue felled them both, as it did so many other stranded migrants who set off for home, hundreds, sometimes thousands, of kilometres away, desperate to be with their families in the prolonged lockdown that left them with no money, no jobs and no roof over their heads.

Home beckoned. But they never did get there.

Some bought cycles with their little savings and others just set off on the long walk, in shoes with paper thin soles or flip flops, their few belongings packed into backpacks or



unwieldy bundles.

On Friday night, the first special train ferrying over 1,200 stranded migrants from Telangana reached Hatia in Jharkhand from where the state government took them to their respective districts in sanitised buses in accordance with COVID-19 protocols.

Sometime around then, 32-year-old Dharamveer was declared brought dead at a hospital in Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh. He began cycling, along with other labourers like

him, from Delhi to Khagaria in Bihar, about 1,200 km away, on April 28, police said.

"On Friday night, they halted at the Delhi-Lucknow highway in Shahjahanpur. When Dharamveer's condition deteriorated, the labourers took him to the medical college where he was declared brought dead," Circle Officer (city) Praveen Kumar said.

The day before, 50-year-old Tabarat died in Sendhwa in Madhya Pradesh after cycling over 390 kilometres to get

home from Bhiwandi in Maharashtra to Maharajganj in Uttar Pradesh, about 1,600 km away.

"He died on Thursday near Sendhwa in Barwani possibly due to fatigue and heart attack," said Ramesh Pawar who was with him.

Recapping the arduous journey, he said the group of 11 had left on their cycles on April 25 to get to Maharajganj.

Those accompanying him wanted to take his body to Maharajganj but police did not give permission given the ongoing lockdown restrictions and he was buried in Sendhwa, his desire to go home unfulfilled.

As lakhs of daily wagers and other migrants undertook epic journeys to reach home - walking, cycling and hitching rides when they could - in the absence of any public transport, the outskirts of many cities like Delhi and Mumbai teemed with people.

## Ensure participants attending video conference are properly dressed: CAT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Administrative Tribunal, that adjudicates service matters of central government employees, has said that its benches in the red and orange zones would hear urgent matters via video conference and asked participants to be properly dressed, according to a Personnel Ministry statement issued on Saturday. As regards the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) benches that are in Red and Orange zones, the cases of urgent nature can be filed through electronic mail service (e-mail) by contacting the registrar of the concerned bench, who in turn shall furnish the e-mail id to the intending advocate or party, it said.

"If the Registry is satisfied that the OA (original application or petition) is otherwise in order and needs to be dealt with



urgently, the head of department (HoD) of the bench shall be informed of the same. "The HoD in turn shall decide whether or not to take up the case. If it is proposed to hear the case, it shall be done through CISCO WEBEX online video conferencing facility," the statement said.

The details thereof shall be worked out by the HoD of the benches in consultation with the registry of the principal bench, it said. "It shall be ensured that

the participants in the video conference put on the apparel or at least, are properly dressed," the Personnel Ministry said.

If the advocates of the bar association of such benches are agreeable for hearing of pending cases through such mechanism, the cases shall be identified by the registry and hearing thereof shall take place through the same system in a time slot that may be decided by the HoD on a daily basis, it said.

## Forest department ups vigil to curb wildlife crimes during lockdown

PNS ■ NAGPUR

As attempts to poach wild animals, illegal tree felling and other crimes related to wildlife continue to take place during the lockdown, the forest department in Nagpur has increased patrolling to keep a hawk's eye on the offenders.

The officials said that the employees of the department are also going out of their way to provide essential commodities and food packets to the people dwelling in the forest interiors in a bid to mitigate their hardships.

Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) Nagpur, Prabhu Shukla, said the department staffers have been fighting as "silent warriors" for the protection and conservation of wildlife and forest during these testing times.

"Recently, we foiled two attempts of poaching of wild



**"The Nagpur transit treatment centre annually admits around 600 injured animals. But during the lockdown period alone, as many as 100 injured animals were rescued. They are undergoing treatment at the centre," Shukla said**

animals and arrested seven persons. In the last two months, 15 incidents of forest fires were reported. The department is patrolling the forest areas round-the-clock to thwart any attempt of illicit tree felling and similar offences," he said.

"The Nagpur transit treatment centre annually admits around 600 injured animals. But during the lockdown period alone, as many as 100

injured animals were rescued. They are undergoing treatment at the centre," Shukla said.

The department staffers have also been cleaning water holes for animals, monitoring the movement of tigers and taking regular steps to avoid man-animal conflict in the highly vulnerable areas, he said.

He also informed that the employees of the Nagpur forest department are going beyond

their designated work and providing essential commodities and food packets to the people residing in remote forest areas.

"More than 5,000 ration kits and food packets were distributed in Umred, Hingna, Seminary hill ranges and other area. Masks and sanitisers were also distributed in Khapa, Hingna and other forest ranges for the safety of people," Shukla said.

## Thrissur Pooram held sans pomp, festivities due to COVID-19

PNS ■ THRISSUR

Amid the COVID-19 lockdown curbs, the iconic 'Thrissur Pooram', known for the parade of richly caparisoned jumbos, performance of traditional music ensembles and a sea of cheering people, was held on Saturday in a low key manner with just a handful of people and inevitable rituals inside the Vadakkunnathan temple.

Billed as the mother of all temple festivals in Kerala, the annual pooram was normally held at the sprawling Thekkinkadu Maidan in Thrissur city. The festival was a gathering of 'Pooram' and jumbo lovers around the globe who could be seen dancing to the rhythm of percussion instruments.

But, this year, the Thekkinkadu ground wore a deserted look as the Vadakkunnathan Lord Shiva temple cancelled the celebrations



due to the nationwide lockdown.

The state government and members of the two devaswom boards, which organises the festival, had held discussions and consulted the temple priests on April 15 and "unanimously decided" to cancel the Pooram.

"After considering the unusual situation of pandemic we are facing, the state government and the devaswom Boards have unanimously

decided to cancel the famous Thrissur Pooram (festival) and will conduct only the necessary rituals," state minister V S Sunilkumar said.

The rituals were conducted on Saturday, inside the Vadakkunnathan temple with the participation of around five people and devotees were not allowed inside. All other events related to the Thrissur pooram, including the exhibition, mini-poorams also stood cancelled.

## Civic body arranges for 300 beds in Ahmedabad

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

In light of the rise in number of COVID-19 cases, the civic body in Gujarat's Ahmedabad city has arranged for 300 additional beds at three hospitals, a senior official said on Saturday.

A 100-bed COVID-19 centre at the trust-run Al Amin Garib Nawaz Hospital will provide free treatment to patients, while 100 beds have been put up at Infectious Diseases Hospital in the city's south zone, Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner Vijay Nehra said.

A similar arrangement was also made at Chhipa Welfare General Hospital for asymptomatic COVID-19 patients, he added. At present, the city has 2,659 active cases, of which 808 patients were being treated at the civil hospital and 541 at SVP Hospital, Nehra said.

CAPSULE



FCA India launches online retailing for Jeep

**New Delhi:** Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) India on Saturday announced the launch of its online 'touch-free' Jeep retail experience in response to continued movement restrictions and social distancing due to the coronavirus pandemic. Prospective customers can book and own a Jeep online without having to physically visit a showroom, and will enjoy the convenience of a test drive and sanitized vehicle delivery at their doorstep, the company said in a statement. FCA India President and Managing Director Partha Datta said, "Our commitment is to ensure customers can still continue to access Jeep at their fingertips. To ensure health, safety and convenience, we are making the Jeep retail experience as touch-free as possible."



Yes Bank appoints Neeraj Dhawan as chief risk officer

**New Delhi:** Yes Bank on Saturday said it has appointed Neeraj Dhawan as its chief risk officer with immediate effect. The board of directors, vide their resolution dated May 1, 2020, appointed Neeraj Dhawan as the chief risk officer of the bank for a period of three years. Yes Bank said in a regulatory filing. He will assume charge from Saturday in place of Ashish Agarwal, the current chief risk officer, who will be transitioning to a new role in the bank, it added. Prior to this, Dhawan was holding the position of chief risk officer for retail and business banking at Yes Bank. He has 29 years of experience in financial services and banking industry.

RBI Governor meets MD of banks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

In his opening remarks, the governor appreciated the efforts of banks in ensuring normal to near normal operations during the lockdown period.

During the meeting, among other matters, review of the current economic situation and stability of the financial sector among other things were discussed.

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



The Governor appreciated the efforts of banks in ensuring normal to near normal operations during the lockdown period

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

The Supreme Court earlier this week directed the RBI to ensure that its March 27 guidelines directing lending institutions to allow a three-month moratorium to all borrowers is implemented in letter and spirit. Monitoring of overseas branches of banks in view of the slowdown in economies across the globe was discussed, it added.

