

THE DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 18 MARCH 2020

WEATHER

Max: 35.5°C
Min: 22.5°C
RH: 30%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Mainly clear sky. Max/Min temp. 36/22.9 C

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari: Uttarayanam
Thithi: Phalguna Bahula Dasami till 4.26 am (next day)
Star: Purvashada till 1.03 pm
Varjyam: 9.39 pm to 11.22 pm
Durmuhurtam: 12 noon to 12.48 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HUIJI CALLEDAS
Rajjab 22,1441 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.34 pm
Asar: 4.45 pm
Maghrib: 6.32 pm
Isha: 7.40 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.26 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.20 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 1.31 PM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.10 AM

COUNTER POINT



It will not affect the people... many are working from home!

INSIDE

CITY.. PG3
3 anti-viral drugs may treat virus



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Joe Biden wins Washington primary



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Japan Olympic body official hit by Corona

TABLOID
'Reach out and do your bit'



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SC for greater role for women in Indian Navy

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

Holding that the "battle for gender equality is about confronting the battles of the mind", the Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that women short service commission officers in the Indian Navy would be eligible for the grant of Permanent Commissions (PC) and gave the government three months time to comply with its directions.

Rejecting the various reservations pointed out by the "decision makers and administrators" against the grant of permanent commission to women short service commission officers in the Navy, a bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Ajay Rastogi said: "A hundred and one excuses are no answer to the constitutional entitlement to dignity, which attaches to every individual irrespective of gender, to fair and equal conditions of work and to a level playing field."

Noting that history was replete with examples where women have been denied their "just entitlements under the law and

● The Supreme Court said all the Short Service Commission officers in the education, law and logistics cadres of Navy, who are presently in service shall be considered for the grant of permanent commissions.

the right to fair and equal treatment in the workplace", the court said: "A level playing field ensures that women have the opportunity to overcome their histories of discrimination with the surest of responses based on their competence, ability and performance."

The court described as "specious reasons" that sailing duties can't be given to SSC women officers as the Russian-made vessels don't have toilets for them. "In the context of the armed forces, specious reasons have been advanced by the decision makers and administrators."

■ Page 8: SC quashes 2008 policy restrictions

COUNCIL MOOTED FOR WORKS IN AREA INSIDE ORR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The state government is contemplating a Greater Hyderabad Regional Council (GHRC) comprising eight municipal corporations and seven municipalities within the outer ring road (ORR). Police, electricity department, Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board and other departments will function under the proposed council. It will take up major infrastructure projects while maintenance and operations will be taken up by the local bodies. The council will spend city agglomeration funds.

According to sources in the municipal administration and urban development department, the council will cover all districts of the region but its regulatory power and funding abilities would be restricted to matters like public transport, environmental protection and regional parks. The municipal bodies will take care of maintenance of roads, sanitation, collection of property taxes, the water supply and sewerage network.

■ Page 7: Greater Council will have a CEO

3rd Covid death in India

64-year-old from Mumbai dies after contracting coronavirus

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

One more death was reported from Maharashtra on Tuesday, taking the total number of deaths to three in India due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, while the number of positive cases jumped from 114 to 137 in the past 24 hours. Out of these, 120 are active cases while 14 persons have been cured.

The 63-year-old man from Maharashtra had a history of travel to Dubai and had not disclosed this to the doctors treating him at a private hospital. Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said the exact cause for his death was still being ascertained as the person was also suffering from various other ailments and later had tested positive for Covid-19. The total number of cases include 24 foreign citizens. Among the new cases are two people from Noida and two persons who returned from Italy this week and were staying in an ITBP quarantine facility.

Delhi has so far reported eight positive cases while Uttar Pradesh has recorded 15, including one foreigner. Maharashtra has 39 cases, including three foreigners, while Kerala has 26 cases, which

Covid +ve Indonesian toured state with group for 3 days

PULI SHARAT KUMAR, ATHER MOIN & BALU PULIPAKA | DC
KARIMNAGAR/HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

It was the draw of luck. Quite literally.

A group of 10 travelling Indonesian preachers of Islam, one of whom tested positive for Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) here at the Gandhi General Hospital on Tuesday, after being brought from Karimnagar following suspicions of infection, could have gone anywhere else in the country. It was a lottery held

after the group met with similar groups of preachers in the old city area of New Delhi to choose which group should head where that determined these Indonesian preachers making their way to Karimnagar.

The discovery that one of the 10 Indonesians is suffering from Covid-19, meanwhile, has set alarm bells ringing in the state government. Their presence in Karimnagar was discovered on March 16, but the group is believed to have been travelling in Telangana since March 14.

Health minister Etala Rajendar told a news conference here on Monday that the group landed in New Delhi from Indonesia on March 9. Upon arrival, they were screened at Delhi, after which, they took a train to Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, where they are believed to have spent a couple of days. From Bhopal, they travelled to Telangana and reached Ramagundam town in Peddapalli district.

■ Page 2: Indonesian's arrival date isn't confirmed

includes two foreign nationals. Haryana reported 15, including 14 foreigners, Karnataka 11, Ladakh reported six, Jammu and Kashmir three, Telangana five, including two foreigners, Rajasthan four, including two foreigners. Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab have reported one case each. Around 5,700 people across the country are

being kept under community surveillance through health workers, the health ministry said. Health minister Harsh Vardhan lauded the efforts of doctors and paramedics in dealing with the Covid-19 cases as he briefed the Rajya Sabha on the steps taken to contain the global pandemic. The government has clarified that amid the rising cases, no community transmission of the virus

has been seen so far, and there have only been a few cases of local transmission.

The DGCA has asked airlines to disinfect all aircraft every 24 hours and place hand sanitises in lavatories. To regulate crowds, the railway zones hiked the price of platform tickets from ₹10 to ₹50.

■ Page 9: Budget session not to be cut, says PM

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Upload speeds = Download speeds



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Service at doorstep



GIGA speeds

FEEL THE ADVANTAGE

SHORT TAKES
DISHA INQUIRY
PUT OFF DUE TO
VIRUS SCARE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The Supreme Court constituted three-member inquiry commission into the Disha encounter case on Tuesday decided to suspend its two-day sitting at its office chambers on the premises of Telangana High Court on March 23 and 24.

The committee took the decision consequent on the High Court's decision to restrict footfalls into the court premises following rapid spread of globally pandemic coronavirus.

On the same grounds, the Hyderabad bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal has decided to take up only cases of urgent nature on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until further orders.

The Judicial Academy at Secunderabad has also called off its classes for trainee judicial officers due to coronavirus.

MANY TRAINS
CANCELLED
ACROSS INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

In the list of measures to contain spread of deadly Covid-19, the latest is cancellation of several trains by the Central, Western and South Central railways.

The trains cancelled are:
• No. 12277/12228 INDB-MMCT Duronto Express
• No. 22923/22924 BDTS-JAM-BDTS Duronto Express
• No. 12238/12240 MCT-JP-MMCT Duronto Express
• No. 22209/22210 MMCT-NLDS-MMCT Duronto Express
• No. 19317/19318 INDB-PURI INDB Humsafar Express
South Central Railways has so far suspended 10 trains on major routes like Chennai Central-Tirupati and Chennai-Secunderabad owing to poor patronisation of the trains due to virus scare.

IMA HAILS TS
FOR COVID-19
SAFETY STEPS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) Telangana unit praised the state government's measures to check the Covid-19 outbreak. Its leadership revealed that, in reply to a request, it has submitted a list of doctors of various specialisations to the government.

Dr E. Vijayaraj Reddy state president of IMA, said that the response of the Directorate of Medical Education (DME) and the Department of Health to the situation Dr E. Vijayaraj Reddy, state president of IMA, said that the response of the Directorate of Medical Education and the health department response to the situation was praiseworthy. He said the virus was in many ways similar to others we have seen in the past, but it is easier to transmit. Advising a liberal use of soap and sanitizers, he asked the general public to alert the authorities in case they develop symptoms of the disease.

Dr Sanjeev Singh Yadav, honorary secretary of the state unit, said the association has over 60,000 branches in the state.

5th Covid-19 case registered in state

The patient is an Indonesian national, part of a 10-member group from Indonesia on India visit

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Telangana on Tuesday registered its fifth case of novel coronavirus infection. The Covid-19 positive patient is an Indonesian national, part of a 10-member group from Indonesia.

The rest of the group of Indonesian national, part of a 10-member group from Indonesia, has also been admitted to Gandhi Hospital along with the Covid-19 positive patient.

The health of the other nine members is being monitored and we are waiting for their test results, Health Minister Etala Rajendar told a news conference on Tuesday evening.

While the state's first Covid-19 patient, a 24-year-old from the city, has already been discharged, four others, including the Indonesian patient, are currently undergoing treatment in Gandhi Hospital.

The minister said 89 primary contacts of the first patient have tested negative for the disease and the same was the outcome of tests done on 111 contacts of the second patient who came from Italy and the third patient who came from the Netherlands.

"We are tracking the history of 11 contacts of the fourth patient who came from Scotland," Mr Rajendar said.

With respect to the fifth patient who tested positive on Tuesday, the government is still in the process of identifying the people he and nine others in his group came into contact with after arriving in Telangana, Mr Rajendar said.

He said so far 66,182 passengers have been screened at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. Tests of 464 persons who exhibited some symptoms were done.

Only five people have tested positive in the state so far, the health minister said.



A group of tourists from the United Kingdom take selfies outside the world famous Charminar though the state government has closed down all public places in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. — P. SURENDRA

66 institutions flout order on Covid, sealed

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The Directorate of Enforcement, Vigilance and Disaster Management (EVDM) deployed 18 teams in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits to inspect and ensure that government orders pertaining to closure of educational institutions, coaching centres, gymnasiums, play grounds, bars and pubs, were being followed so as

to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. The EVDM has sealed 66 such establishments and also directed malls and other establishments to screen visitors using thermal screening devices and also sanitise the area at regular intervals.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, EVDM director Gopawasthi Kampani said that the GHMC has been proactive in curtailing the spread of Coronavirus. He said that apart from seal-

ing commercial establishments for violating G.O No 4 dated March 14 pertaining to closure of educational institutions till

March 31, and parks, theatres, museums, gymnasiums, bars and pubs, cultural events, sports events, conferences, workshops etc, until March 21, the corporation has also prepared a future course of action if the orders are extended.

Mr Kampani said that the municipal corporation has provided sanitization workers with sanitizers and face masks and employees working in the GHMC offices are being

monitored from time to time. Additional measures related to hygiene have been sent to the state government and are awaiting approval.

Meanwhile, the state government has issued orders to ensure strict implementation of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, and Epidemic Disease Act, 1897, to prevent and contain the spread of Covid-19, since the World Health Organisation has declared it a pandemic.

Abide by quarantine, says health minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Health Minister Etala Rajendar on Tuesday appealed to people not to object or protest against quarantine facilities being set up for housing asymptomatic international arrivals in the city. The Minister explained that there was no cause for concern or worry about these quarantine facilities, like the ones set up at Haritha Plaza hotel in Vikarabad and Forest Residency in Hyderabad. Dulapally are for people without any symptoms.

"At any point of time there will be 14 days of quarantine in the Gandhi Hospital for isolation and testing," the health minister said. There is absolutely no reason for people to get agitated about these facilities. "What if one among those in quarantine is a member of your

family? Would people not want them to be safe, healthy and sound?" the minister added.

So far, 221 persons who came from the first seven countries have been placed under quarantine at Vikarabad and Dulapally. Another 1,238 are under home quarantine already, he said.

He also said that irrespective of whether people coming from identified countries - China, South Korea, Iran, Italy, Germany, France and Spain - will be automatically quarantined by the State Government. While India has already banned flights from Afghanistan, Malaysia, Philippines and UK, more countries will join this list from Wednesday, including UAE, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait.

The State government will be exploring setting up quarantine facilities in different districts for asymptomatic persons flying into the city so they

can go to their home district and complete the quarantine period.

Mr Rajendar said that the Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu was constantly monitoring the Covid-19 situation in the state and is being fully briefed about every development. He said the Health Department in battling the containment and spread of the disease in Telangana.

The Chief Minister has approved that fund will be provided irrespective of the amounts required to stop the disease. There are about 235 people in Telangana. "Our priority is the health of the people of the State and the government will take every possible step, including mandatory quarantining, checking of people entering the state and adding more facilities as required to meet any requirements in cases," Mr Rajendar said.

TTD URGED TO IMPOSE CURBS ON PILGRIMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 17

With the Union government imposing restrictions on the movement of people at numerous tourism hot-spots across the country in light of the COVID-19 positive cases shooting up, pressure has been mounting on the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) to restrict the entry of devotees during the current festival season.

Along with Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) to restrict the entry of devotees during the current festival season. Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) to restrict the entry of devotees during the current festival season. Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) to restrict the entry of devotees during the current festival season.

Rise in Covid cases worries state govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The state government is worried that the slowly increasing number of Covid-19 positive cases, and the number of immediate or secondary contacts of the patients, might lead to unnecessary spread of the disease.

While the government has been very proactive in terms of quickly identifying positive cases, tracing their contacts, testing close contacts and putting the rest under quarantine, it is at the same time wary of revealing the geographical spread of such contacts.

