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CORONA'S PRIVACY CONCERNS

MONEY 8
CENTRE TO GET RS 1.6 L-CR FROM RECORD EXCISE DUTY HIKE ON FUEL

SPORTS 11
DRIVE TO SUCCEED DIFFERENT FOR KOHLI AND SMITH: WARNER

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY MAY 7, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



KALYANRAM GETS TWO IN A ROW

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ELON MUSK BACKS GENDER-NEUTRAL PARENTING, BABY'S NAME REVEALED

Tesla Inc CEO Elon Musk and Canadian singer Grimes, who announced on Tuesday the birth of their first child together, plan to join a growing number of families opting for a gender-neutral parenting style. The approach has become increasingly popular as more parents reject gender stereotypes - such as dressing girls in pink and boys in blue, instead allowing children to make such choices for themselves. 'I don't want to gender them in case that's not how they feel in their life,' Grimes, 32, whose real name is Claire Boucher, told fans in a YouTube live stream in February while discussing her pregnancy.

FIRST HINDU YOUTH JOINS PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

In a first, a Pakistani Hindu youth has become the first person from the minority community to join the Pakistan Air Force. Rahul Dev has been recruited as a General Duty Pilot Officer, PAF said in a tweet. Dev hails from Tharparkar district of Sindh province. Sharing the picture of the young man, the PAF recently tweeted, "Good news during #COVID19 tense situation. Thar rocked again... Congratulations #RahulDev who hails from very remote village of Tharparkar has been selected as GD Pilot in #PAF". Though Dev's exact age is not known, those inducted in PAF at his level are often around 20. The official Radio Pakistan on Wednesday said it is "for the first time in Pakistan's history" that a Hindu youth has been recruited as a general duty pilot officer in PAF.

UN LEADER SAYS 1B PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HARD HIT BY VIRUS

The UN's leader said Wednesday the world's 1 billion people living with disabilities are among the hardest hit by the coronavirus and called for them to have equal access to prevention and treatment of COVID-19. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the pandemic is revealing the extent to which people are marginalized and is intensifying the inequalities that people with disabilities already face, such as poverty and higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse. His video message was released alongside a UN report that said people with disabilities are estimated to be 15 per cent of the world's population and 46 per cent of the world's people who are older than 60.

ADMIN OF INSTAGRAM GROUP 'BOIS LOCKER ROOM' ARRESTED

Delhi Police's Cyber cell has arrested the admin of the Instagram group which was being used to share obscene messages and morphed pictures of underage girls on the social media site, officials said on Wednesday. Police said the 18-year-old admin of the group, known as 'Bois Locker Room', appeared for his class 12 board examinations this year. He is a student of a school in Delhi-NCR. Four group members, who all are majors, above 18 years, have joined the probe on Wednesday, a senior police official said. The juveniles, who are part of the group, are being quizzed at their home in the presence of their parents and members of NGOs.

Lure of liquor revenue trumps Jagan's poll promise

2

Maharashtra farmers seek Thackeray's nod to access land

5

Hiring during April dips by 62% due to lockdown

8

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Paush & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

Tithi: Purnima: 04:14 pm

Nakshatram: Swati: 11:07 am

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 01:48 pm - 03:23 pm

Yamagandam: 05:50 am - 07:26 am

Varjyam: 04:08 pm - 05:34 pm

Gulika: 09:01 am - 10:37 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 12:44 am - 02:10 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:47 am - 12:38 pm

VUJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly sunny

Temp: 40/28

Humidity: 50%

Sunrise: 05:47 am

Sunset: 06:38 pm

Current Weather Conditions Updated May 6, 2020 5:00 PM

Covid-19 forces new SEC to put off local body polls in AP

● 6 weeks after Ramesh Kumar deferred elections, successor follows suit

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The much-anticipated elections to rural and urban local bodies in Andhra Pradesh will not happen now, much to the disappointment of the ruling YSR Congress Party. On Wednesday, the Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission headed by Justice V Kanagaraj announced indefinite postponement of local body polls in the wake of Coronavirus pandemic situation and uncertainty in the lockdown period. The local body elections which were supposed to be held in the last week of March had earlier been postponed for a period of six weeks by previous SEC Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar, who cited



conducive for conducting elections is restored, as per the Supreme Court directions. At the same time, the State High Court also ruled that the election notification cannot be issued unless the state government removes its party colours from various government buildings (including gram panchayats) within three weeks from the date that the lockdown is lifted. Since the latest lockdown orders from the state government say that no public gatherings can be allowed in any zone until May 17, the local body election process continues to be withheld.

Coronavirus spread as the reason, angering Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and ultimately led to the sacking of Ramesh Kumar through an ordinance. Now, the six-week period has come to an end and since there is no possibility of conducting elections to the local bodies in the present situation, the new SEC also had no option but to postpone the elections, until a situation

Decision on 75% reservation in jobs for locals challenged in HC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A petition was filed in the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Wednesday challenging the state government's decision to accord 75 per cent quota for locals in private industrial jobs. The petitioner, Varalaxmi argued through her counsel Adinarayana Rao, senior High Court advocate, that the decision was regressive and denies the Constitutional guarantee to give equal opportunities to everyone. Government counsel Sumanth Reddy argued that only industrialists have the jurisdiction to question the government's decision to accord 75 per cent quota for locals in private industrial jobs and not lawyers or other individuals. However, the High Court admitted the petition since it was filed in the public interest. The court directed govern-



ment counsel to file a counter affidavit on the Constitutional validity of reserving 75 per cent jobs for locals. The High Court gave the State Government one month to file the counter affidavit. In 2019, the Andhra Pradesh government had made it mandatory for existing and upcoming industries in the state to reserve 75 per cent jobs for locals. This has been done through the passage of a new law called the Andhra Pradesh Employment of Local candidates in the Industries/Factories Bill, 2019. In the past, AP chapter of Confederation of Indian Industry criticised the government's move to accord reservations only to locals saying such a decision would be counter-productive as industrialists look at returns on investments by hiring meritorious and skilled people.

AP's Covid-19 recovery rate up, 140 discharged in one day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh which is already ranked first in the country in conducting the number of Covid-19 tests, has achieved another first by recording the highest recovery rate in the country. In the past 14 hours, 140 people have recovered from the dreaded disease and were discharged from hospitals. With this, a total of 729 people have so far recovered from coronavirus in the state and were sent back home. The discharge rate in AP is higher than the country's average recovery rate. Similarly, the number of new cases is also gradually decreasing in the

District-wise Covid-19 recovered / discharged

Krishna	61
Kurnool	39
Chittoor	20
Anantapur	10
East Godavari	4
Prakasam	2
West Godavari	2
Kadapa	1
Guntur	1

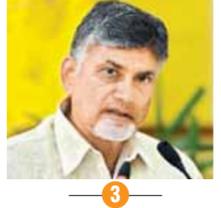
Two deaths, 60 fresh Covid-19 cases take tally to 1,777 in AP

The three Coronavirus hotbeds in Andhra Pradesh continued to register more cases while some 'outsiders' too contributed to the upward surge as 60 more tested positive for Covid-19, taking the state tally to 1,777 on Wednesday. At the same time, two fresh deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 36 even as 140 patients were discharged after treatment from various hospitals in the state, the latest health bulletin said.

Naidu: Govt facilitating sale of liquor but not crops

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday expressed concern over what he called the Jaganmohan Reddy Government's failure to provide necessary facilities for farmers to sell their produce at remunerative prices in the market in this difficult time of Coronavirus epidemic.



AP Transco CMD Nagulapalli Srikanth clarifies doubts about domestic power bills on Wednesday, while I&PR Commissioner T Vijay Kumar Reddy looks on. Report in Page 3

AP to pay migrant labourers' fare

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday said that the Andhra Pradesh Government would bear the travel expenses of migrant labourers if they wished to return to their



Covid-19 hurts emotionally, marriage plans go awry

PNS ■ NALGONDA

While Covid-19 has hit everyone hard financially and mentally, for those waiting to get married, the virus has hit where it hurts the most - emotionally. Prospective brides and grooms would have to wait for some more months to tie the knot as there are no auspicious period after summer. The summer, which has many auspicious muhurat, is on the way out. Function halls have remained closed for over 43 days and there is no possibility that the administration would be giving permission to



them to carry on their business as usual. Livelihoods of priests, photographers, videographers and cooks, who are dependent on function halls for their survival, are at risk. There were many who celebrated engagement ceremonies

The marriages cannot be performed due to lockdown period. Even if the lockdown is lifted, the prospective grooms and brides are worrying about auspicious period

in February and had decided to tie the knot after Ugadi this year. However, the lockdown has put paid to their hopes, and thrown their plans in disarray. Even if the lockdown is lifted in the near future, the prospective grooms and brides will find it hard to decide on the auspicious date, book the venues and complete the wedding preparations. The Telugu auspicious months of Chaitram and Vaisakham are ideal for marriages because of congenial atmosphere, not much agricultural activity, holidays for schools and colleges and so on. These two months have many auspicious muhurat, but the lockdown played spoilsport.

AP creates additional post of Joint Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Taking a further step towards implementing administrative reforms and ensuring effective delivery of services in a 'mission mode', the Andhra Pradesh government on Wednesday restructured the district administration, creating an additional post of Joint Collector of the IAS cadre. As per the new arrangement, each district will now have three J-Cs, two of them being IAS officers and the other a state cadre officer, in charge of different departments. So far, each district in the state had two J-Cs, an IAS officer and the other a special grade deputy collector rank officer. With the latest move, 13 new posts of the J-Cs in the IAS cadre have been created.



CORONA cases in INDIA

52,559

Recover 14,911

Deaths 1,781

Andhra intensifies war against Covid-19

The Andhra Pradesh government has intensified its war against Covid-19 by embarking on a unique strategy that values the lives of the people while ensuring necessary measures are put in place to protect their livelihoods as well.

3T strategy to protect lives:

The state government is banking on a vigorous Trace, Test and Treat strategy which has been followed by South Korea, to impressive results. Armed with a 2.6 lakh strong volunteer force on the ground, the state government has conducted door-to-door surveys covering 1.43 crore households in the state. This

helped the government effectively trace foreign returnees and people who returned from other states in the country.

Further, the state government procured one lakh rapid test kits from South Korea and ramped up its testing capacity with the state conducting over 80,000 tests during the past two weeks. The number of tests conducted increased from 30,733 on April 20 to 1,14,937 by May 3.

During the same period, Coronavirus positive rates declined by over 40 per cent from 2.34 per cent to 1.38 per cent and death rates decreased by about 30 per cent, from 2.90 per cent to 2.08 per cent.

Apart from these measures, the state government has set up a dedicated helpline 'YSR

During the press conference on May 5, KCR made studied observations on how the Central Government has been trying to undermine the federal spirit in the country and how it has been planning to usurp certain State powers.

Telemedicine' with a toll-free number 14410 to attend to the Covid-19 related and other health needs of the people residing in remote areas. It has also ramped up the public health infrastructure by setting up virology labs across the state and designating 23 government and 54 private hospitals as district Covid-19 hospitals by providing state of

the art facilities in them. Besides, insurance cover has been to the village and ward volunteers under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana.

Protecting livelihoods of people:

Andhra Pradesh is perhaps



PRUDHVI VEGESNA

the only or one of the very few states in India where the state government considers protecting livelihoods of people is as important as protecting their lives. The state has come

up with many measures to boost livelihoods of the people.

The state's agricultural marketing department has procured over 75,000 metric tonnes of maize besides procuring other crops including ragi, turmeric, and onion. Further, the government gave nod for toddy tapping, a move that could benefit about four lakh people.

To boost industrial activity and thereby livelihoods of the industrial workers a 'Restart Strategy' has been unveiled which involves phased opening of industries in non-containment areas. The government also gave nod to clear dues worth Rs 905 crore pending to MSMEs from 2014-15 which would provide benefit to about one lakh MSMEs.

A new scheme YSR Zero Interest Loan Scheme has been launched, under which Rs 1,400 crore has been credited to the bank accounts of 8.78 lakh self help groups (SHGs) benefitting 91 lakh women SHG members.

Future strategies to contain Covid-19

The state government is going to invest Rs 16,000 crore to revamp the hospitals as part of its Nadu-Nedu programme while deciding continuing YSR Telemedicine on a permanent basis.

It is also planning to set up one lakh beds for quarantine facility with 10 to 15 beds in every village secretariat besides distributing three

masks to every member of each family in the state.

To boost the livelihoods of fishermen and arrest their migration to other states, eight fishing harbours and one fish landing facility will be set up with an investment of Rs 3,000 crore

Barring a few incidents in which the actions of the ruling party legislators caused an embarrassment to the government, the overall strategy adopted by the it to contain Covid-19 has been proactive, transparent and an all-out effort to protect the lives and promote the welfare and livelihoods of the people.

Prudhvi Vegesna is an Independent journalist. He can be contacted at addprudvi@gmail.com.

Dandubazaar slum turns hotspot in Visakhapatnam

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Health officials have sounded a red alert for Dandubazaar, an old slum located close to the popular Jagadamba Centre where 10 positive cases, including two on Wednesday, have been reported during last one week.

Nearly 42,000 residents from 11,600 households live in 20-odd colonies of Dandubazaar.

Of the Covid-19 cases that were reported in the district, this was the first area where officials observed that the virus spread to neighbours from a positive patient. In the rest of the cases, it was only family members or primary contacts that had been infected.

"We have scanned the entire area and today we sent 160 samples of the same locality where all the 10 cases came out



Of the Covid-19 cases that were reported in the district, this was the first area where officials observed that the virus spread to neighbours from a positive patient

positive and we are afraid more positive cases could come up," said Andhra Medical College principal Dr PV Sudhakar.

He said survey of people was being conducted repeatedly and trying to find out who all came here during the last 20 days period so that their swabs

could also be tested.

A local youth said it was due to lack of awareness the virus infected many people. People did not wear masks or maintained physical distance when the first cases were reported.

"Since the area is congested, officials should have evacuated people from the area," said

a former employee of King George Hospital.

GVMC Commissioner G Srujana has also expressed concern over the spread of the virus in the congested slum.

On Twitter, she sought suggestions from public to stop the transmission in the densely populated, congested slum.

Sudden landslide while clearing boulders on KK line kills three

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

For the first time, landslide has claimed lives on the Kotavalasa-Kirandul railway line passing through hilly terrain of Eastern Ghat under Waltair Railway Division.

In an unfortunate incident, three persons died when boulders fell on them while they were restoring the line by clearing the boulder that had earlier rolled down from the hills on the railway track.

The incident occurred near Chimiddipalle near Borra Caves.

Of the three, one died at the spot on Tuesday while two others died while going treatment on Wednesday at a Vizag hospital. Two of the victims worked under a private contractor while one of them is a railway employee.

Five others who sustained serious injuries were being treated when the last report came in.



Railways had employed a private contractor under supervision of its own staff to clear the track.

A railway official said this was first such landslide on this line that caused casualties. The hilly terrain KK Line mostly witnessed landslide whenever there is heavy downpour.

Kirandul has iron ore mines from where the ore is supplied to the local and international market. Hence, the KK line is

one of the highest freight revenue generating routes in Indian Railways.

Generally, there will be movement of 12 goods trains on the route daily but due to the lockdown there was movement of only three to four trains. Officials said that there will be not any impact on movement of goods train as they will divert them via Koraput and Rayagada if needed.

Kishan Reddy: CMs requested PM to reopen liquor shops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy on Wednesday revealed that the Centre allowed reopening of liquor shops during the third phase of the nationwide lockdown following requests from Chief Ministers of different states. He said during a video-conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, these Chief Ministers, including of BJP-ruled states, sought reopening of liquor shops, citing loss of revenue to the states since the beginning of the lockdown in March.

The Chief Ministers told the Prime Minister that their states don't even have money to pay salaries to their government employees.



TS HC seeks info on steps to bring back stuck pilgrims

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Expressing concern over the safety and security of 107 pilgrims who are now stranded in Sirohi at Rajasthan due to the ongoing nationwide lockdown, the Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the state government to inform the court about the steps taken to bring them back to the state.

A division bench of the HC comprising of the Chief Justice of the state Justice RS Chauhan and Justice B Vijayen Reddy passed this order in a taken up Public Interest Litigation (PIL) which is based on a letter addressed to the HC by advocate K Ramakanth Reddy, a native of Hyderabad.

The division later posted Matter to May 8 for further hearing. In his letter, Reddy said that the 107 pilgrims had been stranded at Shantivan Prajapita Brahma Kumari shwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya from Sirohi District of Rajasthan since March 23 2020.

He told the HC that pilgrims went to Rajasthan to attend a spiritual retreat. He told the HC that pilgrims were under self quarantine since the day one of the lockdown and were healthy without any symptoms of Covid-19. He urged the HC to issue directions to the state government authorities to take adequate steps to bring back all the 107 pilgrims from Telangana by plying buses or by making suitable interim arrangements for their transportation to the state. He told the High Court that the Brahm Kumari organisation was ready to bear the cost of the transportation of the pilgrims.

Not helmet, wearing of mask is priority for most in Covid crisis

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

After the Central government announced some relaxations of lockdown restrictions after the second phase allowing movement of vehicles, enforcement of traffic rules has taken a backseat with the cops stressing on wearing of face mask.

As the threat of novel Coronavirus continues to loom over the population, the government's have made wearing face masks mandatory to prevent spread of Covid-19.

With city slowly reemerging from lockdown after changes in the containment zones, the people once again sharing public spaces in the middle of pandemic, wearing a face mask or refusing to - has become a bone of contention for the moment. The result has been dirty looks, angry words and at times verbal spat.

Naidana Varma, a septuagenarian, appreciated the efforts of the district administration in ensuring people wear a mask



Naidana Varma, a septuagenarian, appreciated the efforts of the district administration in ensuring people wear a mask for the safety of all

for the safety of all. "It is unfortunate and distressing that those who refuse are so self-absorbed as to not follow what is a simple show of respect and kindness to others".

Some people said they found masks uncomfortable, and thus a nuisance they were unwilling to tolerate. Others were sceptical how much difference they made outside on a sunny day. "I hate it," complained Syam Dominic, 27, who said that he was asked to exit MORE shop

in BS Layout for not wearing a mask.