The Reserve Bank has announced several steps to ease the pressure being faced by borrowers, lenders and other entities including mutual funds and has promised to take more initiatives to deal with the developing situation.

The RBI has injected funds totalling 3.2 per cent of GDP into the economy since the February 2020 monetary policy meeting to tackle the liquidity situation.

The RBI has been prompting banks to push lending by cutting its key policy rate by 75 basis points to an 11-year low of 4.4 per cent.

Besides, it also slashed reverse repurchase rate, a tool to control the money supply, to 3.75 per cent to encourage banks to deploy surplus funds within the system towards lending.

Tata Motors JLR CEO Professor elected fellow of UK's royal society

PNS ■ LONDON

Professor Sir Ralf Speth, the Chief Executive of Tata Motors' owned Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) and Professor Vikram Deshpande from the Cambridge University have been elected as new Fellows of the prestigious Royal Society in the UK which recently added more than 60 exceptional scientists to its fold.

Active since 1660, the Royal Society is the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence. It is an independent scientific academy made up of the most eminent scientists, engineers and technologists from the UK and the Commonwealth.

Past Royal Society fellows include Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Stephen Hawking and Srinivasa Ramanujan.



Bank transfer of 2nd installment of Rs 500 from tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Women Jan Dhan bank account holders will start getting the second installment of Rs 500 from Monday in line with the announcement made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in March.

To help the poor tide over the COVID-19 crisis, the government had on March 26 said ex-gratia payment of Rs 500 would be credited to women Jan Dhan account holders for the next three months, starting from April.

Instalment of Rs.500 for the month of May has been sent to the bank A/cs of PMJDY women beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package. "Beneficiaries are requested to follow the schedule shared below to visit banks & CSPs. Money can also be withdrawn via ATMs & BCs," Financial Services Secretary Debashish Panda said in a tweet on Saturday.

The transfer has been staggered over a period of five days to avoid rush at the bank

branches. This will help in ensuring social distancing and avoid overcrowding in banks, he said.

As per the schedule, women account holders under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) having account number with last digit as 0 and 1 will get the money in their account on May 4, while accounts ending with 2 or 3 can approach the bank on May 5.

On May 6, beneficiaries with account numbers ending with 4 or 5 can collect their money, while accounts ending with 6 or 7 may withdraw on May 8.

The last tranche would be remitted on May 11 for account numbers ending with 8 or 9, the tweet said.

In case of emergency, one can withdraw the money immediately. However, for orderly disbursement, one must follow the banks' payment plan, it said. Beneficiaries may withdraw any day at their convenience after May 11, it added.



GE Power India resumes operations at Durgapur plant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

GE Power India on Saturday said it has resumed production at its Durgapur plant in West Bengal. The company had suspended operations temporarily at its facilities located at Durgapur, West Bengal, and Noida, Uttar Pradesh, due to the lockdown imposed by the government in March to contain COVID-19 pandemic.

"We would like to inform that, from today i.e. 02 May 2020, after obtaining requisite approvals/permissions from the competent authority/ies the Company has resumed its

manufacturing operations at its Durgapur factory, to the extent permitted by the local administration/competent authority," a BSE filing said.

The company is taking all precautions, safety and social distancing measures and implementing all applicable guidelines issued by the authorities across its operations and offices for prevention and containment of COVID-19, it added.

"We will continue to follow the recommendations/advisories as may be issued from time to time by the relevant authorities," it said.

ICICI Lombard Q4 net rises 24 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company on Saturday reported a 23.8 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 282 crore for the March quarter.

The non-life insurer had posted a net profit of Rs 228 crore in the corresponding period of 2018-19. The gross direct premium income (GDPI) of the company stood at Rs 3,181 crore in Q4 FY20, compared to Rs 3,485 crore in Q4 FY19, ICICI

Lombard said in a regulatory filing.

For the full year 2019-20, the profit after tax or net profit increased 13.8 per cent to Rs 1,194 crore from Rs 1,049 crore in the preceding fiscal. GDPI of the company stood at Rs 13,313 crore in FY20 compared to Rs 14,488 crore in FY19, a de-growth of 8.1 per cent, it said.

Excluding crop segment, GDPI increased to Rs 13,302 crore during the year compared to Rs 12,036 crore in FY19, up

10.5 per cent.

This was in line with the industry growth (excluding crop segment), ICICI Lombard added.

Combined ratio -- a measure of profitability -- stood at 100.4 per cent in 2019-20 compared to 98.8 per cent a year ago, primarily on account of long-term motor policies, change in product-mix and losses from catastrophic events, the company said.

For the March quarter, the combined ratio stood at 100.1 per cent compared to 99 per cent in the same period last year.

PM meets FM for economic stimulus package

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday held a series of meetings with key ministers, including Home Minister Amit Shah and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and officials of economic ministries to firm up the second stimulus package for sectors impacted by lockdown to curb spread of coronavirus, sources said.

The prime minister held discussions with Shah and Sitharaman and would have followed up meetings with ministers of key economic ministries such as Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), sources said.

The finance ministry, which deferred release of monthly



GST collection numbers on Friday, is also scheduled to make a detailed presentation to the prime minister later in the day on the state of economy and several initiatives that it plans to undertake to stimulate Indian economy.

The prime minister already

of small businesses in the country so that the recovery process is hastened. During these meetings both the home minister and the finance minister were present.

To mitigate hardships faced by the bottom of the pyramid, the government in late March had announced a Rs 1.7 lakh crore stimulus package comprising free foodgrains and cooking gas to poor and cash doles to poor women and elderly. Sources said the government is considering to announce a second dose of relief measures for the segment and a stimulus package for India Inc shortly. The government had first imposed a 21-day nationwide lockdown beginning March 25 and later extended it till May 3.

Adani Ports promoters release 5.66 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) on Saturday said its promoters Gautam S Adani and Rajesh Adani on behalf of SB Adani Family Trust have released pledge on 5.66 crore equity shares held in the company, comprising its 2.78 per cent holding. The promoter family trust holds 39.34 per cent in APSEZ. Adani Group in a BSE filing disclosed the "release of pledge on 5,66,19,000 equity shares of APSEZ". Of this pledge on 1.53 crore shares comprising 0.75 per cent holding were released on April 27, it said in the filing.

New guidelines good start for the economy, says retailers body

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) said that it now expects the respective state government to recognise shopping malls as safe space and allow them to open for customers in a regulated manner.

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

"The new notification by the MHA is a good start to getting the economy moving.

We look forward to clarifications from the states and how they would like to adopt these new guidelines.

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

It also added that the retail industry, which has been hit by the lockdown, is still awaiting fiscal aid and policy support to survive this pandemic.

The government on Friday announced that a "limited" lockdown, including suspension of inter-state travel, air and train services, will continue to remain in force for another two weeks throughout the country from May 4 but some activities would be allowed after classifying areas into Red, Orange and Green zones.

Singapore to let some businesses reopen

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore will allow some businesses to reopen from May 12 as part of a gradual resumption of selected activities and services amidst a decline in the coronavirus cases at the community level, the health ministry said on Saturday. Health Minister Gan Kim Yong said that Singapore is in a position to start the gradual easing of the strict "circuit breaker" measures, reported Channel News Asia. He said that some businesses will resume operations from May 12, with a gradual resumption of selected activities and services over a few weeks. The circuit breaker has been extended to June 1. Home-based food businesses, selected food retail outlets and food manufacturing firms will be among those to resume operations.

'Save lives first, then livelihoods'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Saving lives is of utmost importance for the government and then comes protecting livelihoods, Uttar Pradesh MSME, Investment and Export Minister Siddharth Nath Singh said.

The senior minister also said the government will hand-hold the industry to help it get back on its feet post the COVID-19 lockdown.

"Living becomes the most important aspect of life and then comes earning for the stomach, so saving lives is of utmost importance for the government and then comes saving livelihoods," he said.

Singh, who also looks after the departments of textiles,



khadi and gram udyog, was on Friday addressing industry stakeholders in an interactive session organised by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).

"We want to assure the industry that the government, both the state and at the Centre, are extremely concerned over the halt of economic activities and the revival

of the Indian industry.

"Formulation of an effective stimulus relief package is on the way, with special focus on the MSMEs," he said, according to a statement issued by PHDCCI on Saturday.

Singh assured the chamber that the intent of the government is to support the industry by addressing its issues and challenges in every way. "We understand that if the government does not hand-hold the industry in these crucial time of uncertainty, then India will not be able to stand up again after COVID-19 lockdown is lifted," he said. The minister further said the government will generate 10 lakh employment opportunities in the rural areas of the state.

DeMo: ED files fresh charge sheet in Patna

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has filed a fresh charge sheet in a money laundering case linked to the alleged misuse of the 2016 demonetisation scheme, the agency said.