"We are monitoring every individual who has been in contact with the patients and following strict protocols to prevent the spread of the disease. There is no reason for fear. Every possible suspect is being tested and the health of the rest is being monitored," Health



Suspects visit Gandhi Hospital for Covid-19 test on Tuesday. — S. SURENDRA REDDY

Minister Etala Rajendar said in a press meet on Tuesday.

So far, of the five Covid-19 positive cases in the state, three persons were identified in Hyderabad, one from Bhadrachalam district, one from Kothagudem district, while the fifth, the latest announced on Tuesday, was found in a foreign national visiting Karimnagar district.

INDIANS STUCK ABROAD CRY FOR GOVT HELP

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The Indian government's decision to ban the entry of travellers from Afghanistan, Philippines and Malaysia has spelled chaos for thousands of people.

Students and tourists with layovers in these countries, planning to board their flights to India, are struggling to make alternative arrangements.

Many of them have taken to Twitter to complain about the suddenness of the announcement and deplore the government's action in not giving them enough time to plan their travel.

Nitin, a tourist from India, is stuck in Indonesia. He was supposed to return to the country through a connecting flight via Malaysia on Wednesday. He said on Twitter: "This is incredibly irresponsible of the government to restrict borders on such close calls!"

A video on social media platforms of Indian students who appeared to be stuck at the airport in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia has been widely shared. One of the students says they had boarded a flight from the Philippines. She says the government should announce travel restrictions a day or two before they are enforced.

Another woman notes that she is stuck at the airport in Manila. "If our own homeland refuses to take us back, without prior warning, it will be a big problem for us," she notes. Multiple people tagged the Ministry of External Affairs Twitter handle, requesting it to grant entry to them since their visas in their respective locations were about to expire within a few hours.

Appreciate the difficult situation of Indian students and other passengers waiting in transit at Kuala Lumpur airport. We have now approved to Delhi and Vizag.

These tough times and you should understand the precautions. Please do not have close contact the airline.

PRAKASAM MAN MONITORED CAREFULLY

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, MARCH 17

A 23-year-old youth was admitted at the RIMS Hospital in Ongole, Prakasham district late on Tuesday evening with symptoms of Covid-19, such as cough and fever.

The youth is a student studying in London and he returned to India on March 13 and reached his hometown, Ongole, on the same day. He developed fever on March 14 and was moved to RIMS on March 16, as the fever failed to subside even after two days, at the instance of Health officials who are monitoring all those returning from other countries.

Though officials sent him to Ongole, he preferred to come in his own car to avoid attracting the attention of neighbours. His swab samples have been sent to a virology lab set up at Vijayawada and results are awaited. His condition is stable, according to medical officials.

Incidentally, his is the second suspected case in Prakasham district. The first case was an engineer working in Germany. The youth returned home on March 5 via Muscat and Chennai.

COVID FEAR

Panic after cop's son admitted to isolation ward
Police station locked down in AP

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC
KURNOOL, MARCH 17

The Kurnool district police office (DPO) was locked down on Tuesday as threat of Coronavirus (Covid-19) spread thick and fast after the son of a constable was admitted to the isolation ward. The DPO, comprising a ministerial staff strength of 30, was closed for a day as the constable was working there.

However, superintendent of police Dr Kaginelli Fakkeerappa said on Tuesday evening that the constable's son had tested negative and there was no need to panic. Earlier in the day, two more cases were referred to isolation wards on suspicion. However, it was found that

they did not have any symptoms (asymptomatic) and were allowed to go home, a medical doctor said. The constable's son belonged to Kadapa district and was studying in Rome, Italy, came to Bengaluru. Instead of going home, he came to Kurnool and was staying with friends for the past week.

He showed up on Tuesday before a medical team voluntarily and was reportedly allowed to go home. Another suspect, a resident of Kurnool, who returned from Canada, where he was staying, was also tested negative and was allowed to go home. Dr Fakkeerappa said that seven check posts have been put up near the AP-Karnataka border to screen

● ONE PERSON, who belonged to Kadapa district and was studying in Rome, Italy, came to Bengaluru. Instead of going home, he came to Kurnool and was staying with friends for the past week. He showed up on Tuesday before a medical team voluntarily and was reportedly allowed to leave.

counterpart of Bellary to deal with surge of pilgrims. He said that screening would be done at check posts in Andhra border and suspects would be advised to go back home or get admitted in Bellary hospitals, he said. There were about 235 people, who had arrived from foreign countries in recent months but health officials do not have their details. The SP said that enumeration was going on in villages with a computer application and that the Kurnool government general hospital has converted an old building into a 100-bed isolation centre to meet exigencies.

Arrival date of Indonesian is yet to be confirmed

From Page 1

But health department officials here in Telangana said they were not very sure of their actual arrival date in the state or of their activities till Monday, when they were sent to the city. Those details are still being ascertained. However, it was learnt that from Ramagundam, they arrived in Karimnagar a vehicle on March 14 and spent the night at a mosque near the Karimnagar collectorate. District health officials approached the police, along with their local contacts, to report their arrival as foreigners and to hold a meeting at the

mosque. It was then that the police ordered that they should first get screened for health at a local hospital and bring back health reports. The Indonesian preachers, it was learnt, first went to a private hospital for check-ups and went back to police, who informed them that the screenings should be performed at a state government-run health facility. The group first went to the government-run mother and child health care centre from where they were directed to approach the government area hospital. Once at this hospital, doctors who screened them noticed that one of them was suffering from cough,

cold and a fever, symptoms typical of Covid-19 and immediately recommended that they should be sent to the Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad. It was then that the group, along with three locals - one from Hyderabad and two from Karimnagar - were sent to the Gandhi Hospital by Karimnagar district health authorities. It was learnt that the usual practice for such groups of preachers is to pick a 'markaz', an area served by a mosque or a group of mosques, through a draw of lots and go there and spend a few days teaching the reading of Quran and teaching people the correct way of performing Namaz.

POWER SHUTDOWN

- Saroonagar**
11KV Sivalayam
2 pm to 4 pm
Prabathnagar, Shivayaram,
Shivaji Statue, Dilukhnagar
Main Road, Vikasnagar and
surrounding areas.
- 11KV Fruit Market**
2 pm to 4 pm
Fruit Market, GBR Hospital,
Prabathnagar, ICICI Bank,
Sainagar, Swapna Hospital
and surrounding areas.
- 11KV Durganagar**
2 pm to 4 pm
Durganagar, Dilukhnagar,
Vikasnagar and surrounding
areas.
- 11 KV Phanigiri Colony**
2 pm to 4 pm
Phanigiri Colony, Telangana
Chowrasta, Sai Baba Temple,
Maruthinagar, SLN Swamy
Temple, Ramakrishna,
Indranagar and surrounding
areas.
- 11 KV Ganeshpuri**
2 pm to 4 pm
Ganeshpuri, New
Dilukhnagar and surrounding
areas.
- 11KV Addagutta**
3 pm to 3.30 pm
Ambedkar Nagar Teachers'
Colony, Lyanagar, Addagutta.
- 11KV Marredpalli**
4 pm to 4.30 pm
Geetha Reddy line, Kasturba
College line, Chenoy Nursing
home, Maseed PT, Rishi
Mansion, Pinewood Homes,
Sangamethre Apartments.

IN BRIEF

No mulaqat for prisoners in TS

Hyderabad: The spread of Covid-19 cases in the state has forced the Telangana State Prisons and Correctional Services Department to cancel the mulaqat (meetings) of the prisoners across the state. In a note issued on Tuesday, the department said that in view of the Covid-19, all mulaqats with visitors have been cancelled in all jails across the state from Tuesday, to ensure social distancing, and maintain safety of prisoners in prisons. Family members, relatives and friends of prison inmates are requested not to come to meet in person to jails. They may avail the Telephone facility and e-Mulaqats to talk with inmates until the order of restrictions, the note read.

BWARE OF SPURIOUS HAND SANITISERS

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Even as Coronavirus (Covid-19) continues to spread its tentacles across the world and safety measures have become the most predominant concern of most of humanity, Hyderabad is witnessing a surge in number of fly-by-night hand sanitizer manufacturers. According to industry insiders, number of such factories or units in Telangana, a figure in high 80s, is rising at a rapid pace. "The number of such units will continue to grow as there is an acute shortage of hand sanitizers and masks in the country," Rajiv Nath, forum coordinator, Association of Indian Medical Device Industry, told Deccan Chronicle. Mr Nath said that most of these "new" units do not have the knowhow in terms of quantity or volume of ingredients to be used in making hand sanitizers. Speaking about current paucity of hand sanitizers the city is witnessing, he said there was an acute shortage of nozzles and pumps used in these bottles. "Most pumps and nozzles manufacturers are based in from China. Since we have ceased all imports from there, there is a shortage in supply. We are looking for alternatives to ensure we can meet the demand," he said. "People must understand that washing hands with soap is as effective as any sanitizer," he said. "We approached the Director, Controller of India's (DGCI) office, asking it to organise a crackdown on unauthorised manufacturers. Since there is a shortage of isopropyl alcohol, consumers are receiving spurious quality hand sanitizers, which could do more harm than good," he said. "The demand for hand sanitizers has risen by 100 times in times, he said, adding that the AIMED is working with excise department to procure more alcohol to ensure that supply can somewhat match the demand. He said that consumers need to check name and address number of manufacturer before buying.

Mother of precautions



A woman ties masks to her children while shopping in a mall at Kukatpally on Tuesday. Government directed public gatherings, malls, cinema halls to close till March 31 to control the spread of Covid-19. — R. PAVAN

3 drugs to cure coronavirus soon

IICT, Cipla's drugs to be available in 90 days

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Three anti-viral drugs for treating Covid-19 to be developed by the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology and pharmaceutical company Cipla will be available in three months, if they get the required approvals. "The most promising drug is favipiravir that was used in China and Japan to treat Covid-19 patients. This drug was used in China during the time of SARS Cov1 too. The second drug, baloxavir, is an anti-viral drug which has gone through clinical trials and its toxicology reports have termed it as safe. The third drug, remdesivir, is an anti-viral drug but is under patent of Gilead. Scientists at IICT settled on these three after going through a group of 25 molecules that had undergone clinical

- **IICT WILL develop the Active Pharma ingredient and provide it to Cipla**
- **CIPLA WILL check the bio-equivalence and develop medicines**
- **PHASE 1 and 2 clinical trials will be carried out and reports submitted to the Drug Controller General of India**

report of 14 molecules was found to be safe. Three drugs from these 14 matches the RNA of Covid-19 and is the likely anti-viral drug which will help to treat patients. IICT found pharmaceutical company Cipla willing to take the active pharmaceutical ingredient and develop the medicines. The company will have to pump in an estimated ₹15 crore, and probably more, to develop the medicines. Bio-equivalence and formulation has to be studied before launching the product in the market. The use of favipiravir and its outcomes are being studied by researchers as it seems to be a most promising drug. Cipla specialises in medicines to treat lung problems and scientists at IICT are upbeat that the drugs will help deal with Covid-19.

People refuse to visit Gandhi, opt for pvt docs

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

People who have travelled to Covid-19 affected countries recently are visiting general practitioners and lung specialists as soon as they develop symptoms of cold, cough and fever, but many refuse to go to Gandhi Hospital, which is the nodal hospital for the disease. This has been noted in small and big hospitals and it's worrying that these patients are opting for private doctors. Many are not willing to disclose their travel history for fear of being quarantined. With more cases in the state now coming to the fore as symptoms have developed, some people want their samples to be taken only from home. Dr G. Srinivas, a general physician says, "Covid-19 disease suffers from social stigma and the mental trauma of quarantine. There is much fear of the disease and also fear of what will be done to you in quarantine. Too much of misinformation is floating around. People are scared. This is leading to this kind of behaviour." Since not enough information has been provided about the disease when one is quarantined, people don't know what to expect. They are worried about being kept far away from their families and being unable to communicate with them, which is not the case. The proper information will give people con-

Now, hospitals fear huge rush

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Large crowds usually present in the out-patient departments of hospitals is a cause of worry as they are potential places where infection can spread. The state government on Tuesday evening asked government hospitals to take emergency cases only. State government hospitals will now have only emergency out-patient department and elective surgeries will be postponed. A senior doctor in a government hospital said that in an ENT hospital there are 1,000 patients in the out-patient department every day. They come from villages and surrounding areas. They are not aware of this infectious disease and we are putting them at risk." In Osmania General Hospital and Sarojini

Devi Eye Hospital the out-patient departments are full to the brim. "Gandhi Hospital has seen a low number due to the isolation ward. But other hospitals are full and this place is also a likely source of spreading infection," the doctor said. Multispecialty hospitals in the private sector too see about 500 patients daily. People come for their regular check-ups for heart disease and diabetic follow-up. A senior cardiologist said that hospitals are now providing support online. "We do not want all of them to come to the hospitals and wait for two to three hours with other patients. During the time of an infectious disease, out-patients can postpone visits that are not strictly necessary," the cardiologist said. Surgeries that are not urgent are also being postponed. It is also necessary to know that only those patients are kept in isolation in the hospital who need care, said a doctor. "To have the discipline to self quarantine, that is, go out as little as possible, is an effective way to slow down the spread of the Covid-19.