"It's devastatingly worrisome to me personally," said Vandana Rao, house wife, "because if they go home and infect their grandmother or their grandfather who has a comorbid condition, and they have a serious or unfortunate outcome, they will feel guilty for the rest of our lives".

"We need to protect each other," she went on, "at the same time we're voicing our

discontent. Even as Government imposed orders and public health experts dispensed their professional guidance, the effort to thwart the coronavirus nevertheless amounted to a grand national experiment in cooperation that hinged on the individual decisions of millions.

"People give you the stink eye if you don't have a mask on," said Ram Mohan. He did not feel comfortable in a mask, nor entirely see the need for one.

Isuzu Motors India gets nod to resume production at AP plant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Utility vehicle maker Isuzu Motors India on Wednesday said it has received approvals from local authorities to resume operations at its plant in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh.

The company has received nod from the authorities of Chittoor district to recommence production at its plant in SriCity, Isuzu Motors India said in a statement.

Stating that it has begun preparations to restart activities at the plant, the company said it aims to start supply of vehicles at the earliest.

"It will co-ordinate with all component manufacturers to serve both domestic and export customers," Isuzu Motors India added.



The government had issued relaxed guidelines for the extended lockdown till May 17, allowing factories in rural areas and outside municipal limits to resume operations under strict safety and hygiene norms from

this week.

Incidentally, automobile majors, including Maruti Suzuki India, Mercedes-Benz, TVS Motor, and Royal Enfield, on Wednesday announced resumption of or plans to

The government had issued relaxed guidelines for the extended lockdown till May 17, allowing factories in rural areas and outside municipal limits to resume operations under strict safety and hygiene norms from this week

restart production at their respective manufacturing units following relaxation of guidelines by the government for the third phase of lockdown.

The country's largest car-maker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said it would resume operations at its Manesar plant from May 12.

The Gurugram district administration had allowed MSI to run Manesar facility on a single shift basis, while fix-

ing the total number of employees at plant at 4,696.

The company's Manesar (Haryana) plant is outside the limits of Gurugram Municipal Corporation, while its Gurugram plant falls within the city limits.

The two plants in Haryana have an installed capacity to roll out 15.5 lakh units per annum. Operations at the facilities are suspended since March 22.

Hyundai Motor India, which is yet to start rolling out vehicles from its Chennai plant though it has commenced preparations to do so, said around 250 company dealerships have resumed operations across various states.

Similarly, Chennai-based TVS Motor Company said it has commenced operations in India across all factories in Hosur, Mysuru and Nalagarh, while niche bike maker Royal Enfield also said it has resumed operations at its manufacturing plants.

However, Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) said lack of required workforce is making it difficult for the company to resume operations at its two manufacturing plants, but added that its dealerships have

started to open across the country. The automaker, which sells models like City and Amaze, said that with new relaxations from the government, it is planning to restart operations at Tapukara plant in Rajasthan sometime next week.

Similarly, tyre major MRF Ltd said it has partially resumed operations in most of its plants with restricted manpower, following relaxation of lockdown guidelines by the government. The Home Ministry had allowed factories in rural areas or those outside municipal limits to resume production under strict safety and hygiene guidelines from Monday with an aim to kick-start economic activity in the third phase of lockdown till May 17.

Naidu asks K'taka CM to rescue AP fishermen



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has written to Karnataka Chief Minister Yeddyurappa requesting the government to rescue the fishermen from Andhra Pradesh stranded in the state. Expressed his concern over AP fishermen stranded Karnataka.

Naidu urged Yeddyurappa to ensure food, shelter, medical aid and essential commodities to

the fishermen from Andhra Pradesh. In the past, Naidu appealed to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy to help rescue over 2,000 Telugu fishermen and construction workers who are stranded in different locations in TN since the lockdown.

He also wrote to Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani requesting the government to rescue the fishermen stranded at the Veraval fishing harbour in Gujarat's Gir Somanath.

1,100 migrant workers return home from Mumbai

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh government has arranged nine special trains to bring back the Telugu migrant workers who were stranded in other states due to ongoing Covid-19 lockdown.

As part of this, 1,100 migrant workers who were stranded in Mumbai reached Guntakal railway station on Wednesday, through special train run by AP State Government.

With the initiative of State Government to bring back migrant workers, the Railway Department has run a 24-bogie special train from Mumbai to Guntakal. The train left to Mumbai on Tuesday night and reached



Guntakal today morning.

Out of the 1,100 migrant workers, most of them belong to Uravakonda town in Anantapur district.

The AP government has arranged train tickets, food, and

other facilities to the migrant workers. All the passengers will be medically screened following the protocol, and then they will be sent to quarantine centres in the state.

The migrant workers

The AP government has arranged train tickets, food, and other facilities to the migrant workers. All the passengers will be medically screened following the protocol, and then they will be sent to quarantine centres in the state

thanked Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy for bringing them back safely to the state.

13 special trains leave for different states from AP, TS



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In continuing evacuation, around 14,000 migrant workers left Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for different states in 13 special trains, an official of the South Central Railway here said on Wednesday.

While 11 trains left Telangana, two originated in Andhra Pradesh during the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday and were headed to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, the official said.

In Telangana, the departure of the trains was from six railway stations, most of them on the city outskirts. In the neighbouring state, the trains originated from Kurnool and Rayanapadu stations. Six of the trains left for Bihar, two trains each headed to Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. One train each left for Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, he said.

The railways had been running 'Shramik Special' trains since May 1 for ferrying the

migrant workers at the request of states.

Earlier, over 2,000 migrant workers were sent to their home states from Telangana in two special trains, including the first special to be operated from Lingampalli here to Hatia in Jharkhand on May 1, after the Centre eased the lockdown norms and allowed their movement.

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy on Tuesday said the state government has paid Rs four crore as advance for operation of the special trains.

Doesn't the Centre have money to give railway charges?, he had asked amid opposition parties led by Congress and others attacking the railways for charging money from the migrants.

The government has already stated that it would facilitate the return of migrant workers from the state and had requested the South Central Railway for operation of 40 special trains a day for a week from Tuesday for this.

Two deaths, 60 fresh Covid-19 cases take tally to 1,777 in AP

Continued from Page 1

Among the 60 new cases reported in the last 24 hours, 12 were Gujaratis and one a Kannadiga.

The Gujaratis, according to official sources, were a group of 29 preachers who came to Anantapur district in January.

They were all staying together and recently sent to a quaran-

tine facility. Of the 29, 14 tested positive on Monday and 12 more on Tuesday, the sources said. Details of the one other person from Karnataka were yet to be revealed. The outsiders' count was not specifically added to any district though they were shown in the state's overall tally.

The three Covid-19 hotbeds in AP Kurnool, Guntur and Krishna reported 17, 12 and 14

new cases respectively. Kurnool and Krishna districts also reported one Coronavirus death each, taking the states total to 36.

In all, Kurnool district registered 533 Coronavirus cases, of which 369 are now active following the discharge of 153 and death of 11 patients.

Guntur reported a total of 363 cases so far, of which 226 are now active after 129 discharges and

eight deaths. Krishna touched the triple century mark, but only 173 were active as 117 got discharged and 10 died. The number of active Covid-19 cases in AP now stood at 1,012. A government data chart said 1,41,274 tests were conducted till date, including 7,782 in the last 24 hours, at the rate of 2,646 per million population, which it claimed to be the highest in the country.

Naidu: Govt facilitating sale of liquor, not farm produce

Continued from Page 1

In a statement on Twitter, the TDP supremo deplored that the farmers had to abandon their harvest vegetables on the road at Gollapalli village in Kadapa district due to lack of marketing facilities. "It was painful that the farmers, who had toiled hard to cultivate the crop, were forced to leave the produce in the middle of the road and out of frustration," Naidu said.

He termed this as an atrocity on the part of the Government as it had set aside all lockdown restrictions for selling liquor while, at the same time, not extending similar relaxations to enable farmers to sell their produce.

It may be recalled that the Government liquor shops were reopened in green and orange zones in Andhra Pradesh after nationwide lockdown 2.0.

Covid-19 hurts emotionally, marriage plans go awry

Continued from Page 1

The Chaitra Masam commenced on March 25 and ended on April 23. Vaisakha Masam started on April 24 and will end by May 22. Even after relaxing of the lockdown in some areas, the restrictions on marriages and other functions remain due to the social distancing norms.

The month of Jyestha commences from May 23 and will last up to June 21. During the month there are not many auspicious muhursats. The period from May 29 to June 8 is regarded as inauspicious because of Sukra Moudhyami.

In the month of Jyestha, the marriage of eldest sons or daughters of a family is not performed. The month of Ashadham, considered inauspicious, begins on June 22 and lasts till July 20, this period is often described as marriage holiday period.

The auspicious month of Shraavanam begins in the last week of July and lasts good part of August. Some marriages can be performed in this season, but the farmers are busy during the period. Moreover, educational institutions were commence after vacation. Therefore, many people will not opt for celebrating wedding during the period. The months of Bhadrpadam and Pushyam are considered unfit for solemnising marriages.

This basically means that

prospective brides and grooms should have to wait till Kartika and Margasira months, which coincide with November and December. Till then, there is no possibility for celebrating weddings.

In undivided Nalgonda district, there are over 400 function halls, including 50 in Nalgonda, 40 in Miryalguda and 30 in Suryapet. Small towns like Nakrekal, Chityal, Halia have five function halls each.

To build each function hall, the owners have pumped in at least Rs 3 crore to Rs 7 crore, if it is more spacious. This is in addition to site cost. During summer each function hall earns at least Rs 10 lakh. They have remained closed for 43 days because of Corona threat. Those who booked the function halls prior to the lockdown got back their advances. Yet the function halls will have to pay wages of employees at the rate of Rs 10,000 per head and pay power bill of at least Rs 10,000 and also would have to pay property tax up to Rs 10,000.

The lockdown restrictions have limited number of persons attending the weddings to 20 or less. Therefore, many people will keep the celebrations simple and perform weddings at their homes. The marriage season helps function hall owners, workers, cooks, tent houses, priests, printing presses, potters, barbers, washermen, music par-

ties, tailors earn money. They can lead a comfortable life with the earnings in the marriage season. Because of the Corona threat, they have lost their livelihood till November.

Gangula Narsireddy of Sitarapuram said that the marriage of his youngest son was fixed on April 19 but had to be postponed because of lockdown.

According to Kondagadapa Prasad Sarma, priest of Addagudur, the Ugadi Panchanga Sravanam, Srirama Navami, Hanuman Jayanti celebrations were cancelled because of the virus threat. This year the number of wedding muhursats is very less. Moreover, the marriages could not be celebrated during the auspicious periods. He said that he was at a loss of comprehension how he should take good care of the family, meet expenses of children's education and meet other expenses.

According to a function hall owner, the peak season has been a loss and now, function hall owners would have to wait for almost one year to make up for the losses.

"Meanwhile, we have to pay salaries of the employees and pay electricity bills and municipal bills. If the government exempts us from the payment of taxes and power bills, we would be able to manage to keep our head above water," he said.

AP to pay migrant labourers' fare

Continued from Page 1

Who will also be provided food and shelter. If they wish to go for work, cooperate with them and necessary travel arrangements should be made if migrant workers want to go to their native states and all the expenses will be borne by the state. These migrants will also be given Rs 500 each towards incidental expenses during their travel to their native place."

The Chief Minister focused his attention on the issue of migrant labourers from Andhra Pradesh stranded in other states, and instructed the authorities on the measures to be taken for their evacuation.

The officials briefed the Chief Minister about the details of var- ious flights evacuating people of



the state from abroad. These flights would arrive in Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and

Tirupati airports, they informed. Those arriving by these flights will be screened medically and

then quarantined in accordance with the guidelines before they are allowed to be sent back to their native places, the authorities said.

Jagan was also informed that these foreign returnees would be categorised based on the severity of Coronavirus in the countries they are returning from.

The Chief Minister, in this context, ordered special focus by the officials on the quality of facilities at the quarantine centres for all those arriving into the state from Gulf countries.

The officials informed Jagan that more than 1,000 migrant labourers, stranded in Thane of Maharashtra, have reached Guntakal by a special train on Wednesday and all requisite tests are being conducted on them. As many as nine check posts

are being set up across the borders in the state in view of lockdown, the officials said.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that they are following strict protocol in discharging the COVID-19 patients. Those discharged were allowed to go home only after they tested negative in two consecutive tests.

Also in the review meeting, the Chief Minister directed the officials that they should be accessible to the farmers at all times and respond immediately to their problems across the state.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, DGP Gautam Sawang, Government Advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and Special Chief Secretary of Medical Department KS Jawahar Reddy.

2 more trains with migrants leave from TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two more special trains carrying over 2,000 migrant workers left Telangana for Bihar and Jharkhand on Wednesday, officials said. Both the trains departed from the Bibi Nagar railway station in Yadadri Bhuvangiri district near Hyderabad early on Wednesday morning.

Migrant workers from Yadadri Bhuvangiri and other districts were brought to the railway station by buses late on Tuesday night. A team of 50 personnel from the health department led by the district medical and health officer screened the workers before



allowing them into the station.

Officials said that all necessary arrangements were made for the smooth journey of the workers. Yadadri Bhuvangiri District Collector Anitha

Ramchandran, along with senior officials, supervised the arrangements at the station. The workers expressed their happiness on returning to their home states after a long wait.

They said they had registered their names with the police stations concerned and were duly informed about the travel arrangements made.

With this, the number of special trains operated for migrant workers from Telangana rose to four. The first train had left for Jharkhand on May 1, while the second departed for Bihar on May 5. Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Reddy had said on Tuesday said that 11 trains carrying migrant workers were leaving for various states. He said five of these trains were leaving for Bihar, two each for Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and one each for Jharkhand and Rajasthan.

AP creates additional post of Joint Collector

Continued from Page 1

The two IAS officers will be designated as J-C (Rythu Bharosa and Revenue) and JC (Village and Ward Secretariats and Development).

The non-cadre J-C will look after welfare programmes in each district, as per an order issued by Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney.

"The priority of the government is to provide responsive and accountable governance in a corruption-free environment while laying special focus on the welfare of all sections of the society.

To achieve these objectives, the government has to implement development and welfare programmes in a mission mode, ensuring effective last mile delivery through Village Secretariat/Ward Secretariats," the Chief Secretary said in the order.

Creation of an additional J-C post in each district is also aimed at providing extensive field exposure to the IAS officers before they take up higher responsibilities, according to the Chief Secretary.

Nilam Sawhney directed the Secretaries of government departments in the state Secretariat, heads of departments and managing directors of state-run corporations to "explore the possibility" of delegating more administrative and financial powers to district collectors and joint collectors for ensuring effective delivery of services at grass-roots level.

No excess power bills for domestic consumers, clarifies Transco CMD

Power bills prepared on scientific basis to benefit domestic power consumers, says Srikanth

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Energy Secretary and AP Transco CMD Nagulapalli Srikanth on Wednesday reassured power consumers that there was no excess billing for domestic power consumption.

He said the billing was made on scientific basis basing on the power consumption during the months of March and April for the past five years and the bills were prepared on 50:50 basis to protect the interests of power consumers.

Giving clarification on the reports of excess billing by power Discoms, the CMD said that there was drastic increase in power consumption during April this year due to lockdown. He said when taking into consideration the domestic power consumption for the



past five years during March and April stands at 46 per cent and 54 per cent.

Now the bills were prepared on 50:50 per cent as the meter readings were not taken during April month due to Covid-19 lockdown. He said the April bills came under below slab as 4 per cent of power consump-

tion during April was included in power bill for March.

From financial year 2021, the slab rates depends on monthly power consumption. As a result the consumers got low bills than the real consumption during April. He said there was no increase in bills as four per cent of April

power consumption included in March bill as the slab rates fixed on 2018-19 power consumption.

In addition the interest incurred on the fixed deposit of the power consumer was also deducted from April bill to benefit consumers.

Giving an example on the billing system, the Transco CMD said that if a person consumed 440 units for March and April like 202.40 in March and 237.60 units in April the bill was prepared basing on 220 units per month to benefit the consumer.

The Transco CMD said a toll free number 1912 was set up to redress the grievances of consumers on power billing.

He said a special officer was appointed for each district to redress the billing grievances.

KTR seeks Centre's support for pharmaceutical sector

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Pharmaceutical industry has been a world leader in generics both globally and in domestic markets contributing significantly to the global demand for generics in terms of volume. However, the novel Coronavirus, which has claimed over 1,600 lives in the country, is taking a toll on the industry. Telangana, which is the largest pharmaceutical hub in the country, contributes more than 35 per cent of the national production and is home to about more than 800 Life Sciences companies employing about 1,20,000 people.

As the industry has started to experience financial burden due to reduced production capacity, shortage of labour, price pressure caused by supply chain issues

and maintaining a large skilled workforce on payrolls among the many other deeper issues as a result of Covid-19, IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao in a letter to Union Minister DV Sadanand Gowda requested the Central Government's support to the Pharmaceutical industry. He also made some recommendations to help the industry overcome the Covid-19 crisis.

The Minister, in the letter mentioned that the reforms and targeted support will not only help stabilise the sector but will also go a long way in further consolidating India's leadership position by attracting newer investments from around the globe.

Speaking on financial stress on the Industry, he suggested, "In order to ease the financial burden to an extent, I urge the Government of India to expedite both income tax and GST

refunds to these companies. Gol should also consider extending a moratorium on tax payments for the next 6 months, atleast for the MSME sector, to further ease the financial stress on companies."

Prevent accumulation of input tax credit by allowing the exporters to use this accumulated un-utilised GST credit towards payment of their GST liability on imports. He said expedite clearance of incentives under export promotion schemes and asked Government of India to review all pending incentives cases and expedite release to exporters to reduce the financial burden.

He suggested measures Incentive for export promotion, reduction in capital borrowing costs, price control relaxation for essential and non-essential medicines, Expedite port level clearances to ease Logistics Issues.

Most of COVID-19 deceased were gas tragedy victims: NGO

PNS ■ BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government has decided to screen the vulnerable section among the 1984 gas tragedy survivors who showed primary symptoms so that they can be isolated in view of the deaths of 17 people due to COVID-19 in Bhopal so far, a senior official said on Wednesday.

While an NGO has claimed that 15 of the 17 COVID-19 deceased were the survivors of the gas tragedy, the government said it was not in a position to confirm this claim at this stage.