In the same charge sheet, the ED has also sought permission and moved a Patna court for confiscation of over Rs 8 crore worth assets, including a factory and an office premise. The assets belong to the accused involved

in the case. It said a supplementary prosecution complaint (charge sheet) has been filed against accused Rajan S Shah of V S Healthcare Mumbai and 11 others early this week before a special PMLA court in Patna, Bihar after some new facts came to light.

The ED case, filed under criminal provision of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), is against a Gaya-based businessman, Motilal, promoter of MTI Cotton Mills Pvt Ltd, and others linked to him.

Apps don't face masks to promote healthy practices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Internet companies like Urban Company, MakeMyTrip, Dunzo, HealthifyMe and Zomato are changing their social media handles and app icons to promote wearing face masks as a hygiene practice amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Apna Mask initiative -- an effort by StartUpVsCOVID (a startup community with over 1,000 members) -- is promoting homemade masks and aims to drive behavioural change to ensure that people wear masks and stay protected as they step out of their homes.

The #ApnaDeshApnaMask campaign was kicked off by



startup industry stalwarts like Rajan Anandan of Sequoia India, Paytm's Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Alok Mittal (Indifi), Vishal Gondal (GoQii) and others. They were later joined by celebrities like Vidya Balan,

Dia Mirza, Juhi Chawla, Divya Khosla Kumar, Juhi Parmar, Deepshika Deshmukh, Sonu Sood, Shama Sikander, Preetika Rao and others.

Within a span of two weeks, the initiative has garnered 100

Within a span of two weeks, the initiative has garnered 100 million outreach across digital platforms

million outreach across digital platforms, including WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The team working on the campaign also reached out to various organisations to support the initiative, especially as parts of the country get ready to come out of the lockdown which has been extended till May 17.

"Urban Company, MakemyTrip, Dunzo, HealthifyMe, Zomato, Redbus, Ixigo, MoneyTap, MyUpchar,

Bounce, RazorPay, Medanta, WittyFeed, LBB, Porter, Meesho, Daily Hunt, Img, Paytm Games have changed their social media handles while some are changing the app icons as well," a statement said.

These brands are also inviting more companies to join the initiative. "Given the immense response we have received, we will have more brands join #ApnaMask in this critical initiative.

Zydus Cadila gets tentative nod from USFDA to market type-2 drug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Zydus Cadila on Saturday said it has received tentative nod from the US health regulator to market generic Empagliflozin and Metformin Hydrochloride tablets, used for management of type-2 diabetes, in the American market.

The company has received tentative approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to market Empagliflozin and Metformin Hydrochloride tablets in the strengths of 5 mg/500 mg, 5 mg/1000 mg, 12.5 mg/500 mg, and 12.5 mg/1000



mg, Zydus Cadila said in a statement. The product will be manufactured at the group's formulations manufacturing facility at SEZ in Ahmedabad, it added. This medication is used with a proper diet and exercise programme to control high blood

sugar in people with type-2 diabetes, Zydus Cadila said. The group now has 289 approvals and has so far filed over 386 abbreviated new drug applications (ANDAs) since the commencement of its filing process, it added.



# Let's Meet

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

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

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

A case in point are video conferencing apps like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. From corporate events to business meetings to classes to live concerts and to dance workshops, everything is taking the digital route. With a variety of platforms to choose from, there is a raging competition. Sameer Raje, India Head, Zoom Video Communications, tells you that it is the easy-to-use setup that makes Zoom the number one platform for video conferencing. "There are a couple of aspects that makes us the user's choice. One, it has an easy to use interface. With the touch of a button or click of a mouse you are into a meeting. Two, the experience. When you join a meeting, whatever bandwidth you are on or even if you are struggling with poor connectivity, the platform tries to accommodate to the fluctuating network giving users a rich experience with no complaints of bad connectivity or finding difficulty in joining a meeting," Raje says.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

—SAMEER RAJE

INDIA HEAD, ZOOM VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS



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

—SAMIK ROY

COUNTRY HEAD, MODERN WORKPLACE, MICROSOFT INDIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



IMPERFECTIONS ARE NOT INADEQUACIES; THEY ARE REMINDERS THAT WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER —BRENE BROWN



YOUR WEEK AHEAD



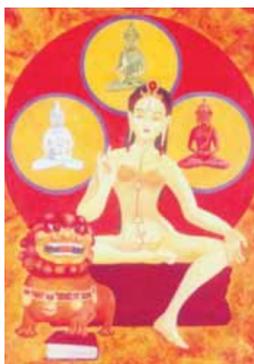
MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week your health will be at its best. You will experience harmony in your thinking and personality. You will be calm, friendly and support others. You give other people their space and are tolerant of their needs. You can create a safe and trusting environment for them and become their influence. This demonstrates a level of soft control and persuading others to your way of thinking. On the career front, long time challenges will be met. You will be focussed on what you need to do. In this process, you will regain self-confidence. On the personal front, you beam with happiness and enjoy the relationships. Your dreams have become reality and relationships will find a new meaning. Married couples will experience a stronger bond.

Lucky number 14  
Lucky colour Green  
Lucky day Thursday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

This week you are filled with imagination and feel at ease on the physical level. The negativity of the past is diluting and your stamina and creativity are on high plane. You will work hard, with a lot of enthusiasm to fulfill your dreams. New hobbies and interests will draw your attention. Your common sense and practical approach will lead you to success. On the career front, work plans held up due to obstacles start opening up with fruitful results. This week you can afford to take the risk as you shall find takers for your plans. Your past investments will start showing dividends now. You are also able to do justice to your professional and personal responsibilities. Married couples will enjoy marital bliss. Couples staying separately are likely to settle their disputes amicably.

Lucky number 18  
Lucky colour Silver  
Lucky day Wednesday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week you need to listen to your body with great care and compassion. Half of the problems can be sorted out with your attitude, therefore be positive. You may face health issues like back pain or low energy. Take good rest. Revisiting your spiritual rituals is on the cards. It might be helpful to give yourself the time and space to seek insight, that might prove healing. Career-wise, you seem to be disoriented and not satisfied with your current job. This is the right to switch the job. Prepare your resume, do research work to seek out the right opening and prepare yourself for the interview. You are very sensitive and emotional this week. Even a small matter could make you cry/feel low. Your mood swings, over-demanding nature could irritate your partner.

Lucky number 8  
Lucky colour Magenta  
Lucky day Friday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

Let go of all the past worries and live in the moment. Depression, isolation and insecurity — these are the three enemies that are likely to cause harm. Try to keep these three away from you. Your positive mindset will not only help in making you a successful person but also stay in great health. This week avoid red colour. On the career front, you are likely to discover a skill which was unknown to you all these while. With a new week, you are set on a new path, realising your potentials and weaknesses. Those who are looking to start their career may have to train yourself to specialise in one field. On the personal front, you tend to lose your temper at the slightest provocation and this will affect your relationships with your family and friends.

Lucky number 2  
Lucky colour Pink  
Lucky day Sunday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

You will behave immaturely when it comes to your health and will soon suffer the consequences. This time you cannot afford to take pressure and anxiety. Relax and take advice from a health professional. Health is the first and the greatest wealth, therefore, take time out for yourself. Make a resolution that you will engage in some kind of physical exercise for at least 30 minutes. A good message for your career is indicated. Your partner and you have a perfect understanding of professional matters and work for the same motive. Balance and determination these are the two keys for your success. On the personal front, your critical and analytical nature is at a peak. There may conflict in your love life. Let your partner grow and have a chance to express themselves.

Lucky number 20  
Lucky colour Mauve  
Lucky day Monday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

There is a sparkling and refreshing factor about your personality that makes you distinct this week. Your courage and risk-taking ability will open up new vistas. You feel healthy and fearless. You have the enthusiasm to experience, discover and enjoy life. You believe in yourself and follow your heart. This is a time when you need to truly believe and have no room for fear. Career-wise, you will feel that there is personal growth in the profession. You feel the highest potential for your life, reaching a state of renewal and new beginnings, where each day is an adventure and each moment is lived to the fullest. Your emotional strength is the greatest tool to win all challenges in life. Support of near and dear ones are on the cards. Have blind faith in your relationship.

Lucky number 19  
Lucky colour White  
Lucky day Tuesday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week you are taking life easy and are not worried about anything. Be careful as your irregular diet and unhealthy eating habits could take a toll on your health. You may face health issues like weight gain, lethargy and low stamina. Don't compromise on health. Do regular exercise to be on a good track. This week work will pick-up speed. It will be important for you to keep your balance in every possible way. Seniors will have high expectations from you. Do not let this make you nervous. Your communication is your tool, use it for everyone's good. On the personal front, you are optimistic. Your networking with people is strong. You will enjoy fulfillment in relationships. With your partner's emotional support, you will feel protected.