AP screens 13.4 mn, finds 7,500 returnees

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 17

The Andhra Pradesh government has carried out a survey of 13.4 million households and identified more than 7,500 persons who returned from overseas after February 10 in the state. Additional chief secretary to the Chief Minister P.V. Ramesh in a tweet said that all the identified persons returned from foreign countries along with those who came in contacts with them were quarantined. In another development, the director of health and family welfare in a release here on Tuesday said that as many as 852 persons were under observation while 580 were under home isolation and 22 were under hospital observation. Out of the 100 samples tested, only one tested positive for Covid-19 while 90 tested negative and results of nine were awaited.

● **ADDITIONAL CHIEF secretary to the Chief Minister P.V. Ramesh in a tweet said that all the identified persons returned from foreign countries along with those who came in contacts with them were quarantined**

● **ON THE other hand, the director of health and family welfare in a release here on Tuesday said that as many as 852 persons were under observation while 580 were under home isolation and 22 were under hospital observation.**

SCR HIKES PLATFORM TICKET PRICES TO ₹50 TO DISCOURAGE VISITORS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The South Central Railways (SCR) has enhanced the price of platform tickets within its zone to ₹50 and ₹20 to discourage non-essential visits to platforms of its railway stations. The platform tickets at major railway stations, such as Secunderabad, Hyderabad (Nampally) and Kacheguda will be priced at ₹50, and at suburban stations it will be ₹20. These prices will be effective till March 31. Following the threat of coronavirus increasing, SCR believes this measure

- **TICKETS AT major railway stations such as Secunderabad, Nampally, Kacheguda will be priced at ₹50, and at suburban stations it will be ₹20**

would decongest platforms and help travellers maintain distance between each other. In another development, the railway has requested its customers and general public to avoid coming to its various offices to meet officials. It suggested that they could instead contact them by phone or via email.

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SHORT TAKES

COUPLE KILLED IN MISHAP, TWIN KIDS SURVIVE

NARENDER PULLLOOR | DC KAMAREDDY, MARCH 17

In a tragic incident, parents were died and their four months-old twin kids survived. The incident took place...

Sadashivanagar police registered a case and an investigation. Tragically, both wife and husband did not wear helmet during their bike ride.

DEATH PROMPTS PROBE INTO MEDICAL REPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Allegations that the medical reports of two pregnant were exchanged leading to the death of baby boy has led to an inquiry by senior doctors.

COOK ARRESTED FOR SEXUALLY EXPLOITING MINOR

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

A cook, working at a private junior college in Madhapur, was arrested by the Madhapur police for the sexual exploitation of a four-year-old girl.

MAN WHO FELL INTO MANHOLE DIES IN HOSPITAL

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

A 30-year-old man who fell in a manhole while cleaning at Narsingi, died undergoing treatment at Osmania General Hospital (OGH) on Tuesday.

Tenant kidnapped two-year-old, held for cloning ATM cards

JAYENDRA CHAITANYA T. | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Three persons from Odisha, involved in cloning of debit and credit cards belonging to customers at restaurants, were taken into custody by the Cyberabad cyber crime police on Tuesday.



Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat holds an awareness programme for policemen on Tuesday in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. He also instructed the cops to take precautions while carrying out their duties.

Body found under village culvert with face smashed

Victim's hands tied, post-mortem reveals she wasn't sexually abused

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

In a barbaric incident at Rangareddy district a woman was murdered and her nude body was thrown under a culvert on the outskirts of Thangadapally village in Chevella mandal.

The police managed to get a saree and covered the woman's body to save her dignity as the onlookers were gathered in heavy numbers to see the crime scene.

THE SPECIAL teams are enquiring with jewellery stores to find out what parts of the state or the country the ornaments recovered could be made and they are also trying to verify if any woman has checked out from the nearby resorts and farmhouses.

The victim was strangled to death using a rope. Her body was brought to the village outskirts and was dumped. Except for the injury on the face, no other injuries were found, and also no signs of forcible sexual assault were noticed by the forensic doctors.

To ensure that the woman's identity could not be established, the accused have tried to disguise her face by smashing it with a boulder. However, a portion of her face was not damaged, and her face pictures along with the gold articles recovered from the spot were shared with the counterparts to find if any woman with similar descriptions went missing in the recent past.

Land grab under garb of temple: PIL over inaction

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

A public interest litigation has been filed in the Telangana High Court challenging inaction of municipal and revenue authorities in preventing illegal grabbing of 1,200 square yards of public land and putting up of structures illegally on that land under the guise of a religious structure.

PETITIONER VAZEER Prakash Goud informed the court that the irregularity had been brought to attention of officials concerned but they have not acted.

Officials of Kotahpet in Disulakhanam village submitted that one-fourth acre of land on survey number 45 in Nagole village of Uppal mandal, which is a public property, has been illegally grabbed by a temple committee named Sri Sri Sri Mahanikallamma Pocharu and Ganika Devasthanam under the guise of constructing temple buildings.

Goud informed the court that the irregularity had been brought to attention of officials concerned but they have not acted. He submitted that the land cost was high and occupation of that land will cause a loss to the public exchequer. The petitioner sought judicial intervention into the issue.

Mother, son killed in gas explosion

DC CORRESPONDENT KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 17

A mother and her son died in an LPG gas explosion at Dhangathuri village of Dharmanagar mandal in Peddapalle district on Monday night.

The deceased were identified as Gotte Yashoda, 45, and Gotte Rohan, 18. Fire officials, on receiving the information from the locals of the explosion, rushed to the spot and tried to put out the flames.

However, by the time they reached the spot, both the mother and son were totally engulfed in the fire following the LPG gas explosion and died on the spot.

Rohan was a student pursuing his first year and it was exam time for him. When the incident occurred, both of them fast sleep. Rohan's father was sleeping outside in the summer months. Police have registered a case and initiated a probe into the incident.

Tenant kidnapped 3 from Odisha nabbed for cloning ATM cards

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

A two-year-old boy, who was kidnapped from his house, has been rescued from a toddy compound at Miyapur on Tuesday. The kidnapper, a tenant of the boy's house, has been arrested.

FOLLOWING A complaint by Farheen, the footage of CCTV cameras in the area was analysed and the kidnapper identified as P. Nooka Raju, 30, a labourer hailing from Andhra Pradesh, who had been a tenant of the complainant. Special police teams were formed and pressed into action to trace the boy.

Three persons from Odisha, involved in cloning of debit and credit cards belonging to customers at restaurants, were taken into custody by the Cyberabad cyber crime police on Tuesday. The three had illegally withdrawn ₹13 lakh using the cloned cards.

THE CLONING gang has so far collected data of 150 customers belonging to 31 national and international banks, and have withdrawn at least ₹13 lakh.

He subsequently roped in his friends Hemant for skimming and Sushil for withdrawing cash from ATMs. "Prime accused Praful always quit his job at a restaurant and pub within 10 days of getting employed. He would change his residence frequently to avoid being caught. The cloning gang has so far collected data of 150 customers belonging to 31 national and international banks, and have withdrawn at least ₹13 lakh," said Praful, who used to take up jobs at restaurants, learnt how to skim and clone debit and credit cards through a friend in Odisha. He practised cloning by purchasing a skimmer and reader/writer machine before he started withdrawing money using cloned cards. Praful has been cloning cards since December 2017.

Praful, who used to take up jobs at restaurants, learnt how to skim and clone debit and credit cards through a friend in Odisha. He practised cloning by purchasing a skimmer and reader/writer machine before he started withdrawing money using cloned cards. Praful has been cloning cards since December 2017.

Police sensitised on coronavirus

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The Rachakonda police commissioner in the city has become the first police unit in Telangana to sensitise its staff about coronavirus and instruct them on the precautions to be taken while carrying out their duties.

An awareness session was organised for the staff where experts talked about the virus and the precautions to be taken while working in the field. Since Telangana started taking measures to control the virus, the police department has actively participated in the undertaking which was mainly confined to the enforcement of government orders.

He said that those involved in traffic regulation are more prone and are exposed to more infections and sound and air pollution. As a result, there are high chances of them being affected with the virus and other disorders in their day-to-day life.

Washable masks manufactured at Cheralapally central prison are being given out to the officers and staff of the Rachakonda commissionerate. Bhagwat also advised the traffic staff to educate commuters and that they get themselves checked immediately in case they show any symptoms.

Mushtafa Afzal, consultant clinical microbiologist and expert on infectious diseases, elaborately explained the coronavirus and the precautions to be taken to prevent its spread. Further, to keep the staff updated about noise pollution, Dr. D.P.K. Babu and Ashray-Akruthi foundation team conducted hearing and throat disorder tests for all the staff. They also explained the precautions to be taken to prevent these disorders.

LAVANYA CRIES FOUL OVER FAKE ACTOR'S INFO

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Telugu film actress Lavanya Tripathi lodged a complaint with the Hyderabad cybercrime police against a person who allegedly shared false information about her during some interviews with YouTube channels.

The popular actress, in her complaint to the police, stated that Sunishit, who claims to be an actor has been giving wrong information about her during his interviews that he was in close proximity to her and that he married her.

Following the complaint, the cybercrime police served notices to the concerned agencies to remove the links from the internet and also are making inquiries to find the facts and take necessary action.

Indebted cybercrime ACP K.V.M. Prasad said, "We are inquiring into the facts of the allegations, following which necessary legal action will be initiated. The suspect is said to be sharing false information about the actress during interviews with YouTube channels."

MAN ARRESTED FOR MORPHING COLLEAGUE'S PICS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

A 26-year-old man from the city who was morphing the images of his male colleague and his daughter, and sharing them with other colleagues via social media, was arrested by Hyderabad cybercrime police.

During the last week of February, the cybercrime police received a complaint from a private employee that some unidentified person was sending emails from anonymous mail address to him and his colleagues containing his morphed pictures and his daughter's morphed pictures along with vulgar text.

The cybercrime police, who initiated a probe, identified the suspect as Mohammed Amir Sohel, 26, a city resident.

The probe revealed that Sohel was unhappy with the behaviour of the complainant and other colleagues at his office, and in order to take revenge, he was sending morphed pictures by creating fake accounts. The accused was arrested and produced before a court on Tuesday.

SOHEL WAS unhappy with the behaviour of the complainant and other colleagues at his office and was sending morphed pictures to take revenge.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF LATE EMULA GOPAL GARU (Date of Demise: 11-03-2020) We request your presence at the 10th Day ceremony of our beloved late father on Thursday, March 19, 2020, followed by lunch at Mahadev Paradise Function Hall, 9-3-235, Youssiguda Checkpost, Hyderabad-500007. Contact: Metro Pillai (No. MN 9734).

PEDDAKARMA BASARI URAMAHESWARA RAO (Date of Demise: 02-03-2020) Four memorials are after in our hearts. Peddakarma Basari Urama Maheswara Rao on Thursday at Home 1B, Jans Azahara Apts, 106B, MG Road, S.R. Nagar, Hyderabad-500010. Contact: Basari Urama Maheswara Rao on Thursday at Home 1B, Jans Azahara Apts, 106B, MG Road, S.R. Nagar, Hyderabad-500010. Contact: Basari Urama Maheswara Rao on Thursday at Home 1B, Jans Azahara Apts, 106B, MG Road, S.R. Nagar, Hyderabad-500010.

10th Day Ceremony Late Hamara Kalicharan (Date of Demise: 13-12-1971) (Date of Demise: 13-12-2020) 10th Day Ceremony on 18-3-2020, 12:30 Noon, at Home 1B, Jans Azahara Apts, 106B, MG Road, S.R. Nagar, Hyderabad-500010. Contact: Basari Urama Maheswara Rao on Thursday at Home 1B, Jans Azahara Apts, 106B, MG Road, S.R. Nagar, Hyderabad-500010.

CHOTI Choti Ceremony of SHRI NAND LAL SOHNI will be held on 18th March 2020, Wednesday at 5:30 pm, at Flat No. 401, Prasad Residency, Hyderabad. Contact: Basari Urama Maheswara Rao on Thursday at Home 1B, Jans Azahara Apts, 106B, MG Road, S.R. Nagar, Hyderabad-500010.

REMEMBRING 25th PRIESTLY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY Rev. Fr. A. Dominic Sylvester Ordained Priest on 18th March, 1965. Contact: Basari Urama Maheswara Rao on Thursday at Home 1B, Jans Azahara Apts, 106B, MG Road, S.R. Nagar, Hyderabad-500010.

SHORT TAKES

CAT DISMISSES VENKATESWARA RAO'S PETITION

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

The Hyderabad Bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) on Tuesday dismissed the petition filed by senior IPS officer A.B. Venkateswara Rao, the then Additional Director General of Police (Intelligence), challenging his suspension by the AP government.

The bench headed by Justice L. Narasimha Reddy declined to set aside the state government's order suspending Mr Rao, who was suspended for violating the Code of Conduct by the AP government on February 8 this year, under Rule 9 (1) of All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969. Mr Rao had filed the petition challenging the suspension order as illegal. However, the CAT dismissed his petition.

After hearing arguments from both sides, the tribunal, which had reserved its order on Mr Rao's petition on March 6, pronounced the same on Tuesday. The AP government in its order had stated that Mr Rao, who was then the Additional DG of Police, was suspended for allegedly indulging in defrauding during the purchase of security equipment.