"We have compiled the data of 15 out of the 17 deaths in the state capital due to COVID-19 and found that 15 were 1984 gas tragedy victims as per their health records," Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA) convener Rachna



Dhingra said.

The BGIA, which works for rehabilitation of the gas victims, has shared a list of the 15 deceased and the health complications among them due to inhalation of toxic plumes of Methyl Isocyanate that leaked from a plant on the intervening night of December 2 and 3, 1984, killing thousands. "As the gas victims are

already affected, they are more vulnerable to COVID-19 and hence need extra care and attention which the authorities failed to gauge while converting the dedicated Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre (BMHRC) into a state-level COVID-19 facility, and later reversed that status following the deaths of the gas affected persons,"

Dhingra claimed.

Meanwhile, the state government has decided to screen the vulnerable section among the survivors of the world's worst industrial disaster so that they can be isolated at a dedicated centre in the event of showing any primary symptoms of coronavirus infection.

"We cannot say at this stage that out of 17 how many were gas tragedy victims, but we have decided to start screening those persons who are more vulnerable and have developed initial symptoms of COVID-19, so that they can be isolated and quarantined," newly-appointed Bhopal Gas Relief department's Director Ved Prakash told PTI.

Once identified, they would be isolated at Rasool Ahmed Pulmonary Medicine Centre, a facility of the Gas Relief department, he said.

Aarogya Setu robust app in terms of privacy protection, security: Min

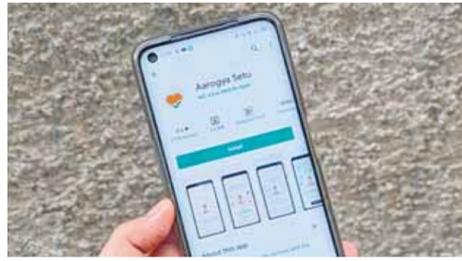
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rejecting charges by the opposition that the Aarogya Setu application breaches privacy, Union IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has asserted that the platform is "absolutely robust, safe and secure" in terms of privacy protection and data security.

"This is a technological invention of India -- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, our scientists, NIC, Niti Aayog and some private (entities) -- whereby it is a perfectly accountable platform to help in the fight against COVID-19," Prasad told PTI.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has alleged that the Aarogya Setu app is a "sophisticated surveillance system, outsourced to a private operator, with no institutional oversight."

He also said it raises serious data security and privacy con-



cerns. "Technology can help keep us safe; but fear must not be leveraged to track citizens without their consent," Gandhi had said.

Countering the claim, Prasad said, "It is safe and secure. The data is in an encrypted form. Most important, it is for safety of Indians in public interest because it cautions you in the event there is a COVID-infected person in your vicinity."

The minister said the mobile

application also helps tracing contacts in the event a person is infected.

"It is a very robust invention of technology and many other countries are using similar applications to fight COVID-19. And the second most important point is that the data is limited. Routine data remains for 30 days and in the event you are infected, then (for) 45 to 60 days. Then automatically it will vanish," he explained.

SHORT READS



Mumbai: Byculla Zoo to have its own YouTube channel

MUMBAI: The Veer Mata Jijabai Bhosale Udyan, popularly known as Byculla Zoo here, plans to start its own YouTube channel for animal lovers and wildlife enthusiasts, an official said on Wednesday. The zoo, which usually witnesses a heavy footfall of visitors during summer holidays, now wears a deserted look because of the lockdown that has been imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus. "The plan is to take the zoo to people's homes so that animal lovers and wildlife enthusiasts can enjoy glimpses of nature and animals through these videos," zoo director Dr Sanjay Tripathi said.

SANITISATION TO THERMAL SCREENING: J'khand wedding in the time of COVID-19

PNS ■ MEDININAGAR (JHARKHAND)

The marriage of a 25-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman was solemnised in Jharkhand's Palamau district amid a small gathering and overseen by the administration, officials said on Wednesday.

Only eight persons four each from bridegroom Pawan Kumar and bride Khushbu Kumari families -- were allowed to attend the programme that took place at Chianki village on Tuesday evening under the supervision of a doctor and two health personnel from the Palamau Medical College, a senior official said.

The venue was sanitised and all the attendees were thermally screened before being allowed to attend the event. Deputy Commissioner Shantanu Kumar Agrahari said.



"The ritual of exchanging garlands was done away with and the priest chanted the hymns from a distance of two metres from the bride and the bridegroom. The eight attendees also stood at a distance of two metres from each other. Everyone had worn masks," he said.

"We are happy that the marriage was solemnised. The ceremony was scheduled a few weeks ago and had to be postponed due to the lockdown," the bridegroom's father, Sudheswar Ram said.

COVID-19 infects 548 docs, nurses, paramedics across India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Coronavirus has infected around 548 doctors, nurses and paramedics across the country so far, according to data maintained by the Centre, official sources said on Wednesday.

The figure does not include field workers, ward boys, sanitation workers, security guards, lab attendants, peons, laundry and kitchen staff among others.

According to an official source, it has not been ascertained from where these doctors, nurses and paramedic staff have acquired the infection. The figure includes doctors, nurses and paramedics from Centre-run and state government-run facilities across states and union territories.

"No epidemiological investigation of the cases were done. So there is no clear segregation on how many contracted the



disease at workplace and how many got it from the community," the official source said.

The official said that 69 doctors in the national capital have so far contracted the disease. COVID-19 has claimed 1,694 lives and infected 49,391 people nationwide till Wednesday morning.

Besides, 274 nurses and paramedics have so far been infected by the virus.

As many as 13 healthcare

93k Ujjwala beneficiaries in U'khand get money in their accounts for free LPG refills

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd has transferred money directly to the accounts of 93,000 PMUY beneficiaries in Uttarakhand to help them get three free refills of LPG under the Pradhan Mantri Gharib Kalyan package. PMUY beneficiaries are to be given three free LPG refills between April-June under the package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Money was transferred directly to the accounts of 93,000 out of a total of 98,759 active PMUY customers in Uttarakhand during the month of April, BPCL state head Vineet Singh said on Wednesday.

Free LPG refills have also been provided to 79.5 per cent of these customers already and the process to reach out to the rest is on, he said.



The corporation had to battle a number of odds to achieve the target including doing night delivery of LPG in high altitude rural areas as the beneficiaries happened to be in their fields during day-time, Singh said. He gave the credit for it to the BPCL's contractual workers like delivery boys and drivers of utility vehicles engaged in distribution of LPG cylinders, who took their job in such critical times in mission mode. Despite the threat of the pandemic, they never shied away from going to the remotest corners of the state to reach PMUY customers, he said.

Odisha reports second COVID-19 death; total cases at 179

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha reported its second COVID-19 fatality after a 77-year-old man died in Bhubaneswar, the Health and Family Welfare Department officials said on Wednesday. He breathed his last at the KIMS COVID-19 Hospital here on Tuesday night, they said. The man had underlying co-morbidities of hypertension, diabetes and kidney ailments, the officials said.

The man, a resident of the Madhusudan Nagar area of the city, was a close relative of another COVID-19 patient. Though his sample tested negative on April 9, he later developed symptoms. He was tested again and found to be positive for COVID-19 on April 28, officials said.

He was at a government quarantine centre from April 11 to 20 and home quarantine from April



21 to 27. He was admitted to the hospital on April 28 after being tested positive.

On April 6, a 72-year-old man from Bhubaneswar's Jharpada had died due to the disease at the AIIMS here. Meanwhile, three more people tested positive for COVID-19 in the state, taking the total number of coronavirus cases to 179, an official of the department said.

An 18-year-old man, who recently returned from Surat in Gujarat, tested positive for COVID-19 in Ganjam. A 48-year-old man tested positive in

Balasure, while a 65-year-old man was detected with coronavirus infection in Jajpur district. Both of them returned from West Bengal recently, the official said.

All of them were in quarantine centres due to their travel history, he said.

Till Wednesday afternoon, there were 117 active cases in the state, while 60 people had recovered from the disease, he said.

Jajpur district has reported the maximum number of cases at 54, followed by Bhubaneswar in Khurda district at 47, Balasure at 25, Bhadrak at 21 and Sundergarh at 12. Four positive cases have been reported from Ganjam district, while two cases each have been detected in Cuttack, Jharsuguda, Kendrapara, Bolangir, Keonjhar and Kalahandi, and one each in Puri, Dhenkanal, Deogarh and Koraput districts.

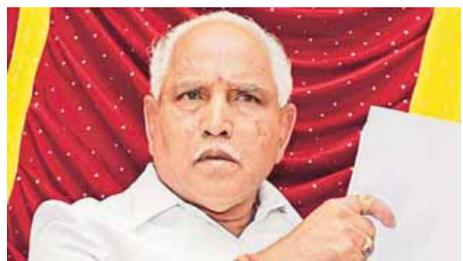
Lockdown distress: Karnataka govt announces Rs 1,610 cr package

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Wednesday announced a Rs 1,610 crore relief package for the benefit of those in distress due to the COVID-19-induced lockdown.

The measures announced by the Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa would bring relief to farmers, flower-growers, washermen, auto rickshaw and taxi drivers, MSMEs, large industries, weavers, building workers and barbers.

While the government will reach out to about 7.75 lakh auto and taxi drivers by providing a one time compensation of Rs 5,000 each, a similar assistance will also be extended to barbers and washermen (dhobis), who are also facing the heat of joblessness due to



the lockdown. Around 2.30 lakh barbers and 60,000 washermen from both urban and rural areas will benefit from the government largesse.

The government also announced a 11 per cent excise duty hike, which is in addition to the six per cent announced

their produce due to the lockdown.

It is estimated that farmers cultivated flowers in about 11,687 hectares. Realising the problems facing flower growers, the government announced a compensation of Rs 25,000 per hectare limited to a maximum extent of one hectare for the crop loss.

Farmers who have grown vegetables and fruits were not able to market their produce, and the government has decided to announce a relief package for them.

MSMEs have also suffered huge production losses due to the lockdown. It takes some time for them to revive, Yediyurappa said.

The monthly fixed charges of electricity bills of MSMEs will be waived for two months.

'Sufficient precautions were taken'

AMITABH BACHCHAN ON SHOOTING VIDEOS FOR KBC, AUTHORITIES

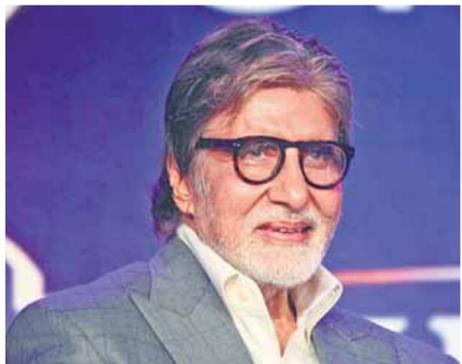
PNS ■ MUMBAI

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Wednesday said he shot for "social messaging" videos as well as promos for his show "Kaun Banega Crorepati" after ensuring that necessary precautions were in place.

In a post on his official blog, the 77-year-old veteran said all the video clips were shot in just one day.

"So yes I worked. Got a problem with that, keep it to yourself then. Damned if you pour it out here in this locked in condition. Sufficient precaution, as much that could be taken, was taken. "And what had been scheduled for two days, was completed in one day. Starting 6 pm, ending a short while now," Bachchan wrote.

The actor said the "social messaging" video from authorities were made to acknowledge the healthcare workers, whom he referred to as "angels in white", leading the fight against



The actor said the "social messaging" video from authorities were made to acknowledge the healthcare workers, whom he referred to as "angels in white", leading the fight against the coronavirus pandemic

conduct the show in the times of coronavirus pandemic. "There have been no definite answers for that. But the authority hopes well and long, so," the actor added.

For the season's registration promo, Bachchan had shot the video from his home, remotely directed by "Dangal" helmer Nitesh Tiwari.

the coronavirus pandemic. "Giving credence to them that deliver, them that work assiduously so you and I can sleep in peace. Personal gratifications to the many that ask."

"And then the 'KBC' pile of several. In all about 10 to 12 videos and then hours of audio

recordings also for the same," he added.

The twelfth season of the popular game show, hosted by Bachchan, has made its selection process completely digital amid the coronavirus pandemic.

He also addressed the speculations as to how the team will

In Aurangabad, odd-even formula for shops

PNS ■ AURANGABAD

In a bid to check the spread of coronavirus and avoid crowding of markets, police have implemented the alternate-day formula for functioning of the shops selling essential items till May 17 in Maharashtra's Aurangabad, a senior police officer said on Wednesday.

The extended coronavirus-induced lockdown is scheduled to remain in force till May 17.

As per the arrangement, fair price shops will now remain open on odd dates and the shops selling grocery and other essential items will function on even dates, he said. Aurangabad, the biggest city in Marathwada region, has reported about 350 virus positive cases so far. "The timing during which the shops are allowed to remain open has been extended by two hours till 1 pm from the previous timing of 7 am to 11 am every alternate day," said Assistant Commissioner of Police Nagnath Kode in a release.

COVID-19: Star hotels reach out to guests as well as the needy

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Notwithstanding a sharp dip in room occupancy and the revenue corroded by the COVID-19 pandemic, hotels in Tamil Nadu have been reaching out to the stranded guests, who also include those on a visit to the metro on medical purposes.

Ever since the national lockdown was initiated on March 25 to prevent spread of the coronavirus, all forms of transport, including air, have been suspended while many businesses have been closed.

The lockdown has totally altered the hospitality sector landscape making the hotels focus on their social commitment rather than wooing guests.

With the usual buzz missing, the pandemic has made the hotel staff wear masks, use sanitiser and request the guests to frequently wash their hands



and remain safe in their rooms.

"We are using thermal scanners to check our guests. Pilots from the cargo flights are also checked for temperature and requested to take all precautions," sources at the Le Meridien Hotel, close to the city airport, said.

The Ascott's accommodates expats based in India, those who are in the city for medical treatment and guests affected

by closure of borders due to the lockdown.

They had to celebrate Easter and Tamil New Years day without the usual fanfare.

Ascott Somerset Greenways and Citadines OMR offered a home away from home experience to the guests, with the management rolling out various initiatives to keep the morale of guests and staff high during this tough phase.

SHORT READS



DCW issues notice to police over jailed Jamia student

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Commission For Women has issued notice to Delhi Police over trolls 'slandering' Jamia Millia Islamia student Safoora Zargar, who is pregnant and lodged in Tihar Jail for alleged violence during anti-CAA protests here. Zargar, the media coordinator of Jamia Coordination Committee, was arrested last month in connection with the protests in northeast Delhi's Jaffrabad in February. Later, she was booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in a case related to the communal violence over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in northeast Delhi and sent to Tihar Jail. Zargar is being trolled on social media on the paternity of her child. 'On receipt of complaints, DCW issued notice to Delhi Police Cyber Crime Cell against shameful slandering by trolls of pregnant Safoora Zargar,' the panel said. DCW chief Swati Maliwal said the court will decide whether Zargar is guilty or not 'but no one has the right to outrage her modesty and vilify her character'.

People booked for spreading rumours about U'khand CM's death

DEHRADUN: The Uttarakhand police on Wednesday registered a case against some people who spread a rumour about the death of Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on social media, officials said. 'An unfortunate and shameful rumour has been spread about the Chief Minister on social media. Dehradun SSP has been asked to register a case against the culprits and arrest them,' DG (Law and Order) Ashok Kumar said. Those spreading rumours on social media will not be spared under any circumstances and stringent action will be taken against them, he said. 'They have crossed all limits in this case. Stern action will be taken against those who spread the rumour and also those involved in the conspiracy,' Kumar said.

Man beaten to death in Uttar Pradesh

BAGHPAT (UP): A 42-year-old man was beaten to death after he reportedly stabbed another person on Binauli road in Badaut area here, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place on Tuesday night when Shyambir attacked another man, Jainis, with a knife after they had an argument over some issue. Later, the family members of Jainis hit Shyambir with sticks, they said. Shyambir was rushed to the hospital, where he was declared brought dead, police said. Jainis is stated to be out of danger, they said, adding the matter is being probed.

Maha to ramp up ICU beds, seeks Central facilities

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra, which is battling surge in COVID-19 cases, has requested the hospitals under the Railways, the Army and other Central undertakings to make their facilities in the state available to the government which is planning to ramp up the number of ICU beds.

A statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) on Wednesday said CM Uddhav Thackeray was personally talking to the higher authorities concerned for getting more ICU beds for the treatment of the COVID-19 patients.

'As a part of planning, the State Government has requested hospitals, institutions & buildings under the management of the Railways, Mumbai Port Trust, Indian Army, Navy and



other Central Gov. undertakings to make their facilities available across Maharashtra,' it said.

The government stated that it had been fighting a war against coronavirus for the past few months, and so far has managed to contain its spread through various measures.

It further said that the num-

ber of tests is being significantly increased, and hence, the patient count is rising. 'The numbers of patients being cured and discharged has also increased,' the statement said.

A total of 2,819 patients were discharged from various hospitals in the state after recovery, a state government official had said

on Tuesday.

'Since the Centre has projected rise in the number of coronavirus positive cases in May, the state government has created isolation and ICU facilities in Mumbai and Pune,' it said.

Mumbai, its metropolitan region, and areas under the municipal corporations of Pune and Pimri-Chinchwad account for the maximum number of the total 15,525 COVID-19 cases reported till May 5.

'In Mumbai, such (quarantine) facilities have been set up in Mahalaxmi Racecourse, Nehru Science Center, Nehru Planetarium, Goregaon Exhibition Centre, BKC, Richardson Krudas factory land near JJ hospital. Private hospitals have also earmarked some of their facilities for ICU (beds),' the statement said.

Over 700 patients discharged in Maha in two days: Tope

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Over 700 COVID-19 patients were discharged from hospitals in Maharashtra in the last two days, including 354 on Tuesday which was the highest in one day, Public Health Minister Rajesh Tope said on Wednesday.

The total number of coronavirus cases that have come to light in the state so far is 15,525, he said in a statement here.

'But we have discharged 2,819 patients after recovery till today. The discharged people have to spend 14 days in mandatory home quarantine from the date of discharge,' he said. 'The state on Monday and Tuesday discharged 350 and 354 people, respectively, after recovery from COVID-19. This (Tuesday's figure) is the highest number of discharged people in a single day



in the state so far,' Tope said.

Maharashtra reported its first case of coronavirus infection on March 9, while the first patients walked out of hospital upon recovery on March 25.