Lucky number 12  
Lucky colour Peach  
Lucky day Tuesday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week your health needs attention. Avoid any kind of physical and mental stress. The balance between body, mind and soul is required at this time. Some external negative forces are working against you. You may feel powerless as something comes to a crashing and sudden end, and you feel as if you are being attacked or backstabbed by someone else. On the career front, work is fine and you feel elated. New opportunities, new creative plans will be made, new projects open up in front of you. On the personal front, you may feel suffocated with no scope of self-expression in love. Those who are looking for love should have patience. This is not the right time. Those facing a rough time in married life should adopt the right attitude towards your marriage and partner.

Lucky number 11  
Lucky colour Beige  
Lucky day Sunday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

You tend to think with your heart, rather than your mind. You may lack rationality but you are highly intuitive. You are nurturing and caring towards others. Women are likely to suffer hormonal, thyroid or menopause issues. In such a case, get yourself checked. Take medication before it aggravates. On the career front, your personal values system will bring you the ultimate fulfillment and happiness. An appraisal or a very lucrative offer in on the cards. Try to look for opportunities that make you feel satisfied and that are aligned with your values. You have to do what feels right to you. The week is good for your emotional happiness as well. The ultimate satisfaction of a long-term relationship is indicated.

Lucky number 15  
Lucky colour Sky Blue  
Lucky day Thursday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

You are not a very health-conscious person. For you, pleasures are in simple traditions and rituals. You need to listen to your body and know what you are feeding it. It is advised to take on-time action. You may get healing with some homemade remedies otherwise you could burn a big hole in the pocket. For the past few weeks, your focus was mainly on your financial security. On the career front, you will need to adapt to the existing set of beliefs that are already in place, instead of being innovative. Personally, this is the time to value the relationships and understand that every bond in life has its meaning. If required, take help from a psychotherapist or a spiritual mentor to whom you will turn for wisdom.

Lucky number 17  
Lucky colour Grey  
Lucky day Saturday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This is a good week. You have both mental and physical agility and are full of anticipation. Those suffering from an ailment, please know that you will recover very fast. Now you want to have fun with mental activities of all kinds, including learning, exploring, and researching. You are filled with fresh energy and feel like an avid learner and an excellent student. This will lead you to learn various skills. These will help you professionally as well. You could prove a smart salesperson for the company and with your skills, you have achieved some unexpected target for the company you are working with. Your appraisal is likely. The grass is green on your personal side too. Those already in a relationship, it's very possible that it will deepen and become better.

Lucky number 13  
Lucky colour Brown  
Lucky day Saturday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

Be careful of wishful thinking or illusions in the choices you currently face. You are more of a dreamer who sees only beauty, outward attraction and excitement. Things will become worse if you continue to stay in your dreams and fantasies. Stay away from bad habits and bad company. This is the time to live in reality and away from any kind of temptations. Professionally, you are likely to take your business into a partnership where you will experience understanding, harmony and big motives between two people. The seed sown now will blossom into a tree of appreciation. On the personal front, you are rich by heart and with your pocket too. You are likely to indulge more, as you believe in quality over quantity and in enjoying a full and joyful life.

Lucky number 6  
Lucky colour Purple  
Lucky day Friday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



**ASTROTURF**  
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

# Be alert to live mindfully

It is time to see how we can reinvent the mind to come out with its whole-some power, which, if unfolded in full, would know no limits. But before that, let us go through a case study, how important it is to address one's habit tendencies. The person under consideration was brought for counselling a couple of years back by his family, worried about his erratic behaviour. He was made aware of all his fault lines, and was also advised how to overcome them. But nothing got registered in his preconditioned mind. His unseemly conduct hit hard familial peace and harmony all these years. Let us now examine his astrological pointers. He was born when Virgo *lagna* was rising with headless *Ketu* there itself. Lord of the sign Mercury was placed adverse to Saturn. Virgo sign and its lord, if free from any malefic influence is marked with high intelligence, discriminatory abilities, and a practical sense. But when afflicted, native's conduct becomes questionable. Even though their awareness level be low, they pretend to be all-knowing, and present themselves as a perfectionist. They suffer from what we may call 'I am the only right person syndrome'. They remain under the impres-

sion that others can't understand their merit. If ever, others don't prove true to their expectations, they become overcritical, and belittle them with caustic remarks. They try to impose their will on others. Saturn's adverse aspect further grants him with a fixated one track mind. The finer coordinates of his chart too are no good. The *lagna* sub-lord Venus occupying the 9th house is opposite mischievous Neptune and also adverse to erratic *Rahu*. That makes him stuck to illusionary dream perceptions, distanced from ground realities, and not open to look beyond for a reality check. Venus occupies the *nakshatra* owned by debilitated Mars, the 8th lord identified with serious difficulties, and incidentally the 5th sub-lord. Whereas linkage of Venus with the 9th and 5th houses makes him a religious person, its opposition to Neptune made him a fanatic. He can't digest if family members ignore his religion bound advisories, when he becomes loud. For, debilitated Mars conjunct Sun and opposite Jupiter points to his inflated ego, bound by self-defined dos and don'ts, and which also makes him irritable, impulsive, rash, temperamental,



intolerant and impatient. Mind indicator Moon is posited in Sagittarius, which makes him tactless and undiplomatic. He doesn't think before he speaks and could embarrass anybody with his unpleasant and ill-timed remarks. Moon too, occupies the *nakshatra* owned by Venus, which further adds to his self-delusional tendencies. On top of that, Saturn's adverse aspect to the Sun brings in a sense of fear and insecurity. Over a period of time, he has lost his sense of civility, sanity, order and reasons and his thought process has become incoherent, calling for immediate medical intervention. So, he neither remains at peace by himself nor does he leave any scope for others. Had the person tried to purify his mind as suggested, he would have come out of his preconditioning, and his scope of vision would have expanded. It would have then dawned upon him that the world doesn't necessarily move to anybody's asking. Second, nobody could ever be born a perfect. Becoming aware thus, he would have worked upon his inter-personal relationship skill and developed a sense of accommodation. Also, he would have been alert enough to consciously invoke his faculty of discrim-

inate intelligence for due diligence, before taking any move. His personal and domestic life would have become relatively happier. He keeps talking about the need to sincerely follow religious practices in order that life, post death turns out good. What he doesn't realise that unless we learn to remain happy as of now, which sets the trends of future, life can't have a pleasant ending, on which birth trends, post death, are premised. Even otherwise, if you ever lose the sense of alert, you may have to pay a heavy price. Immediately after COVID-19 cropped up in China, Taiwan took preventive measures in January itself, and so they remained least affected. Other countries, including India, did not take the signal seriously for long. As a result, more than two hundred thousand people, majority of them in the developed world, have already met their end, and the number is mounting every day. The topic continues... The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Write to him at G-102, Bharat Nagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110 025 Tel: 91-11-49848475/9818037273 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com

# the pioneer agenda

It's so much better to promote what you love than to bash what you hate  
— Jessica Alba



FROM THE INSIDE

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recipes to try at home

While almost all the industries have been impacted because of this pandemic, the ones which have been hit harder than the others are the Airlines & Tourism, Hospitality, Automobile, and Power, says ABHISHEK KUMAR, as he studies

## THE GREAT LOCKDOWN & ITS IMPACT ON THE INDIAN ECONOMY



There are certain events which remain etched in one's memory for a lifetime, for its impact is not limited to a particular geography and neither is it restricted to a particular aspect of social living, but encompasses almost every aspect of human life. The outbreak of coronavirus which has now taken the form of a pandemic affecting more than 180 countries across the globe is one such event. Starting from a small cluster in the capital of China's Hubei province, it has now affected almost everyone in one way or the other and has brought the world to a screeching halt.

Now as the governments across the world have resorted to the only proven public health measure, that is, social distancing to contain the spread of the virus, the second thing which has most severely been impacted is the economy and its growth with public health bearing most of the brunt.

While it seems plausible on the part of the government and the policy maker to take such a stringent action, doing so has severed the flow of goods and people and disrupted the economic activities at almost every level — right from farming to mining to industries to services. And with this, the economic deceleration is spreading as fast as the coronavirus itself.

### THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT

For any economic activity there has to be a supply side and a corresponding demand side and absence of either of the party stops the activity. With people staying at home, there has been a substantial dip in the supply side of the economic chain. First, because of a decrease in the labour participation on account of social distancing and lockdown, the productivity has declined as there are no workers running the factories and mills, no farmers tilling their land and no carriers to take goods from their source (factories and farms) to destination (consumers). This particular problem of lack of carriers has already resulted in wastage of many essential goods though the government is trying its best to keep the production of essential commodities and its supply chain intact.