SEC digs in heels as Jagan fumes

After putting off local polls, Kumar says SEC has powers similar to EC

S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Even as the no-holds bar running feud between the AP State Election Commission (SEC) and the government rages on, State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar, emphasised, "the SEC has extraordinary powers, similar to the Election Commission of India (ECI)."

The statement comes after Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy questioned the scope, extent and limits of the powers of the SEC.

The controversy started with Commissioner Kumar taking decisions to postpone local body elections and transfer collectors, SPs and other officials.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Mr Ramesh Kumar said the Supreme Court had made adjudicated upon this issue in the Kishan Singh Tomar versus Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad

● THE CONTROVERSY started with Commissioner Kumar taking decisions to postpone local body elections and transfer collectors, SPs and other officials

case. In October 2006, the apex court in its judgement had said, "It is necessary for all state governments to recognise the significance of the State Election Commission, which is a constitutional body. They shall abide by directions of the SEC in the same manner in which it follows directions of the Election Commission of India during elections for Parliament and state legislatures. For conduct of the elections to local bodies, SEC enjoys the same status as the ECI."

Meanwhile, when quizzed about the epistolarity controversy between Chief Secretary Neelam Sahani and him, the SEC said, "I don't want to speak more on this matter."

SEC supports centre for postponement of local polls

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 17

N. Ramesh Kumar, AP State Election Commissioner (SEC), on Tuesday suggested to the state government to obtain a clearance from the National Task Force "on coronavirus to hold polls to local bodies immediately. Replying to Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney's request to the SEC to reconsider the decision to defer polls, the SEC in a three-page letter, made it clear that it would restart the election process, which is assessed to be a high human contact scenario, only "after being assured or advised" by the NTF.

Making things on this front complicated for CM Reddy, who was keen on completing the poll process before March 31 to avoid lapse of the 14th finance commission funds due

to the state to the tune of over ₹3,000 crore, the Centre officially announced the second stage of Covid-19.

The centre has warned people against mass gatherings and advised strict adherence to moderate distancing (among people). The SEC described the postponement of polls as implementing the central advisory protocol on "moderate distancing".

Mr Kumar got a shot in the arm with SEC of West Bengal, Maharashtra and Odisha deferring polls in their respective states, a day after his move to do the same. "Had the decision to postpone polls been announced along with other states, things would have been different, the SEC said in the letter, adding that the commission was being "needlessly faulted" for acting a day

Political déjà vu of YSRC and SEC

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

In the ongoing saga of confrontation between the AP State Election Commission and the state government, a series of encores are creating a sense of political déjà vu. Exactly eleven months ago, when the AP assembly elections were underway, the Election Commission of India (ECI) transferred the then chief secretary A.K. Puneetha, besides several officers including the intelligence chief, leading to the then chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu attacking the ECI.

Now, watchers of the SEC, which has already transferred several bureaucrats, senior police officers besides postponing the local body polls, sense a foreboding that it may also transfer the Chief Secretary if its orders are not implemented. And Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has already launched a scathing personal attack on the integrity of the election body chief, insinuating that he took a decision to favour the opposition Telugu Desam party,

because he belongs to the same caste as TD leader N Chandrababu Naidu.

When the ECI transferred the then CS A.K. Mr Naidu had said, "First, the ECI transferred a district collector. Then the intelligence DG and two district SPs, and now the CS. Why? They did not give any reasons. How can it transfer officials without revealing the mistake they did? Election Commission should work in an unbiased manner."

In the current face-off, the SEC transferred district collectors, SPs and suspended some police officials, after postponing the ongoing local body elections for six weeks due to Covid-19. In an angry outburst of a reaction, CM Reddy said, "who gave him (SEC) such rights to take such arbitrary decisions. If required, they would complain against the Commissioner and seek necessary action. What authority does the SEC have to order transfers? Why should we have an elected government and Chief Minister let the SEC run the government."

Study challenges cheetah's evolutionary divide

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 17

Extensive analysis by scientists at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) suggests that divide between the north-east African cheetah and both the south-east African and Asiatic chee-

tah is 100-200,000. In a report published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, using DNA analyses to understand the finer details of Asiatic and African cheetahs, scientists found that the data contradicts existing belief of the evolutionary divide. It was estimated that the divide bet-

ween Asiatic and African cheetahs was only of 5000 years. Dr. K. Thangaraj, senior author of this study and chief scientist at the CCMB, said "We have analysed three distinct cheetah samples; first one was a skin sample of a cheetah, believed to be shot in Madhya Pradesh in the 19th cen-

tury from the mammal gallery of the zoological survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata; the second was a bone sample of cheetah, obtained from the Mysore natural history museum, dated 1650-1900; and the third was a blood sample of a modern cheetah from the Nehru zoological park, Hyderabad."

"We have isolated DNA from both the historical samples in the ancient DNA facility of CCMB; the mt DNA of these two samples, and the modern cheetah sample were sequenced and analysed along with mtDNA of 118 cheetahs from different parts of the world" said Dr Niraj Rai.

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SHORT TAKES

INDIA ISSUES NV TO PAK ON MISSING JAWAN

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

India has asked Pakistan if its missing armyman Havildar Rajender Singh Negi is with them and if he is, then consular access should be provided to him immediately. Havildar Negi of 11 Garhwal Rifles was patrolling on an elevated walkway when he slipped from the January 8 at around 7.15 pm and is missing since then. He is believed to have accidentally crossed the border in Kashmir and landed in Pakistan. Raising the matter officially with Pakistan, India on Monday through a Note Verbale sought details about Havildar Negi. India has asked Pakistan to confirm the presence of Havildar Negi in its territory and give consular access if he is with them. Pakistan is yet to respond to India's note. Negi is a resident of Dehradun and had joined the 11 Garhwal Rifles regiment in 2002. He was posted in Gulmarg since November.

SC QUASHES 2008 POLICY RESTRICTIONS

From Page 1

The court noted there was "documentary evidence of the accolades which have been bestowed on women officers in the Indian Navy".

The court recalled that in 1963, Commander Ruby Singh became the first Indian woman to lead a platoon in the Indian Navy's contingent at Rajapah on Republic Day.

The INSV Tarini, which circumnavigated the globe, comprised an all-woman crew, while Sub-Lieutenant Shivangi became the first woman pilot of the Navy.

Having cleared the decks for the grant of permanent commission to women officers, the court said in terms of the February 25, 1999 policy decision, all SSC officers, including women officers, are eligible for permanent commission — and noted that this has not been complied with.

The court said the stipulation in the policy letter dated September 26, 2006 mandating "prospective and restricting its application to specified cadres/branches of the Indian Navy shall not be enforced". The court also "quashed and set aside" the provisions of the December 2006 "implementation guidelines" to the extent that they are made prospective and restricted to specified cadres.

Holding that the short service commission officers "can't be left in the lurch", the court said the situation has arisen due to the failure of the authorities to implement the policy statement of February 25, 1999 by which they were bound to offer them permanent commission, and as also by the decisions of the Delhi high court.

COURT RECALLS that in 1963, Commander Ruby Singh became the first Indian woman to lead a platoon in the Indian Navy's contingent at Rajapah on Republic Day.

INSV TARINI, which circumnavigated the globe, comprised an all-woman crew, while Sub-Lieutenant Shivangi became the first woman pilot of the Navy.

They fear nothing



Members of the Indian Youth Congress hold placards during a protest in New Delhi on Tuesday against the price hike in petrol and diesel.

Nath ducks floor test again

Rebel MLAs say they are not held captive; SC to hear Shivraj's plea today

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 17

The high-octane political drama in Madhya Pradesh triggered by exit of veteran leader Jyotiraditya Scindia from Congress last fortnight, continued on Tuesday with Chief Minister Kamal Nath holding information on a case lodged against him with the Economic Offence Wing of Madhya Pradesh police, in his nomination paper. A petition seeking rejection of Scindia's RS (minority) is baseless," Nath said.

Nath, who shot off a letter to the Governor on September 26, 2019, asking "prospective and restricting its application to specified cadres/branches of the Indian Navy shall not be enforced". The court also "quashed and set aside" the provisions of the December 2006 "implementation guidelines" to the extent that they are made prospective and restricted to specified cadres.

EC rejects plea, declares Scindia's RS papers valid

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, MARCH 17

The Election Commission on Tuesday rejected charges of omitting a case registered against him by Jyotiraditya Scindia, who has joined BJP recently, in his nomination paper for Rajya Sabha and declared his papers valid. A petition seeking rejection of Scindia's RS (minority) is baseless," Nath said.

Earlier on Monday, the Governor set fresh date of March 17 for the Kamal Nath government to face trust vote after his earlier directive to the Chief Minister to take floor test in the Assembly on Monday was given a go by. The Governor while issuing fresh directive to hold floor test on Tuesday

had warned that it would be deemed that the Nath government has reduced to minority if the Chief Minister failed to face floor test on the day.

Replying to the governor's fresh missive, Nath took refuge in coronavirus outbreak as well as the pending case in SC relating to the matter to skip the floor test. Besides, he reiterated his stand on the 16 rebel

against Scindia was registered by the EoW ahead of submission of his nomination papers and yet the nomination form had no mention of it.

Interestingly, a day after Scindia joined BJP on March 11, the EoW declared to re-open a land grab case lodged against him in 2014 which was closed in 2018 owing to lack of evidence.

Congress MLAs, lodged in a resort in Bengaluru in Karnataka since over a week, that he could not take floor test unless their release" were secured. In a late evening development, however, the Assembly Speaker N.P. Prajapati wrote a letter to the Governor seeking his intervention to secure release of the 16 rebel Congress MLAs.

The MLAs said they were given short shrift by Nath that they were held 'captive' by the BJP.

LS nod to new Pregnancy Bill

New Delhi, March 17

Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a Bill which seeks to extend the upper limit for permitting abortions from the present 20 weeks to 24 weeks for "special categories of women" which include rape survivors, victims of incest, differently-abled and minors. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Bill, 2020 which seeks to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 was passed by a voice vote. Certain amendments moved by members were defeated.

Health minister Harsh Vardhan said the proposed Bill allows termination of pregnancies in cases related to rape, incest, minor girls, and pregnancy with substantial foetal abnormalities. "It is a very progressive legislation. Even the courts had said that the law should be reviewed," he said. One of the salient features of the proposed law is "enhancing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women which will be defined in the amendments to the MTP Rules and would include vul-

nerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, minors etc)". If pregnancy has to be terminated in 20 weeks, the opinion of one doctor is required. But beyond that, opinion of two doctors would be needed and one of them has to be a government physician. Name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy is terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised in any law which is in force, according to a provision.

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Gogoi: Will speak after taking oath

Guwahati, March 17

Former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi on Tuesday defended his decision to accept nomination to the Rajya Sabha, saying he wants the legislature and judiciary to work together for nation-building.

Gogoi, however, said he will speak in detail about the issue, over which he and the Modi government have come under attack, after taking oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha.

"I have accepted the offer of nomination to the Rajya Sabha because of strong conviction that the legislature and judiciary must, at some point of time, work together for nation-building. My presence in Parliament will be an opportunity to project the views of the judiciary before the legislature and vice versa," he told an Assamese news channel.

Opposition parties, including the Congress, have questioned the nomination of Gogoi to the RS barely months after he retired in November last year. Meanwhile, former Supreme Court judge Justice Kurian Joseph has reacted strongly to the nomination of former-CJI Ranjan Gogoi as member of the Rajya Sabha saying that he has "compromised the noble principles" of the independence and impar-

RS NOMINATION OF BAJAJ REJECTED IN WEST BENGAL

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 17

The nomination of Dinesh Bajaj, independent candidate for the fifth and final Rajya Sabha seat in West Bengal, has been cancelled due to an error. The cancellation took place during the scrutiny by the returning officer of the candidates' nomination papers in the Assembly on Tuesday which was also the last date of scrutiny.

This has dealt a severe blow to the ruling Trinamool which had wanted to support Bajaj after fielding him as an independent candidate against Congress leader Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharyya, a candidate fielded by the Left-Cong for same the seat.

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"INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE FORCE" (MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS) GOVT. OF INDIA

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public are informed that written test of Constable (Tradesman)-2017 recruitment in ITBP scheduled to be held on 22nd March, 2020 (Sunday) is hereby postponed as a precautionary measure for COVID-19. Fresh online admit cards for appearing in written test to eligible candidates of aforementioned recruitment will be issued in due course of time.

For any assistance candidates may contact on ITBP Recruitment Helpline Nos. 011-24369482/24369483 on working days (0930 Hrs to 1800 Hrs). dadv 19143/1/0025/1920

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems) for: 2019, Northern Railway, New Delhi, India. The tender is open to all persons who are interested in participating in the tendering process. The tender is valid for 90 days from the date of opening of the tender.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering for: 2019-20, Eastern Railway, Kolkata, India. The tender is open to all persons who are interested in participating in the tendering process. The tender is valid for 90 days from the date of opening of the tender.