'The government's efforts of concentrated medication and utmost care of patients and their relatives helped in increasing the figure of discharged people,' the minister added.

Delhi announces summer vacation from May 11 to June 30

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has announced summer vacation in schools run and aided by the government from May 11 to June 30, officials said on Wednesday. The government has also clarified that students will not be called to schools for any vacation-related activity in view of the COVID-19 situation.

'Due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching and learning activities in the schools have been suspended since March 23. The lockdown has further extended upto May 1. 'The summer vacations in government and government aided schools shall be observed from May 11 to June 30. However, keeping in view the COVID-19 pandemic, students shall not be called to schools for any teaching learning activity during summer vacation,' DoE said.

Maharashtra farmers seek Thackeray's nod to access land

PNS ■ WARDHA

Farmers from the border areas of Maharashtra's Amravati district sought Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's permission to prepare their land for the upcoming Kharif season, as the current COVID-19 lockdown has prevented them from accessing their farms in Wardha.

The authorities at Wardha, Chandrapur, Amravati and Yavatmal districts have sealed their borders to contain the spread of coronavirus, as a result of which, farmers in the border areas have not been able to access their lands.

Farmers of Haturna village in Amravati district's Varud tehsil wrote to the Chief Minister seeking permission to access their



farms in Wardha district's Salora, Wadhegaon, Jamgaon, Dhadi, Borgaon and Drugwada areas.

The local authorities had denied them permission to access their farms, which is why they were forced to write to the Chief Minister, said Baburao Meshram, one of the 55 farmers who signed the letter to Thackeray.

'Economically anti-national': Cong on raising petrol, diesel prices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday said it is "economically anti-national" to fleece Indians of Rs 1.4 lakh crore by raising taxes on petrol and diesel, and urged the Centre to share 75 per cent of this revenue with states so that people are not burdened.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said when the entire country is fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and its poor, including migrants, shopkeepers and small businessmen, were virtually penniless, the government of India was "fleecing" 130 crore Indians by insurmountably raising prices of petrol and diesel.

'To fleece people of India in this fashion is economically anti-national,' he told reporters at a press conference through video conferencing.



Surjewala alleged that the manner in which "illegally and forcibly" this recovery is being made is "inhumane, cruel and insensitive".

'The government should transfer 75 per cent of this money so collected through raise in taxes to states. This will ensure there is no further burden on people of India, by way

of more taxes on petroleum products by states,' he said.

He said the issue was discussed at a meeting of the chief ministers of Congress-ruled states with party president Sonia Gandhi, where everyone besides former prime minister Manmohan Singh and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi expressed deep concerns.

Marathi youth can take advantage of migrants' return: Rohit Pawar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The return of migrant workers to their native states could lead to difficulties in resumption of industrial activities in Maharashtra and the Marathi youth can take advantage of the opportunity, NCP MLA Rohit Pawar said on Wednesday.

The Marathi youth should not underestimate work of any kind during the present crisis, Rohit Pawar, who is the grandnephew of NCP patriarch Sharad Pawar, said on Twitter.

Several workers/labourers are returning to their home as the lockdown is being relaxed. There could be difficulty in resuming industries-business activities due to the absence of



the workers from other states,' he said.

But the Marathi youth can take advantage of the opportunity created after the return of workers and not underestimate any work during the present crisis, the MLA from Karjat-Jamkhed constituency tweeted.

Plea in HC for early hearing on petition relating to violence at Jamia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A plea was filed in the Delhi High Court on Wednesday for early hearing on a petition seeking setting up of a judicial commission to inquire into the December 2019 violence of Jamia Millia Islamia University protests against the CAA.

The application for early hearing is listed on May 8. Earlier the high court had fixed for July, the hearing on the main petition, in which notices were issued to the Centre, AAP Government and Delhi Police.

The fresh application was filed in the pending petition by advocate and petitioner Nabila Hasan in which she has sought action against the police for brutally attacking the petitioners, students and residents of Jamia Millia Islamia. The petition has highlighted the alleged ruthlessness, and excessive use of force and aggression unleashed by police and paramilitary forces on students within the university.



The plea, filed through advocates Sneha Mukherjee and Siddharth Seem, said the government imposed complete lockdown across the country on March 24 due to the spread of coronavirus during which movement of people is restricted but several students from the university have been called to the police station and crime branch.

It said students are made to sit there for hours in the name of investigation by the police and "the harassment of the students at the hand of the Delhi Police

has not stopped even with the current situations in the country".

Besides the present petition in which an application has been filed for early hearing, various other petitions were also filed, including by lawyers, students of JMI, residents of Okhla where the university is located and the Imam of Jama Masjid mosque opposite Parliament House, and they sought action including medical treatment and compensation for the students and registration of FIRs against the erring police officers.

Kerala airports get ready to receive expats from Gulf

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

As India begins its biggest evacuation exercise to bring back its citizens stranded in the Gulf and various countries due to the COVID-19 lockdown, the three airports in Kerala are all set to receive around 2,700 expatriates in the first five days, beginning Thursday.

Three naval ships, which have also joined in the evacuation process, left for Maldives and UAE on Tuesday to bring back Indian citizens.

The first of the three flights from the Gulf will take off from Abu Dhabi on Thursday with 200 passengers and touch down at the Kochi International airport at 9.45 pm.

Jishnu, a passenger from Abu Dhabi, who got his ticket, was elated that he would be able to return to his home state.

'I am very happy to have got the ticket. I was informed yesterday that I could travel', he told a television channel.

The Kochi-Doha flight of



Thursday has been re-scheduled to Saturday, CIAL sources said.

Two flights with 200 passengers each are scheduled to land at Kozhikode airport from Dubai and Riyadh on Thursday.

Another two flights are expected at Thiruvananthapuram on May 9 and 10 from Doha in Qatar with 200 passengers each, Thiruvananthapuram Airport Director C V Raveendranath said.

Arrangements are in place at Kochi, Kozhikode and

per the government's COVID-19 protocol. Various hostels, hotels, auditoriums have been taken for quarantine facilities of the NRKs.

The Cochin International Airport and Cochin Port have also made all arrangements to receive expatriates returning from the countries, Ernakulam District administration said.

Thermal scanners have been set up at the airport for the screening of the passengers and for quarantine facilities, while 4,000 houses with water, electricity and bath attached facilities have been arranged in Ernakulam district.

From May 7 to May 13, 64 flights are expected to be operated from various countries to India to bring back expats from the Gulf countries, Singapore, US and UK, among others.

While all arrangements have been made by the state government to receive the NRKs, there is some confusion about the number of days passengers will have to undergo quarantine on arrival.

Lockdown: 4,000 Goans from 65 countries seek to return home

PNS ■ PANAJI

At least 4,000 Goans from 65 countries have registered themselves on the Goa NRI commission's portal to come back to the country amid the coronavirus-enforced lockdown, state NRI Commissioner Narendra Sawaikar said on Wednesday.

The state NRI commission has shared the data with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Sawaikar told PTI.

Nearly 4,000 people have registered themselves on the Goa NRI portal launched by the commission. They are spread across 65 countries, mostly in the Middle East and the UK, the BJP leader said.

The Goa NRI Commission has urged the MEA to facilitate immediate repatriation of Goans who are stranded abroad.

Sawaikar said Goa does not figure in the first phase of the MEA's repatriation initiative, but its natives are likely to be brought back in



Air India will operate 64 repatriation flights for a week from May 7 while the Navy deployed two ships as India rolled out a massive evacuation plan on Tuesday to bring back thousands of its nationals stranded abroad due to the coronavirus-triggered lockdown

the second phase.

The 4,000 people who have registered on the portal include a sizable number of students, some who have lost their jobs and some NRIs parents who are stranded abroad as they had travelled prior to the lockdown.

Sawaikar said the MEA will give preference to those who have requested to come back under compelling circumstances, the criteria of which will be decided as per

their guidelines.

Air India will operate 64 repatriation flights for a week from May 7 while the Navy deployed two ships as India rolled out a massive evacuation plan on Tuesday to bring back thousands of its nationals stranded abroad due to the coronavirus-triggered lockdown.

From the Gulf countries to Malaysia and the UK to the US, the multi-agency operation christened 'Vande Bharat Mission' will

see the state-owned airline operate the non-scheduled commercial flights till May 13 to ferry around 15,000 Indian nationals from 12 countries.

Those availing the repatriation flights will be charged, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday in New Delhi, adding that private Indian airlines may join the repatriation effort after May 13.

COVID-19 testing lab being set up at Deen Dayal University

PNS ■ MATHURA

A lab is being set up at the Deen Dayal Veterinary University here for COVID-19 testing, an Uttar Pradesh minister said.

'With the opening of the lab at the varsity, the time taken for getting reports of COVID-19 samples sent to J N Medical College, Aligarh Muslim University, would be less,' Minister for Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Dairying Chaudhary Laxmi Narayan said. Initially, 50 samples will be tested in a day. However, it will gradually increase to 100 or more, he said.

Chaudhary said the government has so far established 19 COVID-19 testing labs in the state. Dr S K Garg said the work in the lab will begin after the supply of chemicals and testing kits will be received from Bengaluru-based firms, which is expected shortly.

29 BSF jawans test positive in Jodhpur

PNS ■ JODHPUR

Twenty-nine BSF jawans, forming part of a company deployed earlier in the Walled City area in Delhi on internal security duty, tested positive for Covid-19 here on Wednesday, an official of the border guarding force said.

All these jawans had been shifted to the Subsidiary Training Center (STC) of BSF on Monday from Delhi for quarantine.

'Their samples were taken on Tuesday after their arrival at Jodhpur and had been sent to AIIMS for examination. The report was released by AIIMS on Wednesday morning, in which they were tested positive,' the BSF official said.

All of them have now been admitted in the AIIMS for treatment, he added.

According to the official, all these jawans were the part of a BSF company, which had been sent to Delhi from Jaipur



for internal security purpose and had been put up at the Jama Masjid.

Some of the jawans, on duty there, had tested coronavirus positive, after which the entire company was air-lifted to Jodhpur and was quarantined at the STC considering adequate accommodation for their quarantine.

The official said the quarantine centre at the STC here is well-equipped for the purpose and the administration here has been taking proper care of all the jawans.

85 more BSF personnel test COVID-19 positive

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eighty-five more personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF) have tested positive for coronavirus, taking the total to 154, a force official said on Wednesday.

These include over 60 troops, who were deployed for law and order duties in the Jamia and Chandni Mahal area of the national capital, and six from the escort team of the inter-ministerial central team (IMCT) that toured West Bengal to check COVID-19 containment measures in the state. At least 37 infected personnel are from the Tripura frontier of the force.

A total of 85 new cases have been detected. The troops were performing essential and operational duties, a force spokesperson said. There were 69 cases of BSF personnel testing positive till Tuesday and hence the total stands at 154.

Creation to preservation

Millions of Indians are out of work. We must not let them get out of hope as well. It's time for some big-bang reforms



A survey by an independent economic think-tank, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), for the week ended May 3 has estimated that unemployment rate in India surged to a staggering 27.11, up from just 8.7 per cent in early March. Unemployment has always been a slow-burn crisis in India but what's worrying is an urban flare-up ever since the lockdown. According to the latest CMIE data, unemployment rate was the highest in urban areas, which include a majority of the red zones. As against 26.16 per cent for rural areas, it stood at 29.22 per cent in urban India. In the previous week ended April 26, the urban unemployment rate had stood at 21.45 per cent and the rural unemployment rate at 20.88 per cent. The impact of the shutdown on small businesses and manufacturing facilities has been brutal. Several previously viable, even profitable businesses have been laid low due to the COVID-19 shutdown. And with it, all hopes and dreams of not just thousands of entrepreneurs but also accountants, clerks, secretaries and more have been shattered. Companies have had to slash wage bills significantly in order to ride out the storm and "orders" to pay salaries cannot possibly be met. We understand that several unions have approached the courts, asking them to order companies to pay up. Firms, too, have retaliated saying that they cannot possibly pay and that there needs to be a sense of rationality here. It is true that some companies have used the pandemic as an excuse to shut down parts of their business or to get rid of recalcitrant employees and are just shrugging their shoulders. That said, unions should also realise that several firms have seen their cash flows drop to zero and normal salary payouts to all employees will be impossible. Instead of fighting fruitless cases, which will only succeed in shutting down companies, unions need to rally the troops and raise money from their employed members to support those who are jobless. Of course, only good ones do that and in India, unions have been in a political morass for decades.

It must be agreed that we had no other option than go for a complete shutdown in a bid to contain the disease. But this does not absolve the Government. When the scale of disruption has been such that unemployment is becoming the norm, it calls upon the Government to intervene and respond with all the resources it has at hand to alleviate distress. Statements by the Chief Economic Advisor KV Subramanian, saying that there will be "no free lunch" for a stimulus, are extremely unhelpful and insensitive. Further, the situation conveys that this Government is not getting the correct advice. Maybe these words were made in response to Nobel Prize-winning economist Abhijit Banerjee's comments on a call with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, where he had argued for a massive stimulus. But *prima facie*, it is impossible to see what choice the Government has if the economy is to revive. It will be expensive and will mean the suspension of some big-ticket projects and investments. Possibly even a pay cut for the Government itself. But if revenues are to rise again, the Government has to spend instead of doing public relations exercises around "Make in India." The need is to sustain incomes and that calls upon the Government to save the weakened parts of the economy. The need for a fiscal package cannot be denied. This is the start of the seventh year of the Narendra Modi Government and the COVID pandemic cannot be blamed on prior actions. India has a once in a lifetime opportunity to attract investors and make some truly dramatic reforms. We are letting that opportunity as well as any job of preserving jobs slip through our fingers. We cannot allow that to happen. If for nothing else, at least for the sake of the millions who are now unemployed.

Feluda to the rescue

CSIR has developed a testing strip, named after Satyajit Ray's famous sleuth, to detect COVID-19 in minutes



Filmmaker and author Satyajit Ray created the sharp-witted, well-read, analytical and intellectual sleuth Feluda as a home-grown counterpart to the great detectives in world literature. Feluda wasn't superhuman or a geek, wasn't blessed with great tools of gimmickry but was a simpleton with a deductive mind, one which we could relate to. He was the original Bengali, who simply because of his rootedness became a pan-Indian favourite, too. And now he seems to have inspired a testing kit tool in our fight against COVID-19. Two Bengal scientists at the Council for Scientific

and Industrial Research (CSIR) have developed a rapid testing strip named after him, which is paper-based, affordable and reliable for early detection. In conjunction with Tata Sons, CSIR is gearing up for commercial production for it to be ready for use by the end of this month. Making the best use of the new CRISPR technology for mapping the genomic sequence of the novel Coronavirus and paper strip chemistry, the testing kit can read a visible signal that can be rapidly assessed to establish the presence of viral infection in a sample. Unlike the antibody-based rapid test currently being used by the Government for surveillance in hotspots and containment zones, the IGIB diagnostic kit relies on DNA-protein interaction for successful diagnosis. The strip basically will change colour, just like a pregnancy strip does. What's more, the results will be available in minutes. Besides, there's no need for any specialisation, the test can be carried out in a simple pathological lab. While the now extant RT-PCR test kits are priced at ₹4,500, the Feluda test strip would cost only ₹500 per test. Compared to the RT-PCR test for COVID-19, which takes more than a day to yield results, Feluda results will be out in an hour, out of which 45 minutes would be just for the testing preparations. This will facilitate large-scale sampling, which undoubtedly is much needed. Currently, India is testing less than one person per 1,000 people (0.76 to be precise). The scientists prefer saliva over blood because it is easy to collect even from an elderly patient.

With nations across the world caught in a race against time to develop a vaccine for the deadly Coronavirus, India, too, has been scurrying to build its own arsenal to fight it. From laboratories coming up with promising ideas to fast-tracking the development of a vaccine and the development of rapid testing kits by a lab in Pune, the Corona crisis may well change science for good. What is most required though is developing a respect for scientific temperament, holding talent and funding research in the country. If a virus assault of three months could prod home-grown scientists to find their own solutions, imagine what sustained encouragement and funding of R&D could do? We should keep our best scientific minds home in a post-COVID world to build our own sufficiencies. And begin to collect our own patents rather than in collaboration with others.

Corona's privacy concerns

With changing transnational contours of the app economy, where the jurisdictional functionality of service providers is questionable and operates in clouds, India needs to strengthen data laws



ARUN K PUJARI

The Government's directive to all public and private sector employees to install the Aarogya Setu app in their mobile phones has raised eyebrows in some quarters. But the fact is that a post-COVID world is going to be equated with a digital society. It will be the new normal, where the use of diverse and converged digital technologies will help people maintain social distancing and facilitate secured living in an age of pandemic.

The Aarogya Setu app is designed to keep the people informed about the risk of them being infected with Coronavirus. Self-assessment begins with a request for information such as gender, full name, age, countries travelled to in the last 30 days and professional details. The app, which makes the use of GPS to get the user's location, discovers other available applications near his/her device using bluetooth. By cross-referencing the location details with that of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s database and by collecting records of nearby users, it does a risk assessment and returns with a colour-coded message. It appears that the app continuously collects the user's data and uploads them to a Government server along with a DiD, which is a unique digital id. Data in the server is anonymised in such a manner that personalised features are suppressed without affecting the statistical features of the data ensembles.

The fact that devices exchange information, continuously collect location data of registered users and maintain a record of the places where they may have come in contact with other people has given rise to a sense of distrust among the people. Hence, the controversy. Arguments can be drawn into two fields: One of data privacy and the other on surveillance. While debate around the Aarogya Setu app is unsubstantiated and unfounded, questions related to data privacy will very much be a talking point in a post-COVID society.

Data is now widely being treated as the new "oil", "gold" and is a valuable resource from the perspective of society, economy, polity, privacy and human progress. For a society to make progress from an information age to a knowledgeable, digital world (data-driven society), the effective use of data and information, while qualifying with privacy parameters, will be a cornerstone of public discourse. Privacy is as old as mankind and has a close connection with human dignity, freedom and independence of an individual. Maintaining privacy will be more challenging in an age of informed society. Data privacy is a necessity so as to preserve and protect personal information that is collected by organisations. The fear of it being used by a third party is always there.

Data privacy assumes significance as people live with the app economy for the entire day, every day and every hour. Digital



citizens, while accessing various apps, give in to the consent clause and in reciprocation forfeit intimate details to data companies by accepting the fine print of services that they receive through the app. Further, several devices often track our movements, preferences and any information that we mine from our digital existence. This without the consent of the user.