Secondly, because of this slowdown in the economic activities the financial institutions are facing liquidity issues and a credit crunch is being felt everywhere. The banks are not looking anymore to increase their asset size and their focus has primarily shifted in keeping the balance sheet intact as many of them are still

recovering from the bad debt crisis. Also, the scars of the 2008-09 financial recession are vivid in their memories. To help in this regard and to see that there is no additional impact of coronavirus on India's lenders due to a potential slowdown, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced measures to pump more rupee liquidity into the banking system through its 'Long Term Repo Operations' and reduction of 25 basis point in its reverse repo rate. Additionally, the central bank has relaxed the asset classification norms which will help banks not to classify some of the (non-NPA) stressed borrowers as defaulters and has eased the liquidity coverage ratio for commercial banks from 100 percent to 80 percent (to be restored by April 1, 2021). All these measures will provide the much-needed liquidity and will keep the credit flowing.

While there is a clear visibility of restrictions on the supply side, the demand side too has started to contract, and this is further hampering the economy which might lead to a vicious cycle of further decrease in supply until the government intervenes and take necessary steps to keep the demand flowing. Usually, demand in any economy is driven primarily by private final consumption, private investments and government expenditure. According to the Economic Survey 2020, private final consumption contributed to around 60 percent of India's GDP. With people cutting down their consumption to their basic essential needs and foregoing their discretionary expenses, the private consumption has dampened. The private investments too have witnessed a slowdown primarily because of lower credit flow and secondly because of future uncertainty. Government expenditure, however, is expected to provide some relief and add to the GDP growth. The stimulus package of \$24 billion (₹1.7 lakh crore) in the form of *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna* to provide relief to people is likely to mitigate some impact and help the poor and daily wage earners sustain during these difficult times.

Another issue which is more relevant to the Indian economy is its huge informal sector which accounts for roughly 94 per cent of the total employment in the country and contributes about 45 per cent of the output. Further, this informal sector employs mostly contract workers or daily wage earners and migrant labourers who are from low-income households and they are the people who are the most impacted because of the lockdown.



The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has come up with a report and has projected a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 1.9 per cent for India in FY 2020-21. With this subdued forecast, India might witness its worst growth rate since its economic liberalization of 1991. Still, India is among the only two major economies expected to register a positive growth rate in FY 2020-21; the other being China, as the global growth rate in FY 2020-21 is expected to fall to negative 3 per cent.

### IMPACT ON KEY SECTORS

While almost all the industries have been impacted because of this pandemic, the ones which have been hit hard are the Airlines and Tourism, Hospitality, Automobile, and Power. Aviation and Tourism is probably the worst affected sector as all the passenger traffic-inbound, outbound and domestic has been grounded during the lockdown. As per International Air Transport Association (IATA), airlines globally can lose in passenger revenue of up to \$113 billion due to this crisis. Further, the industry is already low on cash reserves, and cancellation, rescheduling and lower traffic may lead to job losses and pay cuts. According to IATA report, more than 20 lakh jobs are at risk in India's aviation space and dependent sectors because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The hospitality sector which includes hotels, restaurants and foods and beverages have also seen a substantial downfall in its footfalls. Occupancy across hotels in key cities have declined rapidly by a staggering 45 percentage points compared to last year which has never been seen before. Additionally, many restaurants which already run on a very thin margin will be forced to layoff its staffs or close its operations.

Automobile sector's slowdown is also clearly visible. With China accounting for more than 27 percent of imports of India's automotive part and closure of their factories, there has been a delay in the production and delivery of vehicles. Almost all the major manufactures witnessed a drop in its March sales which is the peak period of inventory clearance for the industry. Maruti Suzuki India's domestic passenger vehicle sales fell 47 per cent and Hyundai witnessed a drop of 40 per cent. Further, the requirement to comply with the BSIV emission norms which was to be implemented from April 1 have decreased the sales further as new BSIV vehicles were few and most of the companies are pushing the pro-

duction of new BSIV compliant vehicles to a later date.

Also, as most of the factories are closed during this lockdown and with fewer vehicles plying on the road, the consumption of electricity and petrol/diesel has come down substantially. While the electricity consumption contracted by 26.6 per cent for April 1-10 2020 over last year, consumption of petrol fell by 16.4 per cent and diesel by 24.2 per cent in March 2020 on a year-on-year basis.

The stock market too has reacted to this pandemic and BSE Sensex fell from the level of 41,000 in mid-February 2020 to 29,000 by the end of March 2020. A decrease of over 30 per cent in such a short period of time has resulted not only in the loss of investors wealth but also in their trust in the capital market.

### THE WAY FORWARD

The COVID-19 became a pandemic primarily because it is novel and till date no proven cure for this disease has been found out. So, it's clear that once a cure or a vaccine, which will help people build immunity against the virus, is found, the need of social distancing will gradually phase out letting loose the neck of the global economy which it has presently gripped. Till such a cure is found, social distancing, full-scale testing and rigorous quarantine is the only solution to restrict the spread of the virus.

And while the medical practitioners are doing their best to control its spread and finding a possible cure, the government need to keep the economic activities to such a sustainable level from which it can be rebound easily once the pandemic is over. While a stimulus package was already announced in March, the extension of this lockdown for another three weeks would require another such package.

To ease the load of households and businesses struggling to make their regular payments, the central bank has advised all the lenders to provide a moratorium of three months on mortgage and other loan payment for residential and commercial borrowers. However, borrowers need to be educated of such measures so that they can benefit from it in case they are facing any liquidity issue.

Another focus point of the government should be to take care of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which may not have the adequate liquidity to survive the crisis.

“THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) HAS COME UP WITH A REPORT AND HAS PROJECTED A GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) GROWTH OF 1.9 PER CENT FOR INDIA IN FY 2020-21. WITH THIS SUBDUED FORECAST, INDIA MIGHT WITNESS ITS WORST GROWTH RATE SINCE ITS ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION OF 1991”



WHEN IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE GOALS CANNOT BE REACHED, DON'T ADJUST THE GOALS, ADJUST THE ACTION STEPS  
— CONFUCIUS

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING TAKES A BAD HIT

COVID-19 has brought the real estate industry to a grinding halt. There is a level of uncertainty that was not seen in previous economic downturns, say **MINIYA CHATTERJI & DHAVAL MONANI**, as they share solutions to save it

**T**he real estate sector contributes 9% to India's GDP and employs over 40 million people. It is a bellwether to the economy that has been going through a severe downturn over the last few quarters with affordable housing emerging as one of the few sustainable asset classes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the industry to a grinding halt and brought in a level of uncertainty that was not seen in previous economic downturns. For the first time in an economic crisis people are also facing a genuine threat to life, mass reverse migration and prolonged isolation.

There is consensus that the pandemic will adversely affect the real estate sector. The real estate sector was already reeling from high inventory, low sales and cash flow issues but going ahead the situation is likely to worsen and the government should look to take pro active measures shore it up.

The lockdown will most likely be extended in areas that have emerged as hotspots across the country. We are likely to see layoffs and salary cuts across the board. Besides construction, retail, hospitality and entertainment sectors, other large employers and income generators with multiplier effects are likely to be the worst hit. Conversations with hospitality leaders indicate that most are factoring in virtually no revenue over the next two months and have brought in severe cost cutting measures.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SEGMENT?

We understand the affordable housing market broadly as homes priced under 40 lac rupees across tier I, II and III cities. This is a fairly new segment in India that mostly came into the picture 2006-07 onwards. Since then in downturns it has remained the most resilient.

The lowest end of the market, units priced ₹5 lakhs to ₹15 lakhs is largely catered to by the government under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). The government is doing a fairly good job but unable to meet demand. The current model that mostly outsources the construction to contractors is inefficient and has high working capital requirements. It also doesn't assign any value to the underlying land and is a huge drain on government resources. On the demand side, this segment is predominantly first time buyers who are less financially sophisticated and invest in a home as their primary asset.

It is unlikely that there will be any sales in the affordable housing sector over the next quarter and possibly the second as well. Buyers tend to postpone their



buying and particularly upgrading decisions in times of economic uncertainty. The biggest challenge though will be access to capital. The principal funders in the current environment will be banks and private equity players, and the expected cost of capital is likely to be 18-20% versus 12-15% pre-crisis. This could hamper the sector going ahead for the next few quarters.

Post crisis we believe the demand of these homes will increase dramatically for the following reasons. One, government homes are significantly undervalued and have easy access to financing. Second, real estate and particularly homes are already the most preferred investment vehicle in India. Especially in times of such uncertainty the economically weaker segment and the low income group would want to create an asset that would guarantee some security for their

families. Third, we believe that post COVID-19 people, the sub 40 lakh market residents will opt not to upgrade and stay with their current homes, whereas the market immediately above 40 lakhs is often people up-grading from the sub 40 lakh market. It is therefore possible that over the next 6 to 8 quarters the affordable housing segment will be a bigger part of the overall housing market.