Government of India Ministry of Rural Development

Department of Rural Development (Training Division) Recruitment Notice. This Ministry has invited applications for filling up the post of 2000 General in Full-time Institute of Rural Development and Training, (INRD-FTRI), Hyderabad (RS: 80,000/- fixed pay) on 18.03.2020. The candidates who are interested in applying for the post should submit their applications on or before 18.03.2020. The selection will be made on the basis of the written test.

COFMOV (INDIAN RAILWAYS) TENDER NOTICE

Table with columns: Tender No., Brief Description, Closing Date. Includes tenders for Spare Hydraulic Brake Assembly Testing Machine, Pneumatic Filling Machine, Compartment Load Box, and Freight Vehicle Overhaul Travelling Classes.

NAVODAYA VIDYALAYA SAMITI REGIONAL OFFICE HYDERABAD. TENDER NOTICE No. 1/2020. Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, Regional Office Hyderabad invites sealed tenders from the reputed firms who deal with the Supply of Tracaculcs for the students of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas of Hyderabad Region for the year 2020-21.

NIRBHAYA CASE Legal experts view this as an attempt to delay hanging Convict's wife files for divorce

PATNAYA AZAD | DC MAYUR, MARCH 17

Punita Devi, wife of Nirbhaya rape convict Akshay Kumar Singh has filed a petition in a family court seeking a divorce from her husband who is slated to be hanged on March 20. The matter will come up for hearing on March 19, a day before Akshay Kumar Singh along with other convicts is to be hanged. In a petition to the court, she has pleaded that "I believe that my husband is innocent but he has been held guilty in a rape case. The court has awarded death sentence and he is to be hanged on March 20. Since I don't want to live the life of a

widow I want a divorce from him." Punita has been living with her in-laws at Akshay Kumar Singh's ancestral home in Bihar's Aurangabad district. According to a lawyer Mukesh Kumar Singh who is representing Punita Devi, the petition has been filed as per the provision under section 13(2) in the Hindu Marriage Act where the wife can seek divorce under special circumstances. After three postponements of death warrants, the trial court on March 17 set the date of hanging at Tihar jail on March 20. The fresh dates were issued after the convicts exhausted all available legal remedies including

the curative and mercy petitions. Legal experts are of the view that the petition for divorce filed by Punita Devi, wife of Nirbhaya rape convict Akshay Kumar Singh would be an attempt to further delay the scheduled hanging. Meanwhile, Akshay Kumar has filed a second mercy petition before President Ram Kovind just three days before his scheduled hanging on March 20. Officials at Tihar Jail, where the hanging is scheduled to take place, said Kumar filed the petition addressed to the President on Tuesday evening.

"This plea will also be forwarded to the ministry of home affairs through the Delhi government," they said.

SHORT TAKES

UP extends shutdown

Lucknow: To contain the coronavirus spread, the Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday extended the closure of all educational institutions, cinemas, multiplexes and tourists places in the state till April 2.

Ayodhya gears up for Navami mela

Ayodhya: The district administration is gearing up to hold mega Ram Navami mela despite the coronavirus scare and concerns expressed by many including the chief medical officer of Ayodhya about the health risk posed by a large congregation of 10 lakh devotees.

People banned from beaches too

Mangaluru/Udupi: After the shut down on pubs and malls in the state, Dakshina Kannada district administration has now banned people from visiting beaches and attending annual festivals in the temples.

Railways cancels 76 trains

New Delhi: Railways has cancelled 76 trains as a precaution against the spread of coronavirus and due to low occupancy, officials said on Tuesday. It has also issued a set of guidelines to zonal railways for its catering staff.

DELHITES TAKE CORONA CURBS SERIOUSLY

New Delhi, March 17: The coronavirus outbreak in Delhi has alarmed the residents of the city with many trying to maintain minimal physical contact in public places, avoiding use of public transport as much as possible, and deserted restaurants painting a gloomy picture.

Union mantri self-quarantines

GILVSTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 17
Minister of state for external affairs V. Muraleedharan has self-quarantined himself as a preventive step against Covid-19.

Chitra Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology in Thiruvananthapuram where a doctor had tested positive. As many as 75 staffers including 25 doctors are under surveillance in the institute.

The minister had attended a meeting at Sree Chitra Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology where a doctor had tested positive.

The director's office is in a separate building away from the hospital. The Union minister did not visit the hospital. The affected doctor was on home quarantine during this time and had not tested positive in his first screening test.

The Director has had no contact with the affected doctor in the last one year and has not held any meeting in which the affected person attended.

BILAL BAGH TO HAVE NOT MORE THAN 50 PROTESTERS

AKSHEEV THAKUR | DC BENGALURU, MARCH 17
Bilal Bagh, the venue of anti-CAA, NPR, NRC protests will witness a limited congregation on the backdrop of Covid-19 scare.

There will be 50 protesters with all the safety checks in place. Though the indefinite sit-in will continue, the venue will be closed for the protesters.

The organising team of the protest told the Deccan Chronicle that they are in constant touch with the medical experts in order to avoid any eventuality.

On March 16, a group of protesters from a Hindu right wing organisation descended at the venue with iron rods and threatened to shut down the site in a few days.

On Tuesday, the government decided to establish the test as soon as the concerned private laboratory procures the primers, probes and reagents.

Journey to safety



A worker disinfects a train coach as a precaution against Covid-19 in Jammu. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. Three railway staffers on board the Delhi-Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Express, who came in contact with a Covid-19 positive passenger, have been asked to quarantine themselves, a senior official of East Coast Railway said on Tuesday.

ICMR: Accredited pvt labs can conduct Covid-19 tests

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 17

The government on Tuesday decided to allow accredited private labs to conduct Covid-19 tests. The government has made it clear that the tests should be done only when prescribed by a qualified physician, as per ICMR-NIV norms, and free of cost.

Specific separate collection kits should be created and all private testing laboratories have to ensure immediate real-time reporting to the state health departments of IDSP and ICMR for timely initiation of contact tracing and research activities.

Guidelines have also been issued for dead body management towards standard procedures, infection prevention and control measures, handling of the body and environmental disinfection. The government also said that guidelines on

Clinical Management of Covid-19 disease (early recognition of patients), implementation of infection prevention and control measures, and management of deceased persons by private institutions saying each and every case whether suspected or confirmed should be isolated and provided appropriate treatment and their contacts traced at the earliest to break the chain of transmission.

2 Darjeeling students face racial taunts

Kolkata, March 17: Two students from Darjeeling Hills studying at premier institutes here allegedly faced racial taunts linked to coronavirus in separate incidents on city streets.

Police sources said no complaint has been lodged. JU Vice-Chancellor Suranjana Das said, "If such a thing has happened, we condemn it. We are working towards raising awareness among the public."

When the woman refused to buy his logic and insisted that he had taunted her, the other man asked her not to make a fuss and quietly leave the spot.

After they threatened to take appropriate action against the men, they apologised, the woman said. "We are pretty sure these two men purposely called us coronavirus as they look at people with mongoloid features in this way. However, since they apologised, we did not take any follow-up action. But it is necessary to share our experience in social media to debunk racist prejudices," she told reporters on Tuesday.

Moratorium on all bank loans in Kerala likely

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 17

With the next two weeks being extremely critical, Kerala has stepped up alert besides taking measures for intensive screening, monitoring and surveillance of those with suspected symptoms. Those under quarantine at home and in hospital have been directed to strictly comply with the instructions and not to venture out.

Primary contacts of the affected doctor have been identified and with the guidance of the state health officials and placed in home quarantine. Hospital staff who are not in contact as per criteria are attending normal duties. High priority and emergency surgeries and care of patients attending the OP are conducted at Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology hospital wing. Elective procedures and admissions are postponed till staff strength is restored. All of 76 hospital personnel who may have potentially direct contact with the infected radiologist were included in the primary contact list and are in home quarantine.

Siddiqui was first Covid-19 casualty after he returned from a pilgrimage

Doc of first casualty of Covid tests positive

M. B. GIRISH | DC KALABURAGI, MARCH 17

A 63-year-old family physician of Mohammad Hussain Siddiqui (78), a resident of ward 29 who died of Covid-19, tested positive and is being treated in an isolation ward in ESI Hospital in Kalaburagi.

While the doctor was in home quarantine, his family members are suspected to be secondary contacts and it is feared that they may have contracted the disease from him. The doctor's family members have been home quarantined by health officials.

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He on March 9 contracted fever and severe cough and was rushed to a hospital in Kalaburagi before shifting him to Hyderabad by his family members and he died on return to Kalaburagi on March 10 at around 11 pm.

As a precautionary measure, after the disease in Siddiqui was confirmed, health officials shifted 20-family members of Siddiqui family to ESI Hospital which includes 8 children.

On his return from Saudi Arabia on February 29 via Hyderabad, Siddiqui is said to have met several persons at his residence who greeted him on successful completion of pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.



A stamp on coronavirus-affected patient after home quarantine which recognises 14 days of social distancing or earlier if the suspect turns out to be tested negative in Mumbai.

DECCAN Chronicle

18 MARCH 2020

Gogoi's RS nomination sends the wrong signal

Just months after Ranjan Gogoi retired as Chief Justice of India, he's been nominated to the Rajya Sabha. Though the nomination is in the President's quota of 12 "non-political" nominees, nobody will treat it as anything but a political nomination. Such an appointment can easily be misconstrued as a "quid pro quo" for the judgments Justice Gogoi oversaw that favoured this government. Far from maintaining a separate identity as the third pillar of democracy, separate from the legislature and the executive, Mr Gogoi as CJI went into full embrace of his strongman leader.

Evidence of this is in the RSS's recent declaration that the Ayodhya ruling, during Mr Gogoi's last days in office, was correct. How correct it was will be debated in the years to come; on the one hand, it found the Babri Masjid demolition criminal but on the other it gave the go-ahead for the Ram Mandir. One suspects that the RSS is not unhappy with Mr Gogoi's nomination.

What about the Congress nominating former CJI Ranganath Misra (nuncio to another CJI, Dipak Misra) to the Rajya Sabha in 1998? The elder Misra retired in 1992; one could hardly accuse him of favouring the Congress when his single-member constituency had 18 Congress members for the 1984 riots. Also, when the Congress sent him to the Upper House, it was not in power.

Justice Gogoi has also had a destructive influence as a "strongman" judge. In the name of overseeing the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, he essentially took over its executive functioning and without democratic checks and balances it has become the most divisive administrative measure in India — it will make the Citizenship (Amendment) Act so sinister to Muslims. He relied heavily on sealed evidence, something that goes against transparent jurisprudence; and the nation watched it in action when the Supreme Court, on the basis of sealed evidence, found nothing amiss in the Rafiqul Karim case, a lucrative deal in which the Prime Minister had personally intervened.

Worse, however, was Justice Gogoi's refusal to hear habeas corpus cases from Kashmir after August 5, when the Centre hollowed out Article 370, demoted J&K into a Union territory, and the Rajya Sabha was already an open prison into a collective solitary confinement by cutting off mobiles and the Internet. Whereas the CJI was in a hurry to complete the Ayodhya hearings before he retired, he said the court "had no time" for Kashmiris' civil rights. With such rights as a citizen, no wonder his wife was called an "executive court". What choice did Justice Gogoi have? There was the example of Justice H.R. Khanna, the sole dissenter against a 1976 ruling supporting Indira Gandhi's Emergency; he paid the price of dissent by being superseded as CJI (he then chose to resign). Incidentally, Justice Gogoi had, before he became CJI, unprecedentedly held a press conference with three other judges, lambasting then CJI Dipak Misra's opaque allocation of cases. Ironically, two years later Justice Misra will continue to sit at home — but not in any House.

Bring back Manjrekar

The BCCI's exclusion of former Test and ODI cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar from the commentary panel is a violation of his rights if the action is based on his personal opinion on the citizenship Act. As an individual, he has every right to hold an opinion on public issues. His opinion has nothing to do with his role and performance as a commentator on the "world feed" team that is cherry-picked by the cricket board. The trouble with being on the iterative annual contract BCCI team is the appointment is subject to the whims and fancies of the administrators whereas the host broadcasters' terms are treated sensibly.

Sanjay, son of the classicist batsman Vijay Manjrekar, is no stranger to controversy. But on every occasion that the star found trying into excessively opinionated territory, he has profusely apologised. For instance, his run-ins with the "bits-and-pieces" all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja became so notorious that he had to play wearing a "protective" "verbal diarrhoea". Sanjay had also put down the popular professional commentator Harsha Bhogle as not being competent to comment because he has not played the game at a representative level.

A classic Lester Piggott comment on sporting competence was "to be a jockey you did not need to have been a horse". As the paymaster, the BCCI may expect their comments men to be cheerleaders rather than critical analysts. In times of televised sport in which viewers see everything that happens on the field or in the arena, comment has to be more pointed and certain tolerance of opinions is called for. The cricket body is, however, known to be a bloated and arrogant employer for whom money is manna from heaven and the egos of the administrators, accustomed to basking in the reflected glory of cricket stars, could fill the Motera Stadium, the world's largest, many times over.

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Subhani

KAMAL NATH AVOIDS FLOOR TEST



Political trade grows: Rs is the new market

Shikha Mukerjee

The commodification of politics is progressing from an emerging market in defections and lawmakers on sale to a maturing market, where lawmakers, hopeful candidates and ambitious leaders have formulated the mechanism of doing a trade. As merchandise, lawmakers or local government representatives have neither principles or ideologies; and as for the ethics of representation and democracy, nobody really cares, including voters, as was confirmed in the Karnataka byelections.