Let us be clear at this stage that collecting data, however private it may be, with the user's consent, implicit or explicit, for any purpose and using it for data analytics in anonymised form is not a breach of privacy. Of course, unless the data is personalised and shared with other platforms or a third party. This seemingly is not the case with the Aarogya Setu app at present.

The nation has just seen that all efforts to curb the rapid spread of the Corona pandemic can be seriously affected due to contact tracing. This can be minimised with the help of data-driven technology that collects contact history of individuals. Undoubtedly, contact history is private but is used for a public cause. Aarogya Setu ensures just that and is a proof that India is growing to be a digitally matured State.

Post the COVID pandemic, India will witness a rise in app-driven socio-economic activities. Every aspect of the digital society — spanning from

e-commerce, digital marketing and learning, digital art and culture, digital banking and transactions, social networking and social media, to digital Government interventions — will spread ominously.

Collection of data, private or otherwise, is inevitable and unavoidable in a data-intensive and algorithmically governed society. At the same time, the use of data responsibly while also preserving privacy should be the order of the day.

This brings us to an important question: Is India prepared to regulate data laws in the cyberspace? Further, are the citizens digitally educated to understand the trade-off between "comfort" and "luxury" while using digital technologies or when they share their data for a purpose? Are they aware of the privacy concerns arising there-of? These questions need to be addressed by digital communities of a post-COVID society.

India's legal system, too, can be construed as half prepared to deal with concerns arising out of data privacy violation in the app economy and highly integrated digital age, even though the Information Technology Act (2008, amended in 2011) provides the necessary legal regime for cybersecurity and protecting privacy concerns thereof.

With changing transnational contours of the app economy,

where the jurisdictional functionality of service providers is questionable and operates in clouds, India needs to consolidate and strengthen data laws on priority.

The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, which is still stuck in Parliament, intends to regulate the processing of personal data of individuals (data principals) by the Government and private entities (data fiduciaries). The Bill must provide legal teeth to data protection authorities to prosecute the data fiduciaries with penal actions. Such regulation, even if passed, cannot be effectively compliant in the context of lacking digital citizenship practices and etiquette.

A post-COVID society and democracy in India will be digitally driven and will be converged around data privacy and security that should not be devalued due to the current political bickering on the installation of the Aarogya Setu app. The app has only a limited purpose to contain the spread of the Corona infection. At the same time, developers of the app must take care to ensure that the data collected for the purpose is not intruded, de-anonymised or exploited by any other party.

(The writer is former Dean of the School of Computer and Information Sciences at the University of Hyderabad and currently the Vice Chancellor of Central University of Rajasthan)

“COLLECTION OF DATA, PRIVATE OR OTHERWISE, IS INEVITABLE AND UNAVOIDABLE IN A DATA-INTENSIVE AND ALGORITHMICALLY GOVERNED SOCIETY. AT THE SAME TIME, THE USE OF DATA RESPONSIBLY WHILE ALSO PRESERVING PRIVACY SHOULD BE THE ORDER OF THE DAY”

SOUNDBITE

The Centre is ready to help in every way possible — be it manpower increase, capacity building, technical assistance or any kind of handholding that is required to manage the situation.

Union Minister —Harsh Vardhan



What would life be? Without a song or a dance, what are we? So I say thank you for the music. For giving it to me... #music.

Actor —Deepika Padukone



Pakistanis may soon recognise that China seeks not a partner but a colonial vassal, the deaths of whose citizens it sees as wholly irrelevant.

Former Pentagon official —Michael Rubin



We need to know what will happen after lockdown 3.0? The CMs need to deliberate and ask as to what is the strategy of the Government to get the nation out of the lockdown?

Former Prime Minister —Manmohan Singh



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Prevent overcrowding

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "All for a drink" (May 5). As the fight against COVID-19 entered its third phase with the Government providing considerable relaxation in lockdown curbs as part of a phase-wise exit plan, hundreds of people have been lining up before Government-run liquor shops, jostling and pushing in complete defiance of social distancing norms. At most places, many buyers were not even wearing masks. The over one-month-long nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus will become ineffective if the Government does not control such crowding around the liquor shops.

MN Qasmi Kolkata

Save the labourers

Sir — The extended lockdown has exposed the plight of the migrant workers. India of the 1960s had dignified the rural economy. Rural infrastructure support, that would have sustained income levels in agro-slack

seasons, was soft-pedalled, resulting in migration.

Now, as restless migrants tried to set off for their villages, employers leveraged the lockdown to block the exodus to ensure continuity to their farm and factory outputs. This 140 million strong migrant labour is vital to our economy, yet shock-

ingly, their status remains undefined. China has 300 million workers but it provides them with more congenial work environment. It would be a pity if we now fail to incorporate the exploited labour in the new scheme of things.

R Narayanan Navi Mumbai

The pharma industry deserves appreciation

Governments across the world are engaged in an intense battle to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Only a vaccine can be a definite and conclusive solution to help mankind return to normal life. Whoever first develops a COVID vaccine will gain a huge competitive advantage. India, too, has the potential to develop an antidote to COVID-19. We should be proud of our biotech companies. Six Indian companies are in the race to make a vaccine for Coronavirus. Over 30 Indian vaccines are in different stages of development, with a few going on to the trial stages. One of them, the Serum Institute of India (SII), is the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by the number of doses produced and sold globally — more than 1.5 billion so far. It is great to know that a vaccine candidate, developed by the SII in partnership with American biotechnology firm Codagenix, has progressed to the pre-clinical test phase (the animal trial phase) and is estimated to be ready by early 2022. Much of the optimism over the vaccine stems from its reported success on rhesus monkeys.

The Government should empower our pharmaceu-



tical scientists and doctors, provide them with more infrastructure. We should also enhance our bio-defence mechanism. Hospitals should be equipped well to treat patients affected with special pathogens in the future. In this crisis, pharma industries and pharmacists also deserve appreciation. They have been working tirelessly.

Ravi Teja Kathuripalli Hyderabad

Sheer injustice

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Reality, not criticism" (May 5). The homecoming of migrant workers on special trains is welcome. But it is also the moral responsibility of the Government to bear the cost of their train jour-

ney considering their tragedy and distress. It's ironical that the Government could fly back stranded tourists back home for free to display its efficiency to the rest of the world.

Though after facing pressure from Opposition, the Centre clarified that the railways will pay 85 per cent of the train fares and the remaining 15 per cent will be paid by the State Governments, the onus has been put on respective States who are already reeling under tough conditions. Not to forget, there's no accountability of the money being collected in the name of the crisis in the PM Cares fund.

Nimai Charan Swain Bhubaneswar

India must retaliate

Sir — The loss of three soldiers in Jammu and Kashmir is tragic. India must retaliate with full might. Only immediate forceful action will calm the people of India.

Jayant Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A very risky proposition

The concept of 'immunity passports' comes with practical difficulties and a lack of sufficient scientific backing



KOTA SRIRAJ

With May 17 just ten days away, 1.3 billion people are waiting with bated breath to see if the Government is able to usher in a graded relaxation of the 53-day-long lockdown that India is currently under. The Government, on its part, is mulling how to gradually open up the nation and the economy without resulting in a fresh outbreak of Coronavirus cases.

As of now, the number of cases in the country is inching towards the 50,000 mark as States registered 2,958 fresh Coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours. There have been 1,694 casualties till now as the toll zoomed to 126 in one day across the country.

Amid this spike, the Centre's dilemma is made worse by the assessments made by British brokerage firm Barclays, which pegged losses to the Indian economy at \$120 billion or four per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), putting more pressure on the Government to ease the lockdown, at least on commerce, at the earliest.

If the recent surge in cases is anything to go by, India still has a long way to go before it can claim to have a grip on COVID-19, unlike New Zealand which has successfully eliminated the virus. According to Ashley Bloomfield, Director-General of Health, New Zealand, this feat was achieved through rapid preventive measures, widespread testing and scientific research-based methodologies.

India needs to script its own success story in controlling the virus on one hand and revivifying the economy on the other hand. This naturally needs an immediate restoration of business and commercial activities but this is fraught with unimaginable risks to public health. As it is, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have continued to report a high number of COVID-19 cases while Delhi's Coronavirus count reached 5,000 after a deadly spike on May 4. But despite the doom and gloom scenario, the economy has to be opened up anyhow. These exasperating conditions have led some countries to explore the option of giving "immunity passports" or "risk-free certificates" to those who were infected with COVID-19 but recovered from it.

These passports or certificates issued by the Government are being visualised as a way to help people go to work and, in the process, get the economy moving again. In order to have an immunity passport, one would have to be reliably tested for antibodies and specific proteins that could help stall and stop the growth of the COVID-19 infection. This concept quickly caught the imagination of many nations stuck in various levels of the lockdown as it presented a plausible exit strategy from the existing limbo. But the concept of immunity passports has its own share of practical difficulties and lack of sufficient scientific backing, all of which make it a major hit or miss initiative.

The foremost challenge for the immunity passport strategy is that the antibody testing procedures across the world are in their formative stages. Even the home-testing kits for the same are not up to the mark in terms of quality and require strict following of instructions as per the kit.

Then there is also the issue of people who have fought off the disease initially having got infected again, whereupon their immunity failed. This also undermines the concept of immunity passports, as once the person is granted an immunity certificate, there is no guaranteeing that s/he will not get infected again, thereby posing a threat of community transmission.

The issuance of an immunity passport will also cause sociological issues as it demarcates "healthy" people from "sick" people who have no option but to wait for vaccines or drugs to be developed.

The novel Coronavirus is a "new" strain and has no precedent nobody knows how and when it ends and the level of immunity needed to tackle it. Therefore, it is very difficult to predict how and when an infected person can be pronounced safe. Basing immunity-related conclusions on still-developing antibody testing processes for a disease that has evolved out of a new strain is nothing but speculation, which is not advisable. The lockdown of the global economy has dealt a major blow to incomes. However, panicked initiatives to open the economy can lead to a major loss of lives, which are more precious than monetary gains.

India must follow the trio of best practices adopted by New Zealand, wherein rapid isolation measures for hotspots, widest possible population testing using the latest scientific methodology is combined with a calibrated easing of activities for green and orange zones. It must also ensure that the identified hotspots or red zones stay fully quarantined. India must also encourage the scientific research community to identify measures to enhance and bolster cell-level immunity in human bodies as that alone provides the first line of defence against the COVID-19 virus.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WE DEMAND THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE FUEL HIKE AS IT WILL MAKE FOODGRAIN, VEGETABLES AND OTHER ITEMS OF DAILY USE COSTLIER.

—DELHI BJP PRESIDENT
MANOJ TIWARI



LIFE ISN'T ALL ABOUT RAINBOWS AND SUNSHINE. TOUGH TIMES NEED TOUGH SOLUTIONS. THIS HAS BEEN MY LEARNING AS FINANCE MINISTER.

—DELHI DEPUTY CM AND FM
MANISH SISODIA

Cure this malaise

The contemptible action of people to obstruct the dignified interment of doctors and violence against health workers battling the pandemic has outraged the medical fraternity and most citizens



ROBIN R DAVID

A doctor contracted COVID-19 from a patient and succumbed to the virus on April 19 in Chennai. The funeral of the doctor was stopped by residents who assembled in large numbers to oppose it. The Madras High Court, taking suo moto cognisance of the despicable incident, said that Article 21 of the Constitution, which protects the life and personal liberty of all persons, includes within its ambit the right to a decent burial. The court said that this doctor was deprived of his right to have a decent burial.

In another incident in Meghalaya, the local governing bodies known as *Durbar Shmong* prevented the cremation of a COVID-19 infected doctor. Consequently, the Meghalaya Bar Association filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the High Court, against the State and local bodies. The court noted that the State authorities handled the matter in an inept way and the obstructive conduct of the *Durbar Shmong* would shock the conscience of every right-thinking individual.

The contemptible action of various groups to obstruct the dignified interment of doctors and other healthcare professionals has outraged the medical fraternity and all citizens with a conscience. On April 20, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said that objections to proper funerals of doctors and other health workers, dying in the line of pandemic duty, is the last straw. The IMA demanded a special Central law to take stringent action against those who indulge in violence against healthcare professionals and hospitals. The IMA called for a "white alert" on April 22 and sought to declare April 23 as a "black day" if its demands to protect the serving medical fraternity were not met.

Soon after, the Union Cabinet passed the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 which was then signed by the President. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare intended the Ordinance to ensure "zero tolerance" to any form of violence against healthcare professionals and damage to property. Significantly, in 2019 the Healthcare Services Personnel and Clinical Establishments (Prohibition of Violence and Damage to Property) Bill, drafted by the Health Ministry to contain violence against doctors, was rejected by the Home Ministry, saying that there cannot be a separate legislation to protect the members of a particular profession.

Hopefully, this Ordinance will make up for the past errors and infuse confidence in the healthcare community, that is on the frontline in our war against the pandemic. That is the passing of the Ordinance itself is a positive decision by the Government, the moot question is whether the new law is adequate to protect doctors and other healthcare workers?

According to the Ordinance, an "act of violence" includes any of the following acts committed against healthcare personnel: Harassment impacting living or working conditions; harm, injury or danger to life; obstruction in the discharge of duties and loss or damage to the property or documents of the healthcare personnel.

Property is defined to include: Clinical establishment; quarantine facility; mobile medical unit, and other property in which healthcare worker has a direct interest. Further, "healthcare personnel" are people, who while carrying out their duties in relation to countering the epidemic, may come in direct contact with affected patients and thereby are at the risk of being impacted by such disease and include any public and clinical healthcare providers such as

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 THOUGH THE MINISTRY MAKES TALL CLAIMS OF ZERO TOLERANCE, WITH VERY HIGH ASPIRATIONS OF PACIFYING A DEMORALISED AND SHAKEN MEDICAL FRATERNITY, THE 2020 ORDINANCE DOES NOT ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF ATTACKS ON HEALTH WORKERS IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES AFTER THE PANDEMIC IS OVER. ASSAULTS ON THEM EXISTED GLOBALLY, LONG BEFORE COVID-19 REARED ITS UGLY HEAD. NUMEROUS PLEAS TO PROTECT MEDICAL STAFF HAVE FALLEN ON DEAF EARS. ACCORDING TO THE IMA, OVER 75 PER CENT OF DOCTORS AND OTHER HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS HAVE FACED VIOLENCE AT WORK



doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and community health workers. The Ministry claimed that while the citizens fully cooperated with healthcare personnel most of the time, there were sporadic incidents of violence that demoralised the medical fraternity fighting the contagion. Therefore, it was felt that separate and stringent provisions for emergent times were needed to act as effective deterrents to any such incidents of violence.

Though the Ministry makes tall claims of zero tolerance, with very high aspirations of pacifying a demoralised and shaken medical fraternity, the Ordinance does not address the issue of attacks on healthcare workers in normal circumstances, after the pandemic is over. Assaults on them existed globally, long before COVID-19 reared its ugly head. Numerous pleas to protect medical staff have fallen on deaf ears. According to the IMA, over 75 per cent of doctors and other healthcare professionals have faced violence at work.

In 2012, a pregnant woman with obstetric complications died in Tuticorin. In retaliation, the attending doctor was killed by the enraged husband. This triggered a call for a strike by the Tamil Nadu Government Doctors' Association. The IMA has demanded that hospitals be declared as "protected zones" and called for strict implementation of laws in cases of violence against health professionals.

In 2014, angry relatives of a 14-year-old boy, who was declared "brought dead" at a private hospital in Bathinda, Punjab, went on a rampage. They damaged the nursing home and burnt down the doctor's house. The Punjab State Chapter of the IMA demanded strict action against those responsible for damaging the nursing home and the house of the doctor. Angry relatives of patients are not the only ones who oppress medical professionals, the Government set-up is

also equally guilty. Dr Indranil Khan, an oncologist, faced harassment after he posted images of doctors wearing raincoats in a COVID-19 ward of a Government hospital on social media. Police detained Dr Khan, charged him with causing communal disharmony and criminal intimidation and confiscated his phone.

A writ petition against his harassment by the police was filed before the Calcutta High Court. Justice Prasanna Mukherji of the Calcutta High Court said that freedom of speech and expression, which is granted under Article 19 of the Constitution, has to be scrupulously upheld by the State. The court said that if an expression of opinion brings the Government into disrepute, it cannot defend the allegation by intimidation of the person expressing the opinion by subjecting him to prolonged interrogation, threatening arrest, seizing his mobile phone and SIM card.

In another incident, Dr Piyush Pushkar Singh, who complained about the shortage of equipment and protective masks, was terminated by the Hindu Rao Hospital for bringing disrepute to the institution on April 15. Clearly, the Epidemic Diseases Ordinance, 2020, which is stated to ensure the safety of healthcare professionals is not designed to protect Dr Khan and Dr Singh.

Sadly, the COVID-19 outbreak led to a rash of attacks against doctors and other health workers. Healthcare personnel deployed in rural areas were beaten and stopped from entering the villages and for "violating" the lockdown while going to work. The hurried promulgation of the Ordinance appears to be a knee-jerk reaction by the Government. First, the Ministry's claim that the citizens fully cooperated with the healthcare workers is belied by its own statement that incidents of violence have occurred which demoralised the medical fraternity. Second, the Ordinance only "protects" healthcare

personnel in an epidemic and not in general conditions. Therefore, this Ordinance does not afford any protection to the medical fraternity in a non-epidemic situation.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), health workers must be provided with training on infection prevention, given Personal Protection Equipment and technical updates. They must have a blame-free environment to report on incidents such as exposure to blood or bodily fluids or violence.

The right to health i.e. the right to live in a hygienic and safe environment, flows from Article 21. According to Article 47 the improvement of public health is the primary duty of the State. Justice Chandrachud said under Article 21, the right to life is meaningless unless accompanied by the guarantee of certain concomitant rights including, but not limited to, the right to health. The right to health is understood to be indispensable to a life of dignity, well-being and includes, for instance, the right to emergency medical care and the right to maintenance and improvement of public health. In the current situation, with the need to have a conducive and safe environment for medical professionals and the responsibility of the State to provide for public health, the Government will be well-advised to take all steps to protect the medical fraternity from any form of lawlessness. The Centre must consider enacting a stand-alone law that will enable hospitals and medical personnel to work in a safe environment at all times, so as to attain the Constitutional aspiration of right to health for all citizens. While social distancing is being advocated, medical professionals do not have the privilege of working remotely. The best form of applause to give the doctors and medical personnel is to give them a safe working environment.