However, with the current model the government makes some loss on delivery of the unit, a complete loss on the value of the land and loss of interest on the working capital required. To address a substantially increased demand after COVID-19 ebbs, the government will have to create policies to incentivise supply and ease the bottlenecks to demand. The government would have to explore alternate models and a Public Private Partnership (PPP) could be one such.

**TO ADDRESS A SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED DEMAND AFTER COVID-19 EBBS, THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO CREATE POLICIES TO INCENTIVISE SUPPLY AND EASE THE BOTTLENECKS TO DEMAND**

## WE PROPOSE THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD DO SOME OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Structure developer friendly PPPs that incentivise large players to participate and create mega projects, this will reduce leakages and improve quality as compared to contracts to small local players
- Incentivise developers investing in affordable housing by bringing them under priority sector lending
- Grant a one time one year moratorium on all debt and interest payments
- Recast project specific debt for affordable housing projects and bring it under the anvil of priority sector lending
- Waive off stamp duty for affordable housing loans
- In case of housing under 40 lakhs, the government could classify mortgages under priority sector lending to dras-

tically reduce interest rates and Equated Monthly Installments (EMIs)

- Give accelerated single window clearance under set timeframes
- Extend income tax exemption under Section 80 IB(A) and completely remove MAT retrospectively

These incentives would not put a load on government finances but incentivise both developers and buyers. This could help the economy in general to come out of the downturn much faster.

*Dhaval Monani is CEO First Home Realty Services; Director of Affordable Housing at Centre for Sustainability, Anant National University and Dr. Miniya Chatterji is CEO Sustain Labs Paris; Adjunct Professor, SciencesPo Paris; Director of Centre for Sustainability, Anant National University*

## FROM PAGE 1

# The Great Lockdown & its Impact on the Indian Economy

**M**any of them are going to shut their shops and many might ask their banks to restructure their loans. With the limited fiscal resources that we have, we cannot help all the ailing SMEs but turning a blind eye to their ailment will only worsen the situation. Accordingly, the government and the central bank need to find some innovative solution. For instance, providing 'bridge loans' to such SMEs at zero interest for the duration of this crisis with an extended repayment period might provide them some support in sustaining their operations.

The entire idea of lockdown rests on two assumptions. First that it will help in checking the spread of the virus so that public health is not jeopardised. Second is that it can be enforced only for a limited period of time and extending it beyond certain duration may not be feasible as doing so will bring down the economy to such a level that people may start dying of malnutrition and hunger. While it is said that social distancing has helped contain the spread of the virus to a certain extent (as per Dr V K Paul, a government health expert and member of NITI Aayog, from doubling every three days, the number of active cases is now doubling every eight days and instead of 23,000 active cases in India as of April 23, the number could have been around 1,00,000 had lockdown not been implemented); the trick is to find the duration for which the government can afford to keep the people and economy in the lockdown stage. It is because during this lockdown there wouldn't be much economic activity and the government would need to provide for all the marginal section of the society. Doing so for an elongated period of time would, however, blow a dent to the government's

fiscal deficit which is already high. And increasing it further would make the government's debt burden unsustainable, leaving it with very little space to intervene in future when necessary.

The policy makers appear to be aware of this trade-off and in the second stage of the lockdown it has listed a set of economic activities which could be carried out in a restrained manner with all precautions in place so that essential goods and services keep on flowing. Another approach which the government can take is to identify the areas which are least affected because of the virus and start economic activities there at a much larger scale. For instance, Sikkim which is the only Indian state without any recorded Covid-19 positive case as of April 14 may resume its economic activity in full scale with the necessary precautions in place. Also, identifying and allowing only healthy workers to join back the work would be a critical step in this direction. If the government follows such steps, then it should ensure that all the poor and contract workers including daily wage earners who are not able to join workforce because of their health conditions are provided with essential foods and amenities so that they can survive in this period of crisis.

## A SUBSTANTIAL SHIFT

There is no denying the fact that the world will not be the same once this pandemic ends. The way we live, the way the businesses and trades are done, the way Universities carry on their lectures and the way corporates conduct their HR practices is all going to witness a substantial change. Technology and its usage will become more of a norm of life. Students will get used to online

classes of their favourite professors and video conferencing will get more sophisticated with adoption of virtual reality in almost all offices. And while not every job can be done from home, the resistance to work from home is likely to see a substantial fall as the corporates would get used to and become efficient in getting the same productivity from their employees which they had when they used to work from their office desk. This may initially increase the technology cost but in the long run may prove cost effective as the corporates would be able to cut down their rental expense and employees would be able to save their commute time and cost. This in turn would help in easing the traffic congestion and probably might help people breath fresh air again. Going to movie theatres and restaurants will not be the same again. With a splurge in the subscription based streaming services already in place, movie producers will release their movies directly on these platforms. The millennials are likely to learn the forgotten art of cooking delicious food at home and this will come as a sigh of relief to their mothers and grandmothers. Whatever the future holds for us, much has to be done in this hour of crisis and only a collective effort of everyone would help in bringing an end to this crisis. Once the situation is brought under control with a little nudge from India's hot and humid climate which is likely to knock on our doors in a month or so, what we need to do is to reignite hope and rebuild India.

*The writer is the author of Index Investing: A Low Cost, Low Risk Strategy to Investment Success, published by SAGE Publications India*

# Building inner strength

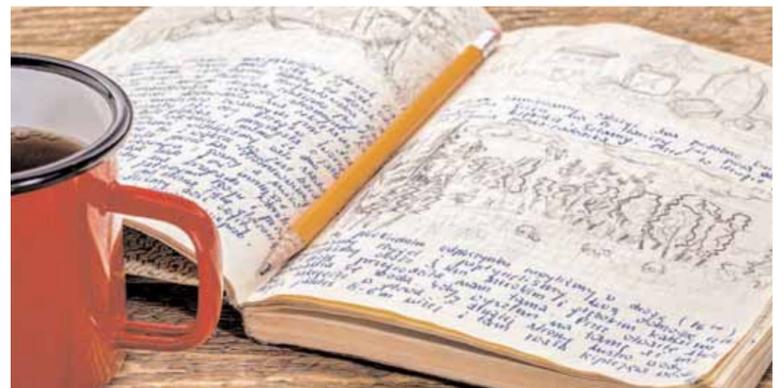
Through the written word, one can explore one's own thoughts, feelings, impulses, memories, and goals, writes **SHOBHA NIHALANI**

**W**ords have power. They have the power to change the way we think, the way we behave and even the way we feel. During a lockdown, we are in a confined space and restricted in many ways. The state of the world adds a sense of despair and fear to the mix. While all this turmoil exists outside ourselves, some of us will face inner turmoil as well. Our self-talk has a great effect on our psyche. As much as we may critique our external world, we also have a habit of being self-critical. Not just that, but when someone says anything negative, it also affects how we feel about ourselves.

These feelings accompanied by our inner self talk can affect us deeply. At this time, it is important to exercise self-care. Focussing on the needs of others is all very noble, but it is absolutely crucial to carry on with inner calm. The words we say to ourselves can affect our mental state in various ways.

According to neuroscientist Andrew Newberg, M.D. and therapist Mark Robert Waldman, words can literally change your brain: 'a single word has the power to influence the expression of genes that regulate physical and emotional stress. A single negative word releases dozens of stress-producing hormones. According to the experts, using the right words can transform our reality, which means that the more self-talk that focuses on positive words, the better the outcome of our reality.'

It all sounds a bit too simple — change your internal talk and everything around you will improve. But apparently, it's not all mumbo-jumbo. Scientific studies of brain scans show that



if we just change what we say to ourselves, we can bring about a big difference in our lives.

From my perspective, I feel that writing can bring about that kind of transformation, especially when thoughts are loaded with simmering emotions. Many times we are affected by what others say to us, or by a negative rant by our inner critic. By writing down these pent-up feelings, we actually start calming down. For me personally, the legendary figure of Mirabai has often inspired me to face inner and outer negativity with courage, compassion, and my favourite activity — writing.

The purpose of writing or journaling is to reflect on the stream of thoughts and feelings. Simply write whatever comes to mind, don't worry about grammar or spelling. You are not sharing this with anyone. This method is more about being inwardly attentive, and letting the words flow onto a page. Through the written word, one can explore one's own thoughts,

feelings, impulses, memories, and goals.