The reduction of politics to a transaction between aspirants and political parties, a trade that has increased in value because the BJP has upped the stakes, is the ultimate desecration of the idea of representative democracy and free and fair elections. In one corner, the BJP has acquired legislators, councillors and panchayat leaders in large numbers, turning politics into a trade and politicians into enterprises or commodities.

The 2020 trading season has started with a vengeance for the ruling BJP. Madhya Pradesh, the Rajya Sabha and municipalities and municipal corporations in states where it matters for the party, the trade is low risk, because the BJP is confident that it has reached a position of dominance. Even so, there is a conundrum; a creeping increase in the number of states, headed by regional parties, where resolutions have been passed in the state Assemblies against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Population Register and the National Register of Citizens. Telangana has just declared itself anti-CAA, NPR and NRC.

The trade in lawmakers and councillors and panchayat members does not increase their efficiency to deliver more to their constituents; it probably reduces the quantum delivered, because time and energy is being wasted on the transactions that profits the individual but not the community. Can one Jyotiraditya Scindia joining the BJP raise the income of the poorest individual in Guna? Can one Dinesh Bajaj change the prospects of an individual whose citizenship may be challenged by the BJP as the party in power pushing through the CAA-NPR-NRC? The absence of principles in the deal that the BJP and Trinamul Congress have struck is obvious. The Trinamul Congress is prepared to bargain with the BJP and its politics of majoritarian communalism, setting aside its self-appointed role as the principal crusader against the CAA-NPR-NRC. This is an unprincipled deal, because the acquisition of assets — legislators and councillors, by visually dramatic means, the undisclosed persuasions — has become a regular spectacle in Indian politics. The BJP has chartered transport, buses, cars and planes, luxury resorts and ministerial berths. In the trade, concepts like ethics, ideology, principles have been discarded and repackaged as required, exactly like in the real world of politics. As people who win elections, these persons have a value independent of the party to which they are temporarily attached, it would appear. And that value is measured in assets for the BJP and all other parties involved in the trade, including the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal, the Congress in Madhya Pradesh, earlier in Karnataka, the Janata Dal (Secular), the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and its Left Front partners.

Endowed with a natural flair or an acquired skill, like the animal spirits that energise the markets, politicians have made enterprises of themselves and their constituents. Over 25 per cent of the BJP is made up of such entrepreneurs; the Trinamul Congress leadership is so crammed with former members of the Congress that it makes little sense to start working out the maths. The BJP, however, is insatiable. It has turned the Rajya Sabha into a marketplace, because at this point it does not have the majority it seems to believe is crucial to its prestige as the dominant party in Indian politics. Speeding up control of the Rajya Sabha is one of its aspirations, because that would make it exactly like the Congress was in the 20th century; the other one is a target set by the BJP — like the banking system, the Yes Bank crisis in the most recent, but there have been spectacular failures in 2019 and earlier.

The degree of policy bankruptcy is measurable by the response of the government to the Covid-19 pandemic; it is also a measure of the irresponsibility of the government by the BJP and its failure to galvanise the states to act to contain the crisis that is now teetering on the brink of spreading exponentially and destroying lives and livelihoods. The political class in India has become so obsessed with the transaction that it has lost sight of the fact that a pandemic will mean shutting down the jobs that daily wage earners, contract workers and the millions of people working as part of the organised labour force do.

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The big trials in defections in 2020 are the one in Madhya Pradesh and the one seat in West Bengal, where an Independent is being supported by the BJP and the Trinamul Congress. Whereas Jyotiraditya Scindia got a Rajya Sabha seat in the trade, the legislator who propped up his value are now in limbo. Till they are formally cleared for defection by the Madhya Pradesh Speaker and can join the BJP and win back their MP status, their assets, but of uncertain value; that depends on getting a nomination and winning an election.

The Rajya Sabha elections in 2020 is just one example. There have been others and there will be others. The consequence is policy bankruptcy. The Indian economy has touched its lowest point in decades. Unemployment, foreign exchange reserves, industrial growth, farm growth have tanked. The crisis has shattered the hopes of millions and ruined institutions and the infrastructure of the economy, like the banking system. The Yes Bank crisis in the most recent, but there have been spectacular failures in 2019 and earlier.

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BJP gained more than it has given; a nominated seat in the Rajya Sabha.

The big trials in defections in 2020 are the one in Madhya Pradesh and the one seat in West Bengal, where an Independent is being supported by the BJP and the Trinamul Congress. Whereas Jyotiraditya Scindia got a Rajya Sabha seat in the trade, the legislator who propped up his value are now in limbo. Till they are formally cleared for defection by the Madhya Pradesh Speaker and can join the BJP and win back their MP status, their assets, but of uncertain value; that depends on getting a nomination and winning an election.

The Rajya Sabha elections in 2020 is just one example. There have been others and there will be others. The consequence is policy bankruptcy. The Indian economy has touched its lowest point in decades. Unemployment, foreign exchange reserves, industrial growth, farm growth have tanked. The crisis has shattered the hopes of millions and ruined institutions and the infrastructure of the economy, like the banking system. The Yes Bank crisis in the most recent, but there have been spectacular failures in 2019 and earlier.

The degree of policy bankruptcy is measurable by the response of the government to the Covid-19 pandemic; it is also a measure of the irresponsibility of the government by the BJP and its failure to galvanise the states to act to contain the crisis that is now teetering on the brink of spreading exponentially and destroying lives and livelihoods. The political class in India has become so obsessed with the transaction that it has lost sight of the fact that a pandemic will mean shutting down the jobs that daily wage earners, contract workers and the millions of people working as part of the organised labour force do.

The 2020 trading season has started with a vengeance for the ruling BJP. Madhya Pradesh, the Rajya Sabha and municipalities and municipal corporations in states where it matters for the party, the trade is low risk, because the BJP is confident that it has reached a position of dominance. Even so, there is a conundrum; a creeping increase in the number of states, headed by regional parties, where resolutions have been passed in the state Assemblies against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Population Register and the National Register of Citizens. Telangana has just declared itself anti-CAA, NPR and NRC.

LETTERS

CURRENCY NOTES

Although different government bodies and the medical personnel are campaigning to bring awareness about the impact of Covid-19, it is mandatory for everyone to be alert and keep themselves hygienically clean. I am a little concerned about the currency notes, especially the soiled ones, which come in contact with every one and could be one of the factors of passing on the virus. The ATM machines are discharging extremely soiled currency notes which no one would like to handle. I feel as if I am carrying an infection in my wallet. I urge the authorities to immediately replace them with the new currency bills.

S.M.Habeeb Hyderabad

SPRAYING MUSI

Since the authorities have stopped spraying of medicine on the Musi and nearby areas, Kachiguda, Nimbalodda and Gohnaka areas, the residents, particularly the aged and children, are suffering a lot with infections like malaria. I request GHMC commissioner Lokesh Kumar to take action on the negligent staff, and make arrangements for early spray in affected areas for early relief.

K.N.Vivan Raj Vikram Raj Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

20 die, 100 hurt in West Bengal rioting

CALCUTTA, March 17 WEST BENGAL, was in turmoil today as violence in industrial areas which were the worst affected by the hartal called in protest against the 'betrayal' of the Bangla Congress' whose President, Mr. Ajay Kumar Mukherji resigned as Chief Minister, yesterday. The 24 Parganas District accounted for 11 of the dead, Hooghly and Burdwan two each. Cooch Behar two and Calcutta city one.

Moments of crisis tend to simultaneously bring out the best, the worst, and the most insane and inane aspects of humanity to the fore, and the coronavirus pandemic has been no different. For one thing, it tells us we are more similar than we are different. In the early days of the pandemic, when the Chinese city of Wuhan was in lockdown, we saw videos that were at the same time eerily apocalyptic and also reassuring, of quarantined residents standing on their balconies and singing songs that echoed through the streets of their ghost town. A lone voice would be augmented by many others as a single stanza was amplified by thousands of human voices: a strident call in the dark, an affirmation of shared hopes and fears. Today, we see the same in the deserted streets of Italy, where locked-in residents gather on their terraces with musical instruments and song, cheering each other even as they prepare for the worst. Then there are everyday heroes

like Aisyah and her husband Jadao, who run a corner store in the Scottish village of Falkirk. Standing outside a department store, Aisyah noticed an old woman in tears because she was unable to get the supplies she needed as the younger and fitter customers were grabbing all the goods. Not content with simply offering sympathy, Aisyah and Jadao put together Covid-19 kits, comprising hand sanitizers, wipes, masks and other products and delivered them, free of cost, to elderly residents in their neighbourhood. Then there are Thasleem and Nadeem, owners of a surgical good store in Kerala who are selling masks at a loss, just so that everyone can get what they need. And while some provide supplies, others fight for the greater good in different ways; given that access to information is key, a group of doctors successfully fought to have over 32,000 research articles on COVID-19 — previously behind paywalls — made free to access. Then there are the doctors, researchers and medical staff work-

around the clock, and at great personal risk, to provide care for those stricken with the virus. Unsung heroes and heroines to whom the world owes a debt of thanks. But there are also those who prey on humanity's fears, and seek to profit from pain like the self-proclaimed 'hustlers', a couple in Vancouver who bought stocks of disinfectant wipes — emptying entire stores — to resell them on Amazon at exorbitant rates, making a profit of over \$70,000 in the process. This has led to outlets like Amazon restricting the sale of many products, and eBay has banned such sales entirely. Facebook too has banned ads that guarantee to prevent or cure the virus. That's because snake oil salesmen (and women) have taken the opportunity to hawk 'cures' for the virus that have no basis in reality. People like TV preacher Jim Bakker, who is selling a 'silver solution' that he claims is effective in killing the virus. Same goes for conspiracy theorist and overall nutjob Alex Jones selling his cure-all tincture. Both Bakker and Jones have been served legal notices and made to cease and desist from their dangerous, deluded claims. Add to these examples similar stories from around the globe and we see how, in a boiling pot, the scum tends to rise to the top. Speaking of which, there is the extremist Hindu Mahasabha organisation in India which in its bid to win support, has issued a ganamutra and dung party in which enthusiastic participants downed shots of cow urine to ward off the virus and encouraged people to bathe in cow dung for protection. Well, if nothing else, it will at least help social distancing as very few sane people will want to be around a dude who just bathed in poop. A particular place of dishonour goes to those probates busy creating and spreading fake news in this crisis, whether out of malice or ignorance. We see WhatsApp forwards and social media posts containing outright dangerous information, calling on people to consume kilos of garlic or even drink bleach to 'cure' the virus. Particularly insidious is a

series of graphics attributed to Unicef that mixes truth with lies. Despite numerous attempts to debunk it by leading media organisations and Unicef itself, this is being actively disseminated by people who really should know better. The damage caused by such falsehoods can claim lives and livelihoods alike, as in the case of a Chinese woman who was hospitalised after consuming nearly two kilos of garlic, or the Indian poultry farmers who are suffering as a result of fake news alleging that a non-vegetarian diet causes coronavirus and that consuming chicken causes infection. Faced with plummeting demand due to these lies, they are incurring losses running into millions of rupees and have had to cull entire flocks, with one poultry farmer even dumping 6,000 baby chicks in an empty lot and burying them alive. Truly, these are the times that test our souls, and show what we are made of — for better or, usually, for worse.

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

INDO-PAK WAR MAY CAUSE FOOD LOSSES

Washington, March 17: A limited nuclear war between India and Pakistan may lead to the worst global food losses in modern history according to a first-of-its-kind study. The study, published in the journal PNAS, found that sudden global cooling from a war using less than 1 per cent of nuclear weapons worldwide, along with less precipitation and sunlight, could disrupt food production and trade worldwide for about a decade.

This would be more than the impact from man-made climate change by late 21st century, according to the researchers from Rutgers University-New Brunswick in the US. While the impacts of global warming on agricultural productivity have been studied extensively, the implications of sudden cooling for global crop growth are little understood, they said.

"Our results add to the reasons that nuclear weapons must be eliminated because if they exist, they can be used with tragic consequences for the world," said study co-author Alan Robock, a professor at Rutgers University. "As horrible as the direct effects of nuclear weapons would be, more people could die outside the target areas due to famine," he said.

Robock co-authored a recent study published in the journal Science Advances estimating that over 100 million people could die immediately if India and Pakistan went to nuclear war, followed by global mass starvation.

For the latest study, scientists used a scenario of 5 million tonnes of black smoke from massive fires injected into the upper atmosphere that could result from using only 100 nuclear weapons. That would cool the Earth by 1.8 degrees Celsius, and lead to 8 per cent lower precipitation and less sunlight for at least five years.

Biden wins Washington state primary elections

A narrow victory for Biden, who is up against Bernie in polls

Washington, March 17: Joe Biden has won the Democratic primary in Washington state, US media have projected, in another boost for the frontrunner who is hoping to build an insurmountable lead over rival Bernie Sanders.

After most of the votes were counted on Monday night, NBC and the New York Times called the result — a narrow victory for Biden, who is up against Sanders for the chance to challenge President Trump in November.