(The writer is Advocate Partner in a law firm)

Substance over showmanship needed

The 'Corona warriors' would have been much more appreciative if they had been provided with PPE and protection from rampaging mobs by the military. Our Ordnance factories could have been used to mass-produce such gear



DEEPAK SINHA

The Indian subcontinent has always been extremely prone to natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, landslides, avalanches and storms. Statistics published in media reports suggest that post-Independence, till 2017, India has witnessed 529 natural disasters, leaving aside those caused by droughts, epidemics and extreme temperature. These disasters have resulted in nearly 2,00,000 deaths and left hundreds of millions affected in the country.

In all of these incidents, our

armed forces have been employed for conduct of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions, more often than not, as the key nodal agency.

It, therefore, comes as a major surprise to all, especially the military leadership, when they find themselves and the military on the fringes in this ongoing war against the pandemic, tasked with providing only limited assistance on the periphery.

That apparently appears to have become a source of immense anxiety and insecurity among the Service Chiefs, forcing them to call a press conference to announce a series of displays by elements of the three Services and the Coast Guard to honour our "Corona warriors."

If, on the other hand, these were the directions of the Government that they were complying with — which is also a major possibility — it shows them up as weak, only aiming to please their political bosses in

hopes of future rewards.

To my mind, there appears to be no other reasonable explanation for this bizarre exercise, which obviously appears to have, at least outwardly, paid them some dividends, if the Prime Minister's tweet means anything.

Let us not get it wrong. There is indeed much to be appreciative of, inasmuch as such displays go towards building the morale of the "Corona warriors." But did it really require the Chief of Defence Staff and the three Service Chiefs to make the announcement? Is that what they have been reduced to? For that matter, was the scale that this morale-boosting exercise was undertaken at really necessary?

In such troubled times, substance over showmanship would have been better appreciated. Much of that time, money and effort, could and should, have been better utilised in providing assistance to the vast numbers of our citizenry who have

been rendered utterly destitute, hungry, without shelter and unable to reach their homes because of an ill-planned and poorly-executed nationwide lockdown.

Feeding the hungry, providing tented shelters for the homeless or transport for the weary are not matters that require approval from the highest levels, just a humane bent of mind at the local level. That in itself would have garnered enough goodwill among the populace, without this grasping for publicity that we witnessed on television.

It should be seen as a positive step that our military has not been called out in this disaster, except of course for providing medical assistance where necessary. This suggests that our civil administration is finally maturing and waking up to its duties, however poor its performance might have been this time around.

In all fairness, this particular disaster has been on an unprece-

ented scale. We neither anticipated it nor were we prepared or trained for it and errors were to be expected.

It has been the bane of the military in the past that whenever a disaster occurred, it invariably led to the civil administration and its agencies all but abdicating their responsibilities, leaving it to the military to take over the process, coordinate and provide the required assistance. Examples are too numerous to quote but the floods that devastated Uttarakhand and Kashmir, in the past, best illustrate this phenomenon.

Clearly, as we look at and assess the security environment in our region, there can be little doubt that our military must take all necessary precautions to keep its units out of harm's way so that they can meet their constitutional obligations and successfully protect our sovereignty at a moment's notice. Static units and those uncommitted opera-

tionally, spread out all over the country could have been utilised in a number of ways to provide succour to our hard-pressed brethren. As a matter of fact, it was the bounden duty of our Service Chiefs to have interceded with the Prime Minister and have convinced him of the enormous range of assistance that our forces were capable of providing.

Obviously the lack of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) within the forces may well have been an important consideration for the hierarchy in whatever suggestions they may have made. In any case, the "Corona warriors" would have been more appreciative if they had been provided with PPE and protection from rampaging mobs instead.

In fact, within the veteran community, leaving aside a few, these theatrics have been seen as contrary to service norms and ethics, as the former Naval chief, Admiral Laxminarayan Ramdas', article in one of our dailies makes it amply

clear. Instead of copying what the US Air Force Aerobatics Teams did at New York, we could have looked at the more innovative ways the Spanish military was used to manufacture PPE. It may come as a surprise but various Ordnance Corps establishments within the Army are authorised tailors and equipment repairers, who could have been gainfully employed to produce masks and other equipment.

Given the massive deficiency in PPE suits, even the Ordnance Parachute Factory at Kanpur could have been modified quickly to mass-produce them. An opportunity to do good was truly squandered, leaving behind only a bitter taste in the mouth that is unlikely to disappear any time soon.

(The author, a military veteran is a Consultant with the Observer Research Foundation and a Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai)

CAPSULE



Adani Enterprises Q4 net profit declines 64 pc to Rs 96.93 cr

New Delhi: Adani Enterprises on Wednesday reported a 63.57 per cent decline in consolidated profit to Rs 96.93 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31. The Gautam Adani-led company had clocked a consolidated profit of Rs 266.09 crore for the corresponding quarter a year-ago, the company said in a BSE filing. Its consolidated total income for the quarter increased by 2 per cent to Rs 13,698 crores as against Rs 13,473 crore during the year-ago period. The total expenses of the company rose to Rs 13,711.98 crore during the quarter under review as against Rs 12,975.30 crore in the same period previous fiscal. The company in a statement said: "The PAT attributable to owners for Q4FY 20 was Rs 61 crores vs Rs 283 crores in Q4 FY 19". "Adani Enterprises Limited has always strived towards nation building through its business endeavours which focuses on creating excellent infrastructure capabilities to accelerate the growth."



Lack of manpower hampering plans to restart plants: Honda

New Delhi: Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) on Wednesday said lack of required workforce is making it difficult for the company to resume operations at its two manufacturing plants, but added that its dealerships have started to open across the country. The automaker, which sells models like City and Amaze, said that with new relaxations rolled out by the government, it is planning to restart operations at Tapukara plant in Rajasthan sometime next week. "However, in order to resume production even at lower level and in single shift, we require manpower which is living in the neighbourhood and also from nearby areas of Dharuhera, Rewari etc.," HCIL Senior Vice President and Director, (Marketing and Sales) Rajesh Goel told.

Centre to get Rs 1.6 L-cr from record excise duty hike on fuel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government will gain close to Rs 1.6 lakh crore in additional revenues this fiscal from a record hike in excise duty on petrol and diesel that has pushed total incidence of taxation on auto fuels to 70 per cent of the price. Late on Tuesday evening, the government hiked excise duty on petrol by Rs 10 per litre and that on diesel by Rs 13 a litre to mop up gains arising from international oil prices falling to a two-decade low.

Petrol price remained unchanged at Rs 71.26 a litre and diesel at Rs 69.39 as state-owned oil firms set off the excise duty hike against gains they accrued from fall in international oil rates.

This is the second hike in excise duty in less than two months and will help the government garner over Rs 1.7 lakh crore in additional revenues annually at 2019-20 level of consumption, industry officials said.



Petrol price remained unchanged at Rs 71.26 a litre and diesel at Rs 69.39 as state-owned oil firms set off the excise duty hike against gains they accrued from fall in international oil rates

Considering the slump in consumption due to travel restrictions imposed by coronavirus lockdown, the gains in the remaining 11 months of the current fiscal year (April 2020 to

March 2021) will be close to Rs 1.6 lakh crore, they said.

Together with Rs 39,000 crore in annual revenues gained from the March 14 excise duty hike of Rs 3 per litre each on petrol and

diesel, the government stands to gain as much as Rs 2 lakh crore. After the excise duty hike, taxes - both central excise and state VAT - make up for 70 per cent of the price of petrol and diesel. A litre of petrol costs only Rs 18.28 per litre in Delhi but after including excise duty (Rs 32.98), dealer commission (Rs 3.56) and VAT (Rs 16.44) the price for consumer comes to Rs 71.26 a litre.

Similarly, a litre of diesel costs only Rs 18.78 but after including excise duty (Rs 31.83), dealer commission (Rs 2.52) and VAT (Rs 16.26), it is priced at Rs 69.39 for consumers. State-owned fuel retailing companies, Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) had frozen petrol and diesel prices since March 16, anticipating the government move and will now set off gains they accrued from the continuing drop in international oil prices against the excise duty hike.

Hiring during April dips by 62% due to lockdown

PNS ■ MUMBAI



The Naukri JobSpeak is a monthly Index which calculates and records hiring activity based on job listings on Naukri.com website

The nationwide lockdown due to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in 62 per cent decline in hiring activities in April compared to the same month last year, according to a report. Hiring activities dropped to 951 last month from 2,477 in April 2019, according to the Naukri JobSpeak Index.

The April 2020 decline in hiring is led by sectors like hotel/restaurant/travel/airlines (-91 per cent), auto/ancillary (-82 per cent), retail (-77 per cent) and accounting/finance (-70 per cent). The Naukri JobSpeak is a monthly Index which calculates and records hiring activity based on job listings on Naukri.com website.

New jobs for professionals in the ticketing/travel/airlines, hotel/restaurants and HR/administration sectors witnessed a dip of 95 per cent, 89 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively. Functional roles in purchase/supply chain (-70 per

cent), marketing/advertising (-69 per cent), sales/business development (-69 per cent) and accounts/finance (-68 per cent) also witnessed a steep decline. However, new jobs for professionals in the IT-software (-51 per cent), BPO/ITES/KPO (-54 per cent) pharma/biotech/ healthcare (-57 per cent) and teaching/education (-56 per cent) sectors were less impacted as compared to other sectors in April 2020.

The job market across cities registered a double-digit dip in hiring mainly led by metros where Delhi dipped by 70 per cent followed by Chennai (-62 per cent), Kolkata (-60 per cent) and Mumbai (-60 per cent). There was an across the

board decline in hiring at varied experience levels with the entry-level experience bands (0 to 3 years) witnessing the sharpest decline of 67 per cent. "The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the hiring activities leading to a 62 per cent decline in April 2020.

While hotel/restaurant/travel/airlines have been significantly impacted, industries like IT-software/software services, pharma/biotech/clinical research and insurance have been less impacted," Naukri.com Chief Business Officer Pawan Goyal added.

Sensex rises 232 points of back of bank, auto stocks

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex ended 232 points higher after a see-saw session on Wednesday, led by gains in banking, finance and auto stocks despite rising concerns over the country's economic outlook as COVID-19 cases spike. After swinging over 800 points during the day, the 30-share index closed 232.24 points or 0.74 per cent higher at 31,685.75.

On similar lines, the NSE Nifty rose 65.30 points, or 0.71 per cent, to finish at 9,270.90.

M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying over 5 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and Hero MotoCorp. On the other hand, ITC cracked over 5 per cent. HUL, TCS, Titan and Infosys too ended in the red.

According to traders, economic uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, muted corporate earnings and weak

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macroeconomic data are keeping investors wary.

In India, the death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 1,694 and the number of cases climbed to 49,391, according to the health ministry. Globally, the number of cases linked to the disease has crossed 36.63 lakh and the death toll has topped 2.57 lakh.

Meanwhile, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul settled with significant gains, while those in Tokyo were closed for a holiday.



Sebi asks 8 entities to make open offer to Kanchan International shareholders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has directed eight entities to make an open offer to shareholders of Kanchan International Ltd.

The market regulator also directed the entities to pay 10 per cent interest along with the offer price to shareholders who were holding shares at the time when the company violated the Sebi norms.

The entities have been asked to make the open offer within 45 days from the date when the coronavirus-induced lockdown would be lifted.

The order would come into force on May 18, 2020 or at the end of the lockdown period, if the lockdown is further extended beyond May 17, 2020, Sebi said.

The eight entities that have been asked to make the open offer are - Kanchan Kitchen Aid Pvt Ltd, Dinesh C. Khimavat, Usha D. Khimavat,



The order would come into force on May 18, 2020 or at the end of the lockdown period, if the lockdown is further extended beyond May 17, 2020, Sebi said

Kanchan C. Khimavat, Bharat Pipalia, Mahendra D Khimavat, Chetan Khimavat and Marlex Products Ltd. Also, the restraint imposed upon the entities earlier, from accessing the securities market, shall stand relaxed only for the purpose of making a public announcement to acquire

shares of the company. Sebi noted that there was a change in the shareholding of the promoter and promoter group entities due to sale of shares or off market transfer of shares by these entities and the share capital of the company also changed due to conversion of warrants into equity share.

SBI scouts for PR agency to devise brand building strategies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As part of the brand building exercise, the State Bank of India (SBI) is looking for a public relations agency to help it become the preferred choice of customers for their banking needs.

The country's largest lender, SBI has a network of more than 22,000 branches spread across India. It is also present in over 30 countries.

"SBI is looking to engage with a public relations agency for providing public relation services (conceptualisation and implementation/execution of public relations campaigns)," it said in a request for proposal (RFP).

In its RFP document for

selection of a PR agency, the bank said it aspires to give an impetus to its marketing efforts to develop a highly favourable brand perception from what it is today, and at the same time, the lender endeavours to become the preferred choice of customers.

The selected agency will be responsible for developing and implementing public relation activities to be organised by the bank.

The agency may also be required to engage with any specialist service providers such as film production house, event venues, travel agents, or other relevant service providers to deliver holistic solutions, the document said.



Mercedes-Benz India restarts production at plant in Pune

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mercedes-Benz India on Wednesday said it has resumed production at its manufacturing facility in Chakan, Pune.

The production has commenced in a graded manner following directives from the government of Maharashtra to reopen and resume operations, the company said in a statement. The company will plan a gradual ramp-up in coming weeks depending completely on the evolving current situation, which is being monitored closely by the leadership team, Mercedes-Benz India added.

"The production has begun with only the essential staff at the production facility, adhering to all the required social distancing protocols, and mandated safety and sanitization measures implemented," it said.

Naspers-backed Dot sets Dec-end target to digitise 5 L traders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

South African internet firm Naspers-backed Dot plans to digitize around 5 lakh merchants and facilitate 10 lakh transactions per day by the end of this year, a senior company official said on Wednesday.

The company has raised around Rs 60 crore in a round led by Naspers firm Payu Fintech Investments for the developing QR code-based contactless commerce technology and digitise merchants across the country, Dot founder Shailaz Nag told PTI.

Naspers has invested in several Indian firms, including Swiggy, Byju's, OLX and MakeMyTrip.

Nag said Dot has developed contactless commerce technology which does away with the need for people to queue up at any eatery or while shopping.

"The entire catalogue of a merchant can be accessed by a QR code scanning and transaction can be made on



that digital catalogue. There is also no need for customers to download separate apps for QR code scanning. Around 2,500 large format retailers have started using it and we plan to take it to around 5 lakh merchants by year end," Nag said.

The company started deployment of the technology at food outlets like Haldiram's, Social, Chili's, Cafe Delhi Heights, Fab Cafe as well as retail brands, and is now planning to reach out to other merchants for their digitisation.

"Our focus is also very clear. We aren't giving any app or website to offline retailers to start running to become digital. Our goal is to provide

"The entire catalogue of a merchant can be accessed by a QR code scanning and transaction can be made on that digital catalogue. There is also no need for customers to download separate apps for QR code scanning. Around 2,500 large format retailers have started using it and we plan to take it to around 5 lakh merchants by year end," Nag said

a digital commerce platform to offline merchants and use channels like WhatsApp, Google, UPI, net banking etc for post transaction engagements with the end user," Nag said.

Compaines advised extra diligence in Covid-19 relief

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With an increasing number of corporates mobilising resources to support the government address the COVID-19 threat, there is a greater need for due diligence by companies on the partners they choose to work with to implement the relief measures, consultancy firm EY said on Wednesday.

Engagement with an unknown third party can expose corporates to both financial and reputational risks, EY warned in a report following a survey on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) trends.

"In the current pandemic stage, wherein corporates are mobilising resources to support the Government address the immediate threat, the need of diligence cannot be overemphasised," the report said.

BMW: Outbreak will slow auto industry 'for quite some time'

PNS ■ FRANKFURT

Automaker BMW saw net profit fall slightly in the first quarter from a year earlier, when the company had a large one-time expense. The company said it expected earnings to deteriorate during the first half of this year due to the coronavirus lockdowns and predicted the entire auto industry would be held back by the outbreak "for quite some time to come." The company said that it remained financially solid with 19 billion euros (\$21 billion) in cash at the end of the first quarter.



Net profit fell 2.4% to 574 million euros (\$620 million) in the first three months of the year, down from 588 million euros in the first quarter of 2019, the company said Wednesday. The year-earlier figure was lowered by a 1.4-billion euro charge stemming from a European Union anti-

trust case. Car sales fell 21% in the quarter as first China and then Europe and the United States saw dealerships closed during the outbreak.

Earnings were supported by a favourable product mix in which vehicles with higher profit margins predominated. It said sales this year would be substantially below last year's and that a quick recovery "is unlikely" as the situation would only begin to stabilize in the third quarter.

The company said it expected profit margins of 0%-3% for the full year, cut from an earlier outlook of 2%-4%.

Maruti reopens 600 dealerships, with new norms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Wednesday said it has reopened 600 dealerships which were closed due to coronavirus-led lockdown, and has even started deliveries of the vehicles.

The auto major said it has put in place a comprehensive standard operating procedure (SoP) across its sales outlets and reinforced digital infrastructure for vehicle purchase amid COVID-19 pandemic.

"Over the last few days we have been able to make 600-odd dealerships operational across the country," MSI Executive Director, Marketing and Sales Shashank Srivastava



told PTI.

He said that dealers have applied for permissions to open up in states where such clearances are mandatory.

The company, which has around 3,080 dealerships across 1,960 cities and towns in

The auto major said it has put in place a comprehensive standard operating procedure (SoP) across its sales outlets and reinforced digital infrastructure for vehicle purchase amid COVID-19 pandemic

Srivastava said. When asked about the timeframe of commencing operations across the company's entire sales network, he said, "It will depend on how soon we get approvals from respective state governments."

The company has enough stock with dealers to take care of the deliveries at the moment, he added.

Operations at the firm's manufacturing plants remains suspended as of now.

Further, MSI Managing Director and CEO Kenichi Ayukawa said, "All our dealerships have put in place steps to ensure complete safety, hygiene and sanitisation of all touch-points". The steps are aimed at removing hesitancy on the part of buyers to visit the showrooms to take delivery of their vehicles.