Negativity will not necessarily disappear right away. The emotions will linger, but their power to affect our mindset, actions and decisions will reduce over time. Writing sincerely and truthfully is a form of spiritual healing. Very often, writing brings up deep-seated feelings that have been bothering us for a long time. Writing from our most troubled selves, we will be able to see things differently, and sometimes make molehills out of mountains, rather than the other way around!

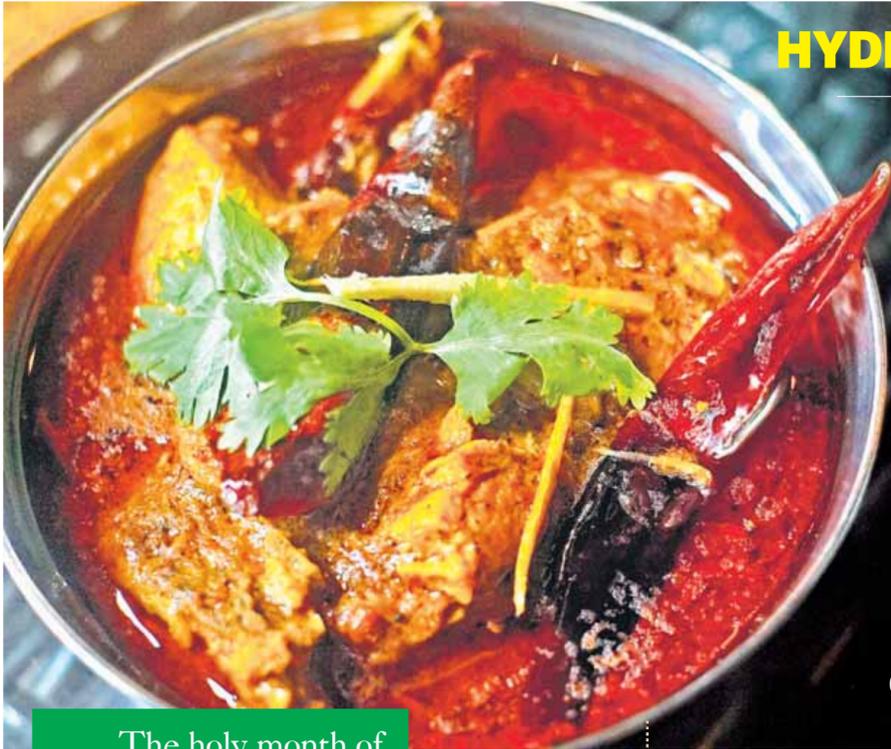
This form of regular writing is not a complaint book; it is not about wallowing in self-pity or ranting. It is more to express our true feelings that trigger a negative reaction — for example, to notice when we feel bad about feeling bad. It gives us pause to understand our inner self. Don't write as an obligation, it's not something to add to a to-do list. Use it as a tool to communicate

with your truest inner self, to be perceptive of pent-up emotions and reflect on them.

If writing doesn't come naturally to you, then start by asking yourself questions. What issue is bothering me? What thoughts are creating these feelings? Why do I keep having these thoughts? Am I being honest with myself? What decision have I taken that has affected me or others? An even simpler approach is to simply write down what emotion you are feeling, keeping a daily mood log.

Writing down our most personal, deepest thoughts and feelings is a courageous act. To enable it to flow, it is important to be non-judgmental of ourselves. You can choose to face your inner critic in the kind, resilient way that Mirabai faced the doubters around her. How the sentence is structured doesn't matter. Just let the words spill out.

*The writer is an author. Her 10th book, The Blue Jade, released recently*



## HYDERABADI DUM KA MURGH

### WHAT YOU NEED:

#### For Marination

Chicken: 1.5kg  
Yogurt: ½ cup  
Red chili powder: 1 tbsp  
Coriander powder: 2 tbsp  
Turmeric powder: 1 tsp  
Garam masala powder: 2 tsp  
Salt: 2 tsp  
Lemon juice: 1 tbsp

#### For curry

Brown Onions: 3, large, divided  
Ginger: 2" knob  
Garlic: 8-10 cloves, large  
Green chillies: 1-2  
Oil: ½ cup, divided  
Bay leaves: 2  
Cinnamon: 1" stick  
Green cardamom: 3  
Cloves: 3  
Mace: a small piece  
Tomato paste: 2 tbsp  
Cashew nuts: 15, powdered  
Water: 1 cup  
Salt to taste  
Cilantro leaves: 2 tbsp, chopped  
Lemon juice: 1 tbsp

### HOW TO MAKE:

- ❑ Mix together ingredients for marinade and coat the chicken pieces liberally. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight, if you have time.
- ❑ Chop 2 large onions of them very finely. Set aside.
- ❑ Similarly, make a fine paste with ginger, garlic and green chillies. Set aside.
- ❑ Thinly slice the remaining onion and fry it in 3-4 tbsp oil till golden brown and crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Set aside.
- ❑ Heat rest of the oil in a large thick-bottomed pan. Add whole spices like bay leaves, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves and mace. Allow to crackle and become fragrant.
- ❑ Now add the onion paste and sauté on medium heat till thick and light golden, 15-20 minutes.
- ❑ Then add ginger-garlic-chili paste and sauté for a couple of minutes till the

raw smell is gone.

- ❑ Then add the fried onion slices (reserving 2 tbsp for later) and tomato paste. Mix well, stir and cook till you see the oil starting to separate at the sides.
- ❑ Now add the marinated chicken and any leftover marinade juices. Toss with the masala and cook on medium-high for a few minutes to seal the meat juices.
- ❑ Add the powdered nuts and stir well to combine. Add a cup of water and check seasoning.
- ❑ Cover and cook on low till chicken is tender, around 30 minutes.
- ❑ Open lid and reduce gravy further if desired. Ideally, the curry should be very thick.
- ❑ Sprinkle the reserved fried onions, chopped cilantro and lemon juice on top. Remove from heat and keep covered till serving.

The holy month of Ramadan is incomplete without lip-smacking food. Eid al-Fitr marks the celebration of food and faith. The celebrations may be restrained this time owing to the lockdown, but you can always add some extra flavours to your day by trying new recipes.

Chef Varun M.B,  
Executive Chef,  
Novotel Hyderabad  
Airport shares four  
nourishing recipes for  
your Ramadan iftar



# Ramadan

## RECIPES TO TRY AT HOME

### WHAT YOU NEED:

Paneer (cottage cheese): 1 cup, cut into cubes  
Onion: 1 cup, sliced  
Tomato: 1 cup  
Curd (yogurt): 1/2 cup, whisked  
Black pepper: 1/2 tsp  
Bay leaf: 1 piece  
Cinnamon: 1 inch stick  
Green cardamoms: 2 pieces  
Cloves: 2 pieces  
Cumin seeds: 1/2 tsp  
Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tsp  
Coriander powder: 1 tsp  
Garam masala powder: 1 tsp  
Kasuri methi: 1 tsp  
Oil: 1 tbsp  
Ghee: 1 tbsp  
Salt to taste

## PANEER SIYA MIRCH

### HOW TO MAKE:

- ❑ Heat oil in pan and add chopped ginger and garlic. Cook for about 1/2 min.
- ❑ Then add sliced onion and cook till the onions become light golden brown. Once done let the onion mixture cool for about 5 min.
- ❑ Once the onion come to room temperature, grind it in the mixture grinder to a smooth paste.
- ❑ In another pan heat ghee and add all dry spices like cloves, cardamom, bay leaves, cinnamon

stick and cumin seeds and cook for about 1/2 min and then add the onion paste to spices. Cook for about a min.

- ❑ Then add Indian spices like coriander powder, black pepper powder, garam masala and salt to taste. Cook for about 2 min or till the gravy is cooked well.
- ❑ Add curd to the mixture and mix well till the curd incorporates with the gravy.
- ❑ You can sprinkle some black pepper to the gravy.
- ❑ Now the gravy is ready. Add paneer to the gravy and mix well the gravy and also sprinkle some kasuri Methi.

❑ Paneer Kali Mirchi sabji is ready to serve. Enjoy the delicious kali mirch paneer with roti, chapatti, paratha or naan.



Chef **VARUN MB**, Executive Chef,  
Novotel Hyderabad Airport

## PATTHAR KA GOSHT

### WHAT YOU NEED:

Mutton leg sliced: 1 kg  
Black pepper powder: 10 gms  
Garam Masala: 5 gms  
Hung Yoghurt: 200 gms  
Raw papaya paste: 30 gms  
Kachri powder: 10 gms  
Lemon juice: 50 ml  
Mint fresh chopped: 15 gms  
Black Cardamom powder: 10 gms  
Cinnamon powder: 5 gms  
Red Chilli powder: 10 gms  
Turmeric powder: 10 gms  
Oil: 10 ml  
Ghee: 10 gms  
Roasted Chana powder: 20 gms  
Salt to taste

### HOW TO MAKE:

- ❑ Marinate the mutton pieces with ginger, garlic, chilly, pattha ka pool, black peppercorn, refined oil, salt, garam masala powder, kachri powder and raw papaya in a bowl and keep aside for two to three hours.
- ❑ Make a mixture of yoghurt and the remaining spices and mix them with mutton and keep aside for an hour.
- ❑ Heat the Tawa and apply ghee.
- ❑ Place the marinated mutton over the heated Tawa and cook both the sides well.
- ❑ Serve hot.