They said that former vice president Biden had won 37.9 percent of the vote, with the leftist Sanders close behind with 36.4 percent. The result came as millions of Americans were due to troop to polling stations in three more states on Tuesday, with anxiety running high over the fast-spreading coronavirus that has killed more than 80 people in the US so far.

As Arizona, Florida, and Illinois prepare for the primaries, there was confusion over whether polling stations will be safe during the pandemic. Voting has been postponed in Ohio, where officials ordered polling stations closed, making it the latest state to postpone the election. Biden had won 37.9 percent of the vote, with the leftist Sanders close behind with 36.4 percent.

Voting in 2 states amid virus scare

Miami, March 17: Polls opened in two of the three US states — Florida, Illinois and Arizona — holding Democratic primaries Tuesday in the face of a rapidly spreading coronavirus pandemic that has cast a pall over the presidential nomination race between Joe Biden and Sanders.

A fourth primary state, Ohio, postponed its elections until June on orders of Republican Governor Mike DeWine despite a judge's ruling to the contrary, keeping voters at home amid the escalating public health emergency.

At a time when the potential score factor for the elderly, who are at highest risk of contracting COVID-19.

Officials in Florida, with the most delegates in play Tuesday, said the state is pulling out all the stops to keep the process safe.

In Arizona, Governor Doug Ducey said state and Democratic Party officials agreed that the primary should go on.

"We have no guarantee that there will be a time in the future when it will be safer than tomorrow," Ducey said Monday. "Democracy must go on." Biden, 77, tops polling by significant margins in Arizona, Illinois and especially Florida, where the former vice president could strike a hammer blow against his rival by building an insurmountable lead in the delegate count.

Democrats are in the midst of choosing a nominee who will challenge the Republican incumbent in November's election, but doubts and concerns have undercut the process.

Despite DeWine's move to shutter polling stations in Ohio, he appeared to be a lone official voice calling for delay, and failed to win support from Trump, who said it was "up to the states" to make the call.

Ultimately, the president said, "I think postponing is unnecessary."

But the vote could be undermined in part by a potential score factor for the elderly, who are at highest risk of contracting COVID-19.

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PERSECUTION: PUTIN ALLY TO SUE U.S. FOR \$50BLN

Moscow, March 17: An ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin who says he was "wrongfully persecuted" by the US, which claimed he meddled in 2016 elections, vowed Tuesday to sue Washington for \$50 billion in damages.

Evgeny Prigozhin, the rich Russian businessman dubbed "Putin's chef," made the announcement after the US Justice Department on Monday abruptly dropped charges against his company Concord.

Prosecutors had accused Concord of being behind a campaign to help Donald Trump win the presidency. This development meant that allegations like "Prigozhin meddled in a US presidential election" or "Russia meddled in a US presidential election" were "lies and fiction", the secretive businessman said.

Concord was preparing a lawsuit for "wrongful persecution," Prigozhin said in a statement, adding he would seek \$50 billion in damages.

The US authorities had dropped the case because they were scared of bad "publicity and a fair trial," he added.

The Justice Department announced late on Monday it was withdrawing the eight-count indictment of Concord Management and Consulting, just weeks before the trial was due to begin.



A soldier sits atop a vehicle in Iraq's southern city of Basra on Tuesday. — AFP

US-led coalition troops start leaving Iraqi bases: Officials

Baghdad, March 17: The US-led coalition will redeploy hundreds of troops from bases in Iraq including to outside the country, coalition and US officials said Tuesday, with one calling it a "historic" move.

The announcement came hours after another rocket attack targeted an Iraqi base where foreign troops are located, the 24th such attack in less than six months.

"The coalition is re-positioning troops from a few smaller bases," said coalition spokesman Myles Caggins. The first redeployment was taking place Tuesday from Qaim, the western base along the border with Syria, a coalition official said.

"A transfer ceremony is taking place today to hand over the facilities to Iraqi forces, and the intent is that all coalition troops will be leaving Qaim," the official said.

"It's historic," the official added, saying about 300 US-led coalition troops would be moved out of the base. Some had already been redeployed to coalition positions in neighboring war-ravaged Syria along with artillery while others would be sent to other bases in Iraq or to Kuwait.

The official denied that the redeployment was a response to a spike over the last week in rocket attacks targeting foreign troops stationed across Iraq. Early Tuesday, two Katyusha rockets hit an Iraqi base south of the capital hosting Spanish units of the US-led coalition as well as NATO troops.

On March 11, a volley of rockets killed two US military personnel and a British soldier at the Taji airbase, which was hit again three days later.

The US responded with air strikes on five positions controlled by Kataeb Hezbollah, an Iran-backed group and member of the Hashed al-Shaabi military network.

The Hashed has been formally integrated into the Iraqi state's security forces but more hardline groups continue to operate independently.

Some 5,200 US forces are positioned across Iraq and form the bulk of the coalition set up in 2014 to help local forces battle the Islamic State jihadist group. They are deployed at about a dozen bases in Iraq alongside local forces.

A US official said that coalition troops would leave three bases. In addition to Qaim, troops at the Qayyarah and Kirkuk bases in northern Iraq were set to be withdrawn by the end of April.

"There was no trigger but the violence helped keep the (withdrawal) pace fast," the official added, saying overall troop numbers in Iraq would remain the same.

In January, Iraq's parliament voted to oust all foreign forces from the country after a US drone strike in Baghdad killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and the Hashed's deputy chief, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. — AFP

IRAQI PREZ NAMES ADNAN ZURFI AS PREMIER

Baghdad, March 17: Iraqi president Barham Saleh named Adnan Zurfi, the former governor of the Shiite holy city of Najaf, as the new prime minister Tuesday, the second attempt to find a head of government in recent months.

Zurfi, a 54-year-old lawmaker, has 30 days to form his cabinet which he must then put to a vote of confidence in Iraq's notoriously divided parliament.

He would replace outgoing premier Adel Abdel Mahdi, who resigned in December following popular mass rallies against a government that protesters see as corrupt, inept and beholden to powerful neighbour Iran.

An earlier nominee failed to form a cabinet by March 2, triggering a new 15-day deadline for Saleh. Zurfi is a current member of the Nasr coalition led by ex-PM Haider al-Abadi and a former member of the Dawaa party, a longtime opposition party to ex-dictator Saddam Hussein.

Since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam, cabinets have been formed through a sectarian power-sharing system, leading to widespread horse-trading among various sects and parties. — AFP

2 bombs explode outside Thai govt office, 18 wounded

Bangkok, March 17: Two bombs exploded in front of a government office in Thailand's insurgency-hit southern Yala province on Tuesday, wounding 18 people, a security official said.

The explosions took place in front of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC), a Thai government body that oversees the administration of three mostly Malay-Muslim majority provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala where an insurgency since 2004 has killed around 7,000 people.

SBPAC was hosting a government meeting on the region's response to the outbreak of the coronavirus prior to the explosions. "The first bomb was a grenade thrown to the area outside the SBPAC office fence to draw people out," Colonel Pramote Prom-in, a military regional security spokesman said.

"Then a car bomb about 10m from the first explosion went off. This was hidden in a pick-up truck where the perpetrators parked near the fence. Eighteen are wounded and no one died," he said. The car bomb exploded ten minutes after the first explosion and among the wounded were five reporters, five police officers, two soldiers and other bystanders, Pramote said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Such claims are rare following attacks in the region. The population of the provinces, which belonged to an independent Malay Muslim sultanate before Thailand annexed them in 1909, is 80 per cent Muslim, while the rest of the country is overwhelmingly Buddhist.

Conflict has flared on and off for decades as insurgent groups fought a guerrilla war to demand independence for the area. — Agencies

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IN BRIEF

Two cases at World Health HQ

Geneva: Two cases of Covid-19 have been registered at the World Health Organisation headquarters. The two have two staff confirmed with symptoms of Covid-19, spokesman Christian Lindmeier said at a virtual press conference. "They both have gone home. They have self-isolated. They showed symptoms. Colleagues in the office have been checked and we're waiting for further information on those," she said.

Poland govt. in quarantine

Warsaw: Poland's government was under quarantine on Tuesday after a minister tested positive for the novel Covid-19 as authorities introduced sweeping measures to combat the spread of the disease. All members of the government who attended the March 10 meeting had been tested and it was expected to be known Tuesday, said Chief of the Chancellery Michal Dworkczyk. "Until that time, all the ministers remain in quarantine," he told reporters.

Italy reports 349 new casualties

Rome: Italy on Monday reported 349 new deaths from the novel Covid-19, taking its total since last month to 2,158, the most ever when Italy's toll topped 1,000 for the first time. Italy now has 27,980 infections, compared to 15,178 a week ago. It has reported more than 700 deaths in two days. The Italian financial capital's Lombardy region recorded 1,420 deaths, of 66 percent of Italy's total — about the same share it has had throughout the crisis.

Zimbabwe VP flown to China

Harare: Zimbabwe's vice president Constantino Chiwenga was flown to the weekend to China for medical check-ups, an official said on Tuesday. Presidential spokesman Emmerson Mnangagwa's rise to power following a brief military takeover three years ago, "knew back to China for a medical check-up".

Egypt shuts Red Sea resort

Cairo: Egypt on Tuesday locked down the Red Sea resort of Hurgahda where a German tourist died of new Covid-19 earlier this month. Hurgahda is a magnet for tourists, including divers, who come year-round for its clear waters, coral reefs and unique marine life. The Red Sea governor, who is based in Hurgahda, said a two-week lockdown has been imposed from Tuesday to enforce a "national plan". The move was aimed "to ensure the safety and well being of citizens from being infected, as well as the safety of tourists... until they (can) leave the country," a statement said.

PRISONERS FLEE FROM 4 BRAZIL JAILS

Rio De Janeiro, March 17: Hundreds of prisoners fled out of four Brazilian jails on Monday, the day before their day-release privileges were due to be suspended over the Covid-19 outbreak. Sao Paulo state prison authorities and local media reported.

The Sao Paulo state prison authority said it could not say how many inmates had escaped as it was "still tallying the exact number of fugitives". Local media reported that as many as 1,000 had fled from four jails — Mongaguá, Tremembé, Porto Feliz and Miranteópolis — ahead of the lockdown. A video on social media showed a long stream of prisoners purportedly fleeing a prison. The Sao Paulo state prison authority said "acts of insubordination" had taken place at the jails ahead of the suspension of the day-release programme. The suspension was necessary, it said, because 34,000 convicts would be returning to jail and "would have a high potential to install and propagate the Covid-19 in a vulnerable population, generating health risks for servers and custodians".

World hunkers down over Covid-19

Borders shut, schools and businesses closed even as drastic restrictions on movement take effect

Berlin, March 17: Tens of millions of people hunkered down in government-ordered isolation on Tuesday as borders slammed shut, schools and businesses closed and increasing drastic restrictions on movement took effect. Others were scrambling to get home, caught up in widespread travel restrictions that aimed to slow the spread of the new Covid-19. From Southeast Asia to Europe to the Americas, people found their lives upended by lockdowns and social distancing. Commuters in the Philippines waited in huge traffic jams at checkpoints set up to take their temperatures before entering Manila.

Spain now the fourth-most infected country, saw infections rise on Tuesday by more than 2,000 in one day to 11,178 and virus-related deaths jump by almost 200 to 491.

Only China, Italy and Iran had more infections. With the number of cases worldwide topping 183,000, a surge of patients in Madrid's hospitals has fuelled worries across Europe of what lies ahead.

Plans went out to send masks and ventilators to places like Italy and Spain that are struggling with soaring case loads. "There is no easy or quick way out of this extremely difficult situation," Mark Rutte, the Dutch prime minister, said in the first televised speech by a Dutch leader since 1973. Airlines across the world have slashed flights due to a plunge in demand but also because many countries have been barring foreign arrivals.

Turkey planned to evacuate 3,614 citizens stranded in nine European countries over the night, including 500 in Morocco alone. In Lithuania, trucks seeking to enter Poland backed up in a line 100 meters long after Poland closed its border to foreigners due to the new coronavirus.

Thailand calling off its water festival in April. The Dutch banned international travel and is allowing only essential services to stay open. The first confirmed cases of Covid-19 were reported in Somalia. — AP



A man stands by bikes on the Cathedral square in Strasbourg, eastern France, on Tuesday as the order of staying at home to all French citizens comes into effect, in order to avoid the spreading of the novel Covid-19. — AFP

US, China trade pandemic barbs

Beijing, March 17: A spat between the US and China over Covid-19 escalated on Tuesday as President Donald Trump ordered Beijing by referring to the pathogen as the "Chinese Virus". The two countries have sparred over the origin of the virus for days, with a Chinese official promoting conspiracy theories claiming it was brought to China by the US army and American officials using terms seen as stigmatising a nation.

"The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus," Trump tweeted Monday night. He doubled down on the comment on Tuesday morning while tweeting about how US states were being affected, saying: "Some

SPAIN CONFIRMS NEARLY 2,000 NEW CASES, AS INFECTIONS TOP 11,000

Madrid, March 17: Spain on Tuesday confirmed nearly 2,000 new cases of Covid-19, sending the total spiralling past 11,000, with 491 deaths, the health ministry said.