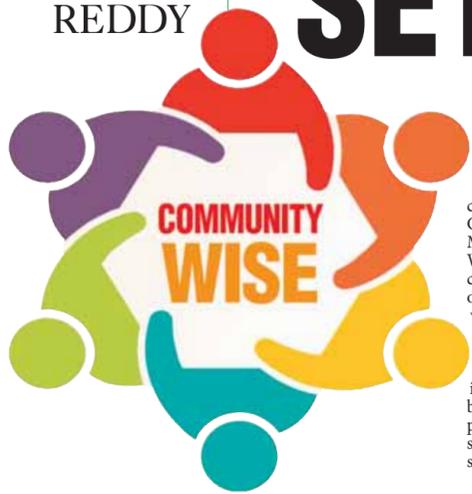
The COVID-19 SoP designed by the company encapsulates all the facets of customer interactions.

Residents of the Doctors Colony in Saroornagar are indulging in various cleanliness activities, celebrating all festivals together and proving unity in diversity, finds V SATEESH REDDY



A SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION WAS SET UP IN THE COLONY AND ESTABLISHED A SEPARATE BUILDING FOR THEM SO THEY CAN INDULGE IN VARIOUS ACTIVITIES IN THIS BUILDING. IT ALSO HAS A SEPARATE PARK FOR ITS RESIDENTS

A clean and green colony SETTING EXAMPLE



Established in 1989, the Doctors Colony in Saroornagar was declared one of the best colonies in East Zone by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. With over three decades, the colony is inspiring many other welfare associations in various ways. The colony is spread across more than five acres and has around 40 families of doctors living here. Not only doctors, but the colony also has people of various other professions including engineers, staying here.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*,

Dr D Ramulu, President of Doctors Colony says, "Our colony was established in 1989 by Andhra Pradesh Medical Officers Housing Society. Around 40 families of doctors are living here. Our colony is known for its cleanliness and greenery and was appreciated by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation for our efforts to make our colony beautiful. To get rid of the garbage, we always separate waste into dry and wet and are working with the GHMC. We teach our colony members about the importance of putting dry and wet waste into separate bins. Our residents are very

active and always follow cleanliness measures."

The colony has a separate community hall to conduct various activities. He adds, "We have established a separate community hall in our colony to conduct various activities. Every year, all of our residents participate in Independence Day and Republic Day and other national events. We also conduct some games during these days to indulge our members in various activities."

"We celebrate festivals like Srirama Navami, Udagi, and others with oneness. Celebrating our festivals with people gives us utmost

happiness," he says.

The colony has a separate park for residents to spend quality time. He shares, "Our park is filled with greenery and it is the best place for us to hangout. People feel relaxed when they visit our colony park. We spend time here with our colony members about discussing various national issues and other topics."

He said that the colony always gives priority to senior citizens and established a separate building for them. He adds, "Senior citizens guide us in various difficult situations. It is our duty to respect them and give them separate space.



We set up senior citizens association in our colony and also established a separate building for them. They can indulge in various activities in this building."

The colony also encourages various cultural activities. He shares, "We have a separate community hall to conduct various cultural activities. We conduct classical dance and other events to engage our people in various activities. We are also

conducting health camps regularly at our premises."

He added that they will conduct executive committee meetings every month to discuss about the development activities. He shares, "We're currently facing Corona crisis. We have to be careful and must follow cleanliness to get rid of it. Our colony members are following various hygiene methods and helping officials in this issue."

Get out of quarantine with A NEW SKILL

Running out of activities to do amid quarantine? *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL brings you some of the fun yet free things to keep you busy during the lockdown 3.0



Fusion - Thread & Art

Nisha Negi, a budding fashion designer has come up with a bewildering fusion of thread work and art. She's embellishing miniatures of human portraits with the help of sugar beads, colourful threads and waste materials. You can use these decorative pieces of work as home decor as well. Isn't it a

her hand out on mandala knock on ceramic glass bottles. From baking at home to experimenting in kitchen, she's learning something new everyday. Using the lockdown extension very productively, she's pleased with the outcome.

Spreading happiness through cooking

As Prakya Shetty, food influencer enters lockdown 3.0, she has begun contemplating life. She thinks life is teaching us effortless art of being patient and allowing us to explore the creative virtuoso. And in that attempt, she decided to make her family happy by rustling up palatable dishes at home. "Stay safe and let's continue to cook up happiness through food," she adds.

Skill of Natural Dyes and Eco Prints

When the whole country is busy colouring the zones into red, orange and green, we at Pioneer, have Mani Bhavana Ala, who is obsessed over creating swatches and shade cards with different paint mediums (gouache, water-colours, acrylic) on various types of papers (watercolour sheets, handmade paper, black slate paper). Apart from this, she has been experimenting with natural dyes and eco prints during quarantine. Dyes include flowers like rose, marigold, chrysanthemum. "It's a never ending exploration now, every-

day there are new results and it feels like meditation for me," adds Prakya.

Literary World

Janani Rao, a renowned poetess whose work was recently published in Aatish 2, an anthology of poem, is attending online poetry sessions amid lockdown. And as a result, loves penning down soulful poems. Giving meaning to any moment she finds worth capturing, she shows us how this lockdown is kind of an equaliser through her poetry. The soothing lines have been able to calm down many of the nerves.

The lockdown face

The shutdown seems like a good opportunity for Shantanu Baithoque to put makeup on and send a message to the society to be creative wherever you are regardless of gender. The lockdown has taught this androgynous personality how beauty can be an essential part of our lives too. "Wearing makeup and trying diverse trends with it has boosted my productivity routine," adds Shantanu.

Portraits In Self Isolation

Creativity is benefitting Bhargava Ram, a professional photographer, in isolation times by making use of that photo button on his camera and experimenting with self portraits. He's into creating good lighting at home, sometimes natural sunlight, editing snaps on light room and uploading it on social media.

Overwhelmed with the number of possibilities he is seeing, Ram is embracing every moment of this quarantine.

fabulous idea of 'best out of waste'?

Display of Illustrations

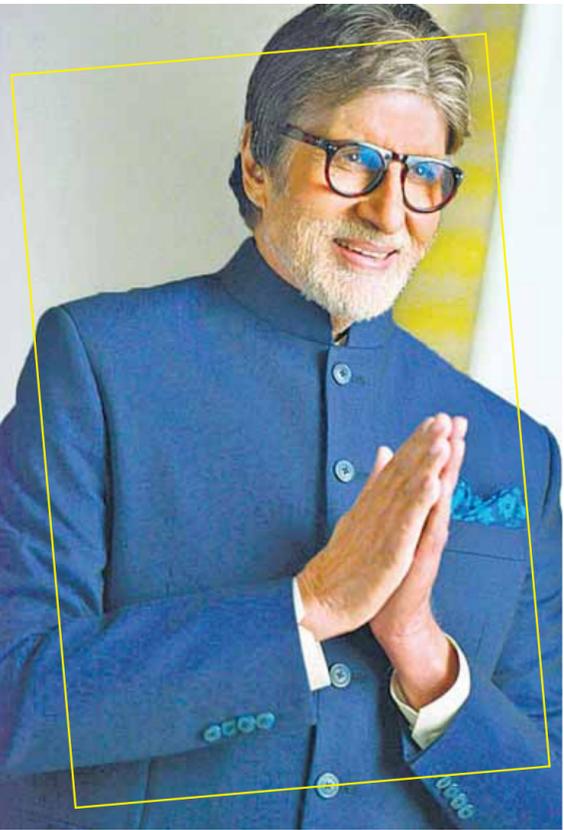
Just like everyone else, Justin Abhishek, an artist is also confined to the four walls of his house yet he's making the best out of it by sketching and painting his most-loved public figures. He feels this is a chance for everyone to celebrate the heroes of entertainment industry. It's his way of expressing love to them.

Mandala Craft on Bottles

A talented baker, Agrima, who is known for her mouth-watering cakes tries



BIG B DEFENSIVE ABOUT SHOOTING FOR KBC AMID LOCKDOWN



Amitabh Bachchan has started shooting for the upcoming season of the popular quiz show *Kaun Banega Crorepati* (KBC) amid the COVID-19 lockdown, and from his latest blog post it seems like the actor is apprehensive about being judged for breaking social distancing rules. He seems defensive in the post, insisting that the shoot was done with essential precautionary measures.

"So yes I worked .. got a problem with that .. keep it to yourself then .. damned if you pour it out here in this locked in condition .. sufficient precaution as much that could be taken was taken .. and what had been scheduled for 2 days .. was completed in one day .. starting 6pm .. ending a short while NOW ... !!!" wrote Amitabh Bachchan in his blog.

Viewers are wondering how the quiz show would be shot this year owing to the current restrictions including social distancing and the lockdown. Talking about the same, Big B mentioned in his blog: "Personal gratifications to the many that ask .. and then the KBC pile of several.. in all about 10 to 12 videos and then hours of audio recordings .. also for the same , KBC .. and the speculation as to how they shall conduct it .. there have been no definite answers for that .. but the authority hopes well and long .. so .."

The 77-year-old actor has also been suffering from a Hamstring pain. "Just back from work .. hamstring be damned .. social messaging videos .. acknowledging the 'angels' videos .. giving commendation to them that work so we exist .. and the invitations to the new season of KBC .. The show goes on ..heavy in heart , to all," Big B tweeted early on Wednesday.

Like everyone else, he is also concerned about the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Of one there is little doubt .. the debate on the outcome of this pandemic .. hesitation .. apprehension .. fear or recurrence .. strain of the conducting of the time of release .. and so much more .."

".. how long then shall it hold the barrel .. what shall be the outcome when the barrel is held .. what alternatives shall prevail and what in God's name shall the future hold for us all .."

".. the World is all 'shook up' .. as Elvis would say .. and would never be the same in the respects of community and reaction," he wrote.

Parineeti Chopra to go on virtual coffee date to raise funds for daily wage workers

Parineeti Chopra will go on a virtual coffee date with five lucky winners to raise funds for daily wage workers hit by the coronavirus pandemic. She has partnered with Anshula Kapoor's online fundraising platform Fankind and non-profit organisation Give India for this initiative.

In a post shared on Instagram, Parineeti wrote, "You say coffee, I say WITH ME! @fankindofficial @give_india and I have come together for your chance to go on a virtual coffee date with me! All you have to do is log onto fankind.org/parineeti and help provide ration kits with essential food supplies for daily wage labourers who are struggling to feed their families."

"5 lucky winners will get a chance to go on a super fun virtual coffee date with me! No one should go to sleep hungry, so let's come together to feed the less privileged. And to make our impact even bigger, A.T.E Chandra foundation will be adding 25% of the total donation we raise as a matching amount, thereby multiplying our impact. YOU, ME and Latte fun! So donate now!" she added.

Last month, Arjun Kapoor went on a virtual date with five winners and raised enough money to feed the families of 300 daily wage workers for a month. "Coronavirus has thrown us all into uncharted territory. I'm grateful to all my fans that my 30-minute virtual date with five lucky winners for Anshula's Fankind has raised enough funds to feed many families. Along with the funds raised during the chat, I have also extended some additional support to Give India and this collective fund will support the families of these daily wage earners for a month," he had said in a statement.

Arjun and Parineeti will be seen as two people on the run in Dibakar Banerjee's thriller *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar*, which marks their onscreen reunion after the 2018 film *Namaste England*. The film was scheduled to release on March 20 but has been indefinitely postponed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.



Judi Dench becomes oldest personality to grace British Vogue cover

Veteran star Judi Dench says there is nothing likeable about getting older. The actor, who is the oldest celebrity to appear on the cover of *British Vogue*, said she disagrees with the oft-quoted adage that age is an "attitude".

Asked by the magazine what she likes most about being 85, Dench said, "Nothing." "I don't like it at all. I don't think about it. I don't want to think about it. They say age is an attitude... It's horrible," she added.

The *Skyfall* star said she shares senti-

ments with colleague Maggie Smith, also 85, whom she claims is beginning to worry about losing her driving license.

"I saw Mags — Maggie Smith — the other day, and she said, 'My God, I think they're going to stop me driving my car,'" she recalled.

Dench, who was forced to give up driving in 2017 when her sight began to deteriorate, said she missed getting behind the wheel of a car.

"It's the most terrible shock to your system. Ghastly. It's terrible to be so dependent on people," she said.



FUN

ARCHIE



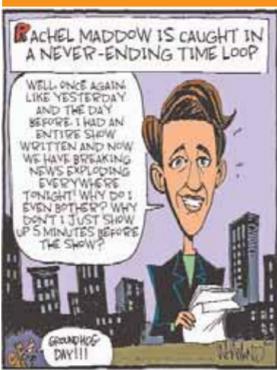
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



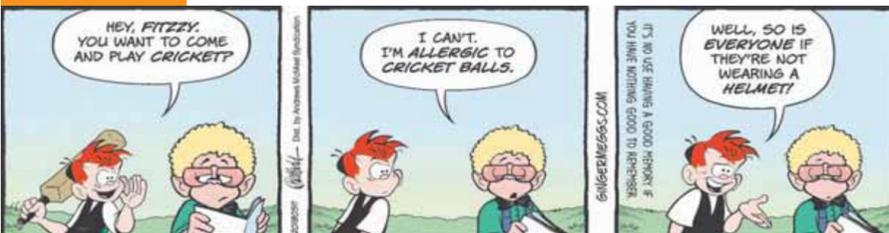
SPEED BUMP



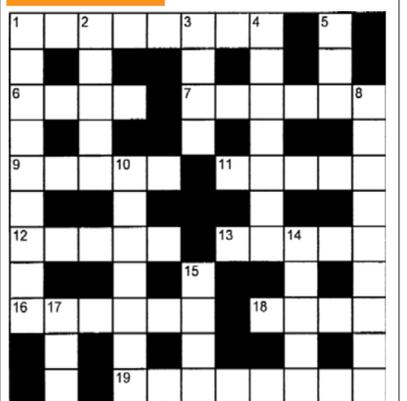
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Beaten in battle
- 6 Following immediately after
- 7 Film theatre
- 9 A student's written composition
- 11 Money paid for doing a job
- 12 A stage drama performed in song
- 13 Jumps a spinning rope
- 16 A digging tool
- 18 Molten rock coming out of a volcano
- 19 Least heavy
- 3 A small sharp nail
- 4 Where Danes live
- 5 A wall across a river
- 8 Helper
- 10 Opposite of departure
- 14 A mirror reflection
- 15 A stopper for a bath
- 17 Very warm

SOLUTION



SUDOKU

7				6			8
	5					1	6
3		4	9	8			
9	1		4				3
			1		7		
	4				9		2
				7	3	9	
	7	2					8
6			2				4

Yesterday's solution

4	8	5	9	3	1	7	2	6
9	6	1	2	7	8	5	3	4
2	3	7	4	5	6	8	9	1
3	1	4	8	2	7	9	6	5
7	9	2	6	1	5	3	4	8
8	5	6	3	4	9	2	1	7
5	4	8	1	9	2	6	7	3
1	7	9	5	6	3	4	8	2
6	2	3	7	8	4	1	5	9

- Rules
- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

DOWN

- 1 Very unsafe
- 2 Repairs

Drive to succeed different for Kohli and Smith: Warner

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

They have similar impact on their teams but Virat Kohli is driven by sheer passion to subdue the rivals while Steve Smith just enjoys batting, says Australia opener David Warner.

India skipper Kohli and top Australian batsman Smith are arguably the top two cricketers of the current era. They achieve new milestones consistently, invoking debates, who is better between them.

"Virat's passion and drive to score runs is different to what Steve's would be," Warner said while speaking to Harsha Bhogle on 'Cricbuzz in Conversation'.

"Steve is going out there for a hit in the middle, that's how he sees things. He's hitting them out in the middle, he's having fun, he's enjoying himself, just does not want to get out."

Warner feels, while Kohli is battling he is aware that if he sticks around the middle his team will be on top of the proceedings.

"Virat obviously doesn't want to get out but he knows if he spends a certain amount of time out there, he's going to score plenty of runs at a rapid rate. He's going to get on top of you. That allows the guys coming in, especially in the Indian team you've got a lot of players who can be flamboyant as well."

The Australian opener added that both men are mentally strong and a good knock by them boosts the morale of the entire team.

"When it comes to cricket, they both have got the mental strength, the mental capacity to score runs. They both love spending time in the middle."



"They stabilise, they boost morale - if they score runs, everyone else's morale is up. If they are out cheaply you almost sense that on the field that everyone is (down on morale and thinking) 'now we all have to step up'. It's a very bizarre situation," he added.

Asked about the similarities between himself and Kohli, who are

both live wires on the field, Warner said the passion to do better than the opponent keeps him going.

"I can't speak for Virat, obviously, but it's almost like we got this thing in us when we go (out to the middle) we need to prove people wrong, prove someone wrong."

"If you're in that contest, and if I'm going at him for example, you're

thinking, 'Alright, I'm going to score more runs than him, I'm going to take a quick single on him. You are trying to better that person in that game. That's where the passion comes from.'

Warner also explained how he breaks down a match into smaller competitions.

"Obviously you want to win the

"When it comes to cricket, they both have got the mental strength, the mental capacity to score runs. They both love spending time in the middle. They stabilise, they boost morale - if they score runs, everyone else's moral is up. If they are out cheaply you almost sense that on the field that everyone is (down on morale and thinking) 'now we all have to step up'. It's a very bizarre situation,"

game but you almost break it down to: If I can score more runs than Virat, or if Pujara scores more runs than Steve Smith, you have these little contests and that's how you try to narrow the game in the sense that if we do these little things, we can be ahead of the game or we can be behind the game.

"The passion is driven by...I know my sense - one, the will to win and two, wanting to do better than that person in the opposition," said Warner.

Will need at least one month of training: Rahane

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Wednesday said cricketers will need at least a month of training before resumption of competitive games, which should happen only after a vaccine for the dreaded COVID-19 is discovered.

Rahane also said that in a coronavirus-scarred world, the lifestyle of cricketers will undergo a change as far as pre and post-match routines are concerned.

"...We would be needing three to four weeks of proper practice before playing any kind of competitive game (domestic or international)," Rahane, who was named brand ambassador of ELSA (English Language Speech Assistant) app, said during an online press conference.