# THE GOLDEN BOY OF INDIA

**RAPID FIRE**

**Describe yourself in 3 words:** Analytical, driven and practical

**One thing you hate the most in others:** People don't give compliments often but are always ready to criticise. I feel we should be lavish in our praises

**Favourite holiday destination:** Latvia

**Who/what are you most inspired of:** Roger Federer is my ultimate hero. The way he interacts with fans despite being a champion is touching. I don't like people who are brash and Federer is the epitome of grace and humility

**Favourite beverage:** Tea. Mom calls me a 'tea totaller, chai bhai'

**Last film you watched:** *Angrazi Medium*. Feel sad Irrfan Khan is no more

**What does snooker mean to you:** Transports me to another world. A reality away from reality

**How do you start your day:** Tea

**City you wish to visit:** London, to watch Federer play on the centre court at Wimbledon

**Where do you see yourself in 10 years:** Mentoring kids

**Celeb crush:** Catherine Zeta Jones

**What do you do to relax:** Go for walks. Breathe in some fresh air

**Guilty pleasure:** Chocolates

**Favourite snooker player:** Ronnie O'Sullivan

**Deal with anger/anxiety:** I welcome rather than resist them

**One thing you still have from childhood:** A few pics with mom and brother



## Lost dad when I was 6....

I was born in 1985 in Pune, most of my childhood was spent in Kuwait. My mom had travelled to India for my delivery and returned later. When I was 5 years old, we had gone on vacation to the US and got to know while returning that Iraq had invaded Kuwait. So we were stuck at Belgrade airport for a few days. We later returned to India and settled in Bengaluru. In 1992, my dad passed away. I was just six and my brother, Shri Advani, was 14 years old then. My mom raised us both single-handedly. Personally, I wish I was older when I lost my dad. But my mom is so strong that she made me strong too.

## Snooker became part of my life when I was 11....

Snooker happened to me in 1996 when I was just a 11-year-old. My brother would play at a club nearby. I wasn't allowed to play there as I was young and short. I used to observe the way they played and two weeks later, when I got an opportunity, I potted the ball in my first attempt. That's how I developed an interest towards the sport. Growing up, I played a lot of other sports. But snooker just drew me in. I learnt about a summer coaching camp and later went to the Karnataka State Billiards Association where they have state of the art facilities. I met my coach Arvind Savur there. I feel that if one is passionate about something, one generally takes the necessary steps to pursue it.

## Wasn't sure if I'd take up snooker as a career...

I had no clue that I would make a career out of snooker until I turned 16, when I started playing in the junior national level championships. Also I reached the world junior semi-finals that year. That gave me the confidence to take this up a notch and make it my profession.

## Travel changed my perspective....

When I was really young I was a quite naughty and used to throw tantrums. I later calmed down in school and was definitely not the bullying kind. My perspective towards life and people and a lot of other things changed after I started travelling because of the game and learnt about the cultures of different countries and places. But in school I was by and large a quiet, obedient kid.

## Was almost knocked out before winning my 1st medal....

My first world title was in 2003 in China when I was 17 years old. Although I won many medals later, the first one is always special and memorable to me as it was my debut. I almost got knocked out in the first round but one lucky shot changed me fate. I beat a Pakistani player in the finals. It was a very emotional moment for me when I won the first title. I didn't know how big the achievement was until I landed in India and started getting recognised.

## Mom had to break FD for England tournament...

I feel in any sport you don't get support from the authorities until you establish

yourself. You have to pay from your own pocket until you start winning. It's definitely an investment. Even with me, my mom had to break an FD the first time I travelled to England for a tournament. When you make a name, people slowly start showing support. Now with the Khelo India initiative, I feel the times have changed.

## Want to change billiards' perception in India....

I have now reached a stage wherein I want to change the perception people have of billiards in India. They feel snooker is a game for the rich and elite. Most sportspersons I know have all come from a middle-class background. In fact tennis and badminton is much more expensive as you need to travel a lot to get your rankings up. So a friend and I have started Cue Schools by Pankaj Advani (CSPA) wherein we want to bring sports to kids at school and so we can create opportunities, or possibly even future champions.

## The time I almost gave up snooker...

Everyone has their highs and lows. In 2005, I started doing well in billiards. It was a unique year as I had won the junior and senior Asian Billiards Championship. It was a rare feat. But after that there was a lull which lasted for about 18 months. I wanted to give up on everything then. But at the end of 2006, we had the Asian Games in Doha and I decided that I would let that decide the fate of my career.

Shri, who was in Australia then, had come down to India and was there to motivate me through that period. That's when the switch happened. I almost lost to an unseeded player and it would have been a shock if I did. I may have given up the sport for good. But then I could turn it around and went on to win the Gold. That moment when you see the flag go up and the National Anthem being played, one realises that these are the moments you play for. You always give your best. There will always be lows, but the highs make up for it.

## Wanted to become a pilot...

I wanted to become a pilot growing up, but didn't know how complicated it was. The subjects and things needed to become one were too tough. But I still got to travel the world thanks to my sports and I am happy. Now I am happy just sitting at home as I have travelled pretty much everywhere in the world. Especially now, when it's the new normal to stay at home.

## Trying to improve my vocabulary...

I like watching TV shows as am not much of a reader. I like spending time with friends and family. During this lockdown am trying to learn something new. I am trying to make sense of the stock market although I don't understand much of it (laughs). I am also trying to improve vocabulary.

## When I was punished...

Once in class, when I was young, my friend and I were doing weird high fives which was very girly at that point. I had

Pankaj Arjan Advani is a name that needs no introduction; his achievements are so many that every Indian takes pride in his accomplishments. Advani has brought India 23 world championships in billiards and many an accolade, has achieved a hat-trick of hat-tricks in English billiards. He held the World, Asian and Indian National Championship titles simultaneously in five different years: 2005, 2008, 2012, 2017 and 2019. He is currently the only player ever to win world titles in both the long and short formats of snooker (15-red standard, and 6-red) and both formats of English billiards (time and point). Advani is also India's first world champion in 6-red snooker. Arjuna Award, Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awardee, Advani has put India on the all-time list of snooker world records. He won his first ever title at the age of 12 and went on to set other records at the state and national levels. The 35-year-old 'Golden Boy' of India speaks to THE PIONEER's K Ramya Sree about domination of the green-topped table, his childhood, losing his dad at a young age and more....

seen it in a movie and we were doing that when the teacher entered. He got furious and made us stand in two corners in the class. Everyone was laughing at us throughout the period.

## A strange intrusion...

A strange thing occurred 10 years back. I was with my friends on New Year's Eve and wore a nice blazer to attend the party. I had also walked the ramp for a fashion designer. Somebody whom I had met for the first time, met me later and whispered in my ear that one must not wear light colours at night. If it was the present me, I would have said it's my business. But back then I was dumbfounded.

## The red carpet moment...

Sometimes we complicate life with too many thoughts. I feel one needs to dream big. If you limit yourself, you are limiting your abilities. Speaking about my sport itself, I was apprehensive initially about how I'd win the world title. I just had that thought, but the seed was sown. I was studying BCom in Mahavir Jain College and they were really supportive of my sport. During my first year I bumped into the chairman who asked me what I



With mom and Brother

was doing in college. I said I was attending classes as much as I could as in due course I'll have to travel. He replied saying that I must go practice and must win the world championship. That took me aback. When I did eventually win the championship, they gave me a red carpet treatment with fireworks, a cash reward and waived the tuition fees for the rest of the course. So such encouragement is always good. I feel if you surround yourself with positive people it makes a difference.

## We should make other federations as big as BCCI....

The Sports Ministry has been supportive despite budget constraints. Initially it was such that you pay from your own pocket and the government reimburses later. Now it has improved as you also get advances before the trip. I also feel that the government should focus on sporting events that take place annually or biennially. They handle 64 sports federations and considering all those factors, the work they are doing is pretty good. But it's the state which cuts down the support for games that don't make it to the Asian games. We cannot constantly follow up as sportspersons. I feel we should make other federations as big as BCCI.



Pankaj Advani receives the Khel Ratna from former President APJ Abdul Kalam



The President, Ram Nath Kovind presenting the Padma Bhushan Award to Pankaj Advani