"...I am missing my batting. But obviously, cricket should only start when we get a vaccine to fight the virus," he asserted.

While the sports ministry is planning a phased resumption of national camps in Olympic disciplines, the BCCI is yet to spell out its plans on cricket. Rahane said he is focussing on his fitness amid the lockdown.

"I am following the chart given by our trainer. I am also doing 'free weights' at home apart from meditation," he said.

He agreed that in future, players will be wary of wild celebrations and group hugs which are so used to at the fall of wickets.

"I think we might go back to the good old days when fielders would



still stand in their designated positions after the fall of a wicket and clap. May be handshakes will be replaced by a 'Namaste', the elegant Mumbai right-hander predicted.

"But once sport resumes, you can't take anything for granted. The safety of the fans will be of utmost importance. There will be changes in lifestyle while travelling. Especially before and after the match," Rahane said.

However he was non-committal on whether there should be a ban on the use of saliva to shine the ball, a topic of debate right now.

"I would like to wait and watch. You will only get a fair idea about revised rules once play resumes."

I have learnt to accept my failures: Samson

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

He has flattered to deceive on humpteen occasions but highly-rated wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson says he has learnt to accept his failures in pursuit of the calm demeanour that former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni possesses.

The 25-year-old from Kerala has always been talked about by the likes of Rahul Dravid and Gautam Gambhir but it hasn't translated into international success with only four T20 Internationals in his kitty in the last five years.

"I have learnt to understand and focus more on my strengths and (be more) accepting (of) the failures. I try to contribute to the team's cause and try to take the team over the line. I am learning to focus and control my emotions while batting like MS Dhoni," Samson said during a podcast organised by Rajasthan Royals.

He recently made a comeback in India's T20 side and it was a worthy experience for him.

"It was great to be a part of the Indian team again. To be a part of one of the best teams in the world, surrounded by players like Virat bhair and Rohit bhair, it was a fantastic experience," Samson said.

In one of the games in New Zealand, Samson was sent to bat in the Super Over, something which made him feel wanted in the Indian set-up.

"It was a great feeling to be trusted by the players such as Virat bhair and Rohit bhair to go out there and bat in the crucial moments. It's a great feeling when the team and the play-



ers consider you to be a match winner." On a lighter note, Samson revealed that he refers to Steve Smith as "chachu" (uncle) after Brad Hodge once started calling him by that name.

"I share a very good relationship with 'Chachu' Steve Smith. He is one of the best brains in world cricket and we all enjoy a lot playing under him."

While Dhoni is his idol, he also loves watching Jos Buttler in Royals and makes notes on how the star Englishman prepares for games.

"I observe Jos especially given he too is a wicketkeeper-batsman. He's always working on his skills and his game and never sits idle."

"He's either working on his keeping, batting in the nets or running around the park. I love to observe and know how he thinks and prepares as a keeper before a game."

If you think Virat is good to watch, have a look at Babar bat: Moody

IAN S ■ LAHORE

Former Australia all-rounder Tom Moody believes Pakistan batsman Babar Azam has grown by leaps and bounds in recent times and will "definitely" be among the top five batsmen of the decade in Test cricket in the near future.

"He (Babar) has emerged over the last year or so into something that is going to be so special. We talked about how Virat Kohli is so good on the eye as a batsman. If you think Virat Kohli is good to watch, have a look at Babar Azam bat. My gosh, he is something special," Moody said in The Pitch Side Experts Podcast as quoted by cricketepakistan.com.pk.

"I THINK IN THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS, HE WILL DEFINITELY BE IN YOUR TOP FIVE (BATSMEN OF THE DECADE) WITHOUT A QUESTION,"



"I think in the next five to ten years, he will definitely be in your top five (batsmen of the decade) without a question," he added.

The former Sunrisers Hyderabad coach, however, admitted considering Azam's statistics at

the moment, it is very difficult to put him in the top five current batsmen.

"I think, in the next 5-10 years, he will be on your top five position. Even though he has played 26 matches but in half of those matches he was not considered even part of the main batting line-up for Pakistan. He was the after-thought down the order," he said.

"I think at the moment, it is very hard to justify him at that position given his statistics. Away from home he is only averaging 37 and at home he is averaging 67. But we have to consider that he has hardly played away from home and a lot of those games away were during the early part of his career," Moody added.

'Current Ind team can't be compared to Aus teams of 90s and 2000s'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli's Indian team still has a long way to go before it is spoken of in the same breath as Australia of 2000s, feels former India pacer Ashish Nehra.

Under Kohli's leadership, India earned its maiden series victory in Australia in 2018-19, achieving the feat after trying for seven decades.

However, it can't be discounted that absence of Steve Smith and David

Warner due to ball tampering ban turned out to be an important factor.

"This Indian team has to still cover a lot of distance in order to match up with that Australia team (led by Steve Waugh and then Ricky Ponting)," Nehra said during an interaction with ex-player Aakash Chopra on his show 'Aakash Vani'.

"You are talking about an Australian team which won three consecutive World Cups and before that reached the final in

1996, won 18-19 Test matches in home and away conditions," Nehra added.

He also did not appreciate the fact that every now and then team combination is being tinkered with.

"It's not like this Indian team can not reach there but I believe the core group is very important. A person gets confused after watching many dishes on the table and so it's important to have fewer but better dishes,"

Nehra made his displeasure clear.

He went on to cite how team management had handled Rishabh Pant's career so far.

"KL Rahul is playing on the fifth position and Pant, the person you were preparing to succeed M.S. Dhoni, is serving drinks," the left-arm fast bowler, known for his straight forward views, said.

Thanks to his inconsistency, Pant had lost his place in the Indian team in white-ball cricket to

Rahul.

"I know he (Pant) has missed his chances and there is no doubt about it but then you have kept him in the team because you saw the potential in him at 22-23 years," Nehra said.

"There are a lot of talented players but they should be backed for a longer duration. Today also when we talk about the number five and six slots in Indian ODI side, then we are not sure about it," Nehra said.

MCC to offer President Sangakkara second term

PTI ■ LONDON

The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) on Wednesday announced that it would recommend a second term for its President Kumar Sangakkara owing to the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The former Sri Lanka wicket-keeper-batsman became the first non-British President of the club when he assumed office on October 1 last year.

"The disruption to the global cricketing landscape caused by the outbreak of Covid-19 has led the Committee to recommend that Sangakkara, who began his term of office on 1 October 2019, be invited to serve as President of the Club until 30 September 2021," the club said in a statement.

The recommendation for Sangakkara's extension will be sent for approval to the club's members at the Annual General Meeting, which has been scheduled for June 24. The club also added that this was not the first time a president will serve beyond his one year tenure.

"While Presidents of MCC only normally serve for a twelve-month period, it is not unprecedented for longer terms to be introduced to respond to extraordinary circumstances."



'We have become more aggressive under Reid'

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Defender Gurinder Singh feels India has been playing an aggressive brand of hockey under chief coach Graham Reid, and it has helped the team in creating more goal scoring opportunities.

India displayed an attacking brand of play in the FIH Hockey Pro League earlier this year and reaped rich rewards for it, beating Australia and world champions Belgium.

"It's been over a year since chief coach Reid has joined us and I am sure one can see the difference he has brought to the side since April last year. We have become much more aggressive in our approach and therefore we are creating many more goal-scoring opportunities," Gurinder said.

Gurinder said since his arrival Reid has been working closely with every player, besides emphasising on team tactics.

"It was amazing to see



Hockey India coach Graham Reid in action

Hockey India/Twitter

him shift focus from working on team tactics to the development of each and every player during the senior men national coaching camp in November last year," he said.

"Since there was a lot of time to prepare for the next tournament after the Olympic Qualifiers, chief coach Reid spent time with all players and ensured that we improved on certain aspects during the camp," he added.

Gurinder, who has been in and out of the team, said his immediate goal is to book

a place in the Olympic-bound team.

"I am working extremely hard to book a place in the Indian team for the Olympics at the moment. Keeping myself fit is my number one priority during the lockdown period and I am carrying out some stickwork drills as well."

"Playing for India at the Olympics has been a dream since childhood and hopefully, I will make it to the squad and contribute to India winning a medal at the quadrennial event," he said.

Nadal pessimistic about return of competitive tennis in 2020

AP ■ MADRID

If given the option, Rafael Nadal said he would scrap this season entirely so tennis could resume normally in 2021.

The second-ranked Spaniard, who is 33 years old and has won 19 Grand Slam titles, said he hoped to resume playing this year but doubted it could happen because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I would sign up right now just to be ready for 2021," Nadal said in interviews with El Pais and other Spanish newspapers published Tuesday.

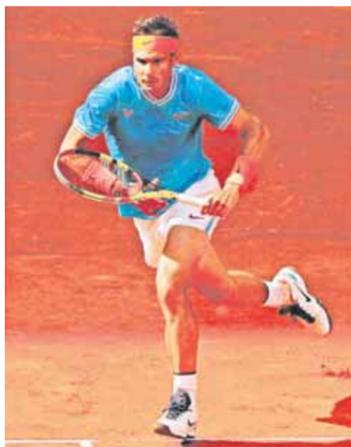
"I'm more concerned with the Australian Open than with what happens later this year. I think 2020 has been practically lost. I'm hopeful of being able to start next year."

Nadal said the logistical difficulties of having to move people from country to country for tournaments make it hard for tennis to resume safely amid the pandemic.

"Sadly, I'm not going to lie to you, the feeling is that we are losing a year of our lives," Nadal said.

"And at 33, 34 years old, that is more valuable than at 20, when you have more time ahead of you," Nadal recently said he was concerned with the risk of new injuries when players return to action after a long time without proper training. The Spaniard has had to deal with a series of injuries throughout his career and expects his body to struggle again when competitions finally resume.

Nadal also complained about "confusing" information regarding the return to practice of tennis players in Spain. He said he went to train on a private court because it wasn't clear to him



Rafael Nadal plays a return shot

Rafael Nadal/Twitter

whether he could practice normally after the government eased some of the lockdown measures that have been in place in the country since mid-March.

Professional and high-performance athletes have been allowed to resume practicing at any time this week, but sports facilities and training centers are to remain closed, with some exceptions for soccer clubs and a few other sports.

Anti-doping hearings to be conducted online: Agarwal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Anti-Doping Agency's Director General Navin Agarwal on Wednesday said the body will conduct its disciplinary hearings online from Friday despite the many logistical challenges to ensure cases don't pile up due to the national lockdown.

NADA hearings have not been taking place due to the lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

"That's right, we will be starting with our online hearings from May 8. Both Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) and Anti-Doping Appeals Panel (ADAP) hearings will be conducted for the cases which are pending," Agarwal told PTI in an interview.

"Last year, they (ADDP and ADAP) did a remarkable job and disposed off so many cases which hasn't happened earlier in the history of NADA. Our panels disposed off 180 cases which is a record for the agency," he asserted.

Agarwal acknowledged that the unprecedented step would have its share of opera-

tional hassles.

Listing inconsistent or unavailable internet as one of them, Agarwal said athletes will be allowed to participate via audio calls to ensure that things can be managed smoothly.

"We understand that the athlete needs to have the (internet) facility at his home for the hearings. I know there are limitations. We are working on that and made arrangements at our level."

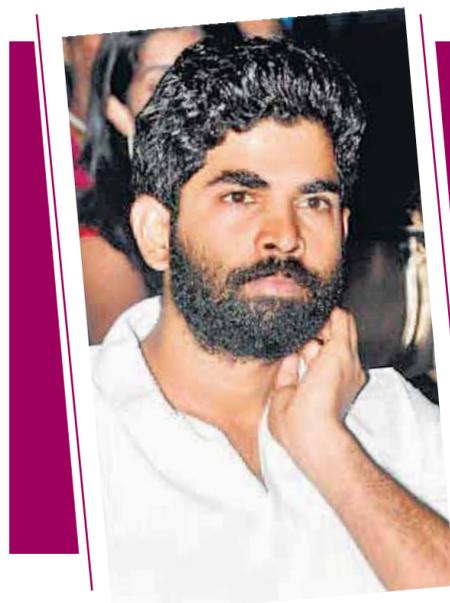
"It will only be done on the availability of an athlete through either audio or video. I know in rural areas, internet bandwidth can be an issue or network, we are game with even an audio recording or a conference call," he explained.

"We are requesting the ministry as the campuses in NIS Patiala and Sports Authority of India (SAI) Bengaluru are closed and have barred entry or exit of any outsiders as per government guidelines."

"So we are taking this up with ministry and would like to know whether our Dope Control Officers (DCOs) will be allowed inside the campuses for testing subject to all clearances," he said.

Kalyanram gets two in a row

The Pioneer has previously reported that Jr NTR has agreed to feature in KGF director Prashanth Neel's next, an action-drama to be mounted on a lavish scale. Mythri Movie Makers tapped the director for NTR to this end. Now, we've learnt that this project will be co-produced by Tarak's older brother Kalyanram under his NTR Arts. This is the new drift in Tollywood as most A-listers are ensuring that their own production houses are attached to the films they are starring in a joint capacity to minimise the risk factor and maximise profits. Over here, it will be a second project in row for NTR Arts with NTR, as they are also jointly producing the actor's immediate next with Trivikram Srinivas (for Haarika & Hassine Creations) after he wraps up RRR. Tarak-Neel film will mostly be going to floors in the second half of 2021 or early 2022. The film, sources insist, will be a pan-India affair and it will consolidate on the actor's star power across India after RRR. Neel will shift attention to the script after he wraps up the promotional activities of KGF: Chapter 2 later this year.



SS KARTHIKEYA disassociates with AAKASHAVANI

Reliable sources indicate it had something to do with creative differences between the director Ashwin Gangaraju and Karthikeya over the film's output, finds Nagaraj Goud

The fact that it was SS Rajamouli's son Karthikeya's first production venture meant *Aakashvani* grabbed immediate attention when it was first announced in November of 2018. But now, we hear that he is no longer attached to the project as a producer. Wonder why? Reliable sources indicate it had something to do with creative differences between the director Ashwin Gangaraju and Karthikeya over the film's output. A well-placed source close to the development tells us, "Karthikeya felt the final output was different to what he and the director envisioned when they took it to floors ambitiously early last year. The director, though, was happy with the way it shaped up overall. With it being his maiden film as a producer, Karthikeya wanted a product that he was completely convinced but as *Aakashvani* didn't turn out to be that, he decided to handover

the production to someone else. It was an amicable parting between the young creative minds. An announcement to this end is around the corner."

The source further adds that Karthikeya's production

A PRODUCER WHO WANTS TO TAKE IT UP WILL BE REQUIRED TO PAY THE AMOUNT THAT KARTHIKEYA INVESTED SO FAR.

house funded the project until now and a producer who wants to take it up will be required to pay the amount that he invested so far. The film is 95 per cent over and the team was geared

up to commence the last schedule when the lockdown was announced. The final schedule with Vinay Varma, who plays an antagonist will be wrapped up in Rajahmundry once the industry decides on a date for film shootings to resume.

Shot primarily in Araku, Paderu and surrounding areas of Visakhapatnam, *Aakashvani*, a pure drama about a bunch of people residing in a forest with radio playing a central role, features 90-95 per cent new actors. Tamil actor-film-maker P Samuthirakani and a couple of actors from *Jabardasth* (Shaking Seshu being one) and Vinay Varma are the only noteworthy names. The film is being planned to be dubbed into Tamil as well. The makers will kick-off the first round of promotions after the lockdown is lifted. Kaala Bhairava is the film's composer and the source exudes confidence that his three songs will top the charts.



Shruti underlines the importance of staying at home

Actress Shruti Haasan has appealed to her followers on the importance of staying at home in these times, saying that we are battling it out against an enemy we haven't neither seen nor understood. "I do miss working with people and the energy of a movie set and the lovely vibe of a jam room but isolating is something we HAVE TO DO and when the lock down eases it doesn't mean you go out and throw a party and squish each other. PLEASE STAY HOME as much as you can. We are up against something unseen and it's something we haven't understood yet. So we must not behave as though we are invincible or can somehow negotiate with a virus!! (sic)," the actress wrote on her Instagram page.

She added the "time can be used to talk with yourself and ask yourself the questions you've been avoiding and maybe find a way to find some new answers!"

"ALSO a time to have gratitude for what you do have, your food your friends your family and your comforts (sic)," she posted further.

On the work front, the actress will be next seen opposite Ravi Teja in Gopichand Malineni's *Krack* — three years after her last release *Katamarayudu*.

Sivaja Raja hospitalised

Senior actor and former MAA president Sivaji Raja was admitted to a private hospital in Hyderabad on Tuesday evening after he felt uneasiness in his chest. The actor, who has featured in more than 300 films — playing supporting roles mainly — is right now stable. His family and a team of doctors are attending to him. Suresh Kondeti, producer and Raja's friend when

contacted, said, "He is doing well now. His blood pressure has dipped drastically on Tuesday, following which he complained of chest pain. He was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital and was put in observation. The doctors advised him to get a heart stent and the procedure will be performed on Thursday morning. He will mostly be discharged the same evening or on Friday. Some of his friends from the industry wanted to meet him but due to Covid-19 outbreak, hospitals are not allowing many guests."



Mohan Babu, Kammula continue their aid

Pained with the way sanitation workers are toiling hard in the summer, filmmaker Sekhar Kammula has decided to offer refreshments to them. "Areas in and around Gandhi hospital seem like war-zones and sanitation workers are our foot soldiers. Hundreds of them are relentlessly working in the red zone areas, hotspots and hospitals, risking their lives. We really can't thank them enough," said Sekhar who lives in

Padmaranagar, Secunderabad. He added, "We arranged butter milk and badam milk from Vijaya Dairy for 1,000 sanitation workers in this area for a period of one month for them to beat the heat. The Dairy agreed to offer the products for a subsidised price. The GHMC North Zone supervisors took up the challenge of distributing the drinks to each one of their workers at their respective work areas by 11 am every morning. It's been a week that we started this program and it's

working really well." He further noted that he is extending the same service to Kurnool Municipal Corporation as well. Likewise, Mohan Babu, who last month distributed vegetables in AP villages like Rangampeta, Pullaiahgaripalli and Ramireddy Pally panchayats, is dispatching food packets to 200 policemen in Pahadi Shareef and Shamshabad regularly for the past many days. Plus, he recently adopted an orphanage home in Secunderabad and taking care of its food needs.