Spain is the fourth-worst-hit country in the world after China, Italy and Iran, with numbers rising rapidly despite an unprecedented national lockdown, with the government

ordering its 46 million population to stay home. Over the past 24 hours, the number of people infected rose by 1,987, hiking the overall total to 11,178, the ministry's emergency coordinator Ferrnando Simon said.

At the same time, the number of people who had recovered from the virus stood at 1,038, he said. — AFP

A commentary by the official Xinhua news agency said using "racist and xenophobic names to cast blame for the outbreak on other countries can only reveal politicians' irresponsibility and incompetence which will intensify virus fears".

The war of words reignited diplomatic tensions between the two countries, which have tussled over trade and other issues since Trump took office. Trump's comments were also criticised inside the US, with warnings it could incite a backlash against the Asian-American community. "Our Asian-American communities — people YOU serve — are already suffering. They don't need you fueling more bigotry," tweeted New York city mayor Bill de Blasio. — AFP

Pollution drops as virus shuts cities

Berlin, March 17: The European Union's space agency's earth-observation satellites have detected a significant reduction in the pollutant nitrogen dioxide, a byproduct of the use of diesel motors and other human activities in northern Italy as the advance of the Covid-19 has led to drastic measures curtailing ordinary life.

The agency's Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service reported Tuesday that with the "abrupt changes in activity levels" in northern Italy, it has traced a "reversal in trend" of nitrogen dioxide, or NO2, for the last four to five weeks.

So far, Italy has been the hardest hit country in Europe by the new Covid-19, and the government has

implemented a wide lockdown, encouraging its 62 million people to stay home unless it's absolutely necessary to go out.

"Similar drops in pollutants were detected in China after the government there implemented widespread shutdowns to try and slow the spread of Covid-19. Most emissions are generated by human activities such as traffic, energy production, residential heating and industry. "It is quite remarkable that a signal of decreasing activity levels could be detected," said Vincent-Henri Peuch, the director of the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service. "This shows the extent of the measures taken by Italy." — AP

Need for 'boldest actions' from Europe, says WHO

Copenhagen, March 17: The World Health Organisation's (WHO) regional office for Europe on Tuesday said there is a need for bold measures in all European countries, calling for the smaller SAFETY boxes of the new Covid-19 pandemic. "Every country, with a few exceptions, needs to take their boldest actions to stop or slow down the virus threat," Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, told a press conference.

"Thinking that 'this does not concern me', is not an option," Kluge said. Kluge also said that the "good news" was that the region was "alert and on guard," noting that "preparedness, readiness and response measures" had been launched in all member states.

Since the virus first emerged in late December, 7,406 people have died around the world, according to an AFP tally based on official sources.

According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, more than 180,000

cases had been confirmed worldwide on Tuesday. The regional WHO director said that countries need to assess their own situation in order to decide which measures should be emphasised, as the outbreak is progressing at different speeds in different countries.

WHO Europe includes 53 countries as diverse as Russia and Andorra, Germany and Tajikistan. On Tuesday the outer borders of the 27-nation European Union and its Schengen passport free zone closed for 30 days. Faced with the "defining global health crisis of our time", the WHO on Monday called for testing of every suspected case of the new Covid-19. — AFP

WHO Europe includes 53 countries as diverse as Russia and Andorra, Germany and Tajikistan. On Tuesday the outer borders of the 27-nation European Union and its Schengen passport free zone closed for 30 days.

Faced with the "defining global health crisis of our time", the WHO on Monday called for testing of every suspected case of the new Covid-19. — AFP

Iran curtails fire fest; toll near 1k

Teheran, March 17: Iran said 135 new Covid-19 deaths took the country's overall toll to nearly 1,000 Tuesday as it curtailed celebrations for a fire festival in a bid to contain the disease. The Covid-19 outbreak in the Islamic Republic is one of the deadliest outside of China, where the illness originated.

The latest deaths, announced by health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahangour in a televised news conference, take the total death toll in Iran to 988. Since it announced its first two deaths in the holy Shiite city of Qom last month, Iran has taken a series of steps to contain the virus. However, it has yet to impose any lockdowns and the outbreak has spread to all 31 of the country's provinces.

In its latest attempt to contain the virus, police banned celebrations marking the traditional fire festival that comes before Nowruz — the Persian New Year. Chaharshanbe Soori falls on the last Wednesday of the Iranian calendar before the country's New Year's Eve, which is on March 20 this year.

Celebrations start on Tuesday evening with Iranians traditionally jumping over fires and lighting fireworks, with many suffering burns requiring hospitalisation. "Those who go out can be infected with the Covid-19 and make things harder for themselves and their families," state news agency

FIRST DEATH IN PAKISTAN, CASES SURGE TO 183

Lahore, March 17: Pakistan reported its first casualty due to the novel Covid-19 on Tuesday, health ministry officials said as the number of positive cases of the Covid-19 infections rose to 183 in the country. The first fatality was reported from Lahore. The patient was admitted to the Mayo Hospital in Lahore. He came here from Muscat on March 15. He was tested positive and died on Tuesday. Sinth has 155 positive cases, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 15, Balochistan with 10, Gilgit-Baltistan 5, Islamabad 2 and Punjab 6, officials said. "One COVID-19 patient who was brought from Hafizabad, some 150 kms from Lahore, died here on Tuesday," Punjab Health Minister Iqbal Masih said on Tuesday. — PTI

IRNA quoted Teheran police official Keyvan Zahiri as saying,

"Authorities in other provinces such as Isfahan, Golestan and Khuzestan had also cautioned people against observing the festival, IRNA reported. The latest health ministry figures showed the Covid-19 disease was spreading fastest in Teheran province. — AFP

Millions can perish, warns Iran state TV

Teheran, March 17: Iran's state television has issued its most drastic warning so far about the new Covid-19, saying the outbreak could kill "millions" in the Islamic Republic if the public keeps travelling and ignoring health guidance. The warning came in a bulletin broadcast on Tuesday afternoon.

Roughly nine out of 10 of the over 18,000 cases of the new virus confirmed across the Middle East came from Iran, where authorities denied for days the risk the outbreak posed. Officials have not implemented new checks for people trying to leave major cities ahead of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, on Friday, but have hesitated to quarantine the areas.

That's even as the death toll in Iran saw another 13% increase Tuesday. Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahangour said the virus had killed 135 more people to raise the total to 988 amid over 18,000 cases. Hard-line Shiite faithful in Iran pushed their way into the courtyards of two major shrines just closed over fears of the new Covid-19. Iranian state media reported Tuesday, as the Islamic Republic pressed on with its struggle to control the Mideast's worst outbreak.

Jordan meanwhile prepared for a shutdown of its own over the virus, banning gatherings drawing

more than 10 people. Late on Monday night, angry crowds stormed into the courtyard of Mashhad's Imam Reza shrine and Qom's Fatima Masumeh shrine. Crowds typically pray there 24 hours a day, seven days a week, touching and kissing the shrine. That's why health officials, who for weeks ordered Iran's Shiite clergy to close them.

Earlier on Monday, the state TV had announced the shrines' closure, sparking the demonstrations. "We are here to say that Tehran is damn wrong to do that!" one Shiite cleric shouted at the shrine in Mashhad, according to on-line video. Others joined him in chanting. "The health minister is damn wrong to do that, the president is damn wrong to do that!"

Police later dispersed the crowds, state media reported. Religious authorities and a prominent Qom seminary called the demonstration an "insult" to the shrine in a statement, urging the faithful to rely on "wisdom and patience" amid the closure. Iran's shrines draw millions of pilgrims, likely contributing to the spread of the virus across the region.

President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday said despite the closures, "our soul is closer to the saints more than at any time". — AP

COVID CHECK-UP

Facilities allow medical staff to examine patients from behind the safety of a plastic panel

S Korea dials up testing with hospital 'phone booths'

Seoul, March 17: A South Korean hospital has introduced a "phone booth" Covid-19 testing facility that allows medical staff to examine patients from behind the safety of a plastic panel, the latest innovation in the country's drive to track down infectious cases. From a row of four booths — which use negative air pressure to prevent harmful particles from escaping outside — stand under a tented shelter outside the H Plus Yangji Hospital in Seoul. The hospital dubs them the "Safe Assessment and Fast Evaluation Technical booths of Yangji hospital" — or SAFETY for short. Each patient steps into the box for a brief consultation by intercom with a medical professional who, if necessary, takes their samples by swabbing their nose and throat using arm-length rubber gloves built into the panel. The whole process takes about seven minutes and the booth is then disinfected and vented.

The smaller SAFETY boxes are "significantly easier" to disinfect than the usual negative-pressure rooms and so are a "much safer space to be tested in", hospital president Kim Sang-il said. "Also, each booth only accepts one patient at a time, unlike negative pressure rooms where patients often need to share space as they get tested," he said, adding the hospital's negative pressure

units are now reserved for treatment purposes. The South was once the hardest-hit country outside of China, where the virus first emerged, but appears to have brought its outbreak under control thanks to a huge testing and contact-tracing effort. By Monday almost 300,000 people had been tested — processes free to anyone told to have a test by a doctor or who tests positive. It introduced drive-through testing, with medical staff in protective suits swabbing noses through car windows, a practice now adopted internationally. — AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	30,579.09 -2.58
Nifty 50	8,967.05 -2.50
S&P 500*	2,505.73 5.01
Dollar (₹)	74.24 0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	89.99 1.37
Euro (₹)	81.84 1.27
Gold (10gm) (₹)	39,719.80 -0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)	29.89 -0.53
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.265 0.910
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.789 8.379

Moody's lowers GDP growth forecast to 5.3%

Moody's Investors Service lowered India's GDP growth forecast for 2020 calendar year to 5.3 per cent, on coronavirus implications on the economy. Moody's had in February projected a 5.4 per cent real GDP growth in 2020. This too was a downgrade from 6.6 per cent forecast earlier. The 5.3 per cent real GDP growth forecast for 2020 compares with 5.3 per cent growth estimate for 2019 and 7.4 per cent in 2018.

Sun Pharma's ₹1,700-cr share buy-back okayed



Sun Pharmaceutical Industries said its board has approved the ₹1,700-crore share buyback offer at a maximum price of ₹425 per share. In a regulatory filing, the company said, the indicative maximum number of equity shares to be bought back would be 4 crore equity shares, representing 1.67 per cent of the total shares. It said the announcement setting out the process, timelines and other details will be released later.

India Inc foreign investment in Feb. at \$2.37 bn

Overseas investment by domestic firms stood at \$2.37 billion in February 2020 against 2.36 a year ago, RBI data showed. In January 2020, domestic companies invested \$2.23 billion in their foreign firms (JVs/wholly owned units). Of the total investments last month, \$1.16 bn was in the form of loans, \$670.17 mn was by way of issuance of guarantee while the rest \$538.70 mn was invested through equity.

RBL Bank says it's strong and well-capitalised

Dispelling rumours about its financial health after the Yes Bank crisis came to a head, RBL Bank said it was financially strong, well-capitalised, profitable and a growing entity with a strong governance set-up. The lender said market rumours around financial health and stability of the bank are totally misplaced, motivated and not based on facts. Last week also, the bank said it was "well capitalised".

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Negative global cues, virus fear lead to last hour sell-off

Volatile session takes Nifty below 9000-mark

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MARCH 17

A late sell-off led to a 2.5 per cent fall in Sensex and Nifty-50, triggered by a sharp fall in the European markets and indications that US market would also open weak after US benchmark Dow Jones suffered its worst overnight fall by 12.9 per cent over the rapid spread of coronavirus cases outside China.

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases worldwide stood at 186,900, with 7,477 deaths. US cases jumped to 4,743, with 93 deaths, while in Europe, Italy was the worst hit with close to 3,000 people dead.

In India, confirmed cases stood at 137 with three deaths reported so far, the latest being a 19-year-old reported from Mumbai.

Not only is the number of new Covid-19 cases and deaths rising but the daily percentage gains are accelerating, said a report.

Given a volatile session, which saw benchmark indices often trading in the green, there was a sharp sell-off in the last



half an hour of trade, which led the Sensex to drop 810.98 points to close at 30,579.09 points, registering a 2.58 per cent decline. The broader Nifty-50 Index closed below the 9,000 level at 8,967.05, as volatility index India VIX jumped 7 per cent to 63 levels, its highest in over a decade.

Both the key indices hit fresh three-year lows on Tuesday as Covid-19 showed no signs of abatement and investors tried to save their investments by booking profit wherever they could. Financials were the worst affected, with the Nifty Bank Index down by 4.10 per cent, led by heavy selling in private banks. Kotak Mahindra Bank (-4.61 per cent), Axis Bank (-4.51 per cent) and HDFC Bank (-2.33 per cent). State-run State Bank of India shed 4.23 per cent. Among the smaller banks, Federal Bank declined 7.98 per cent and City Union Bank fell by

3.02 per cent.

Investors saw wealth erosion by Rs 2.11 lakh crore, as the BSE's market capitalisation fell to Rs 1,19,52,066.11 crore as against Rs 1,21,63,952.59 crore on Monday.

Losses in the broader market were lower. The BSE Mid-cap Index was down 1.84 per cent while the BSE Small-cap Index was down 2.27 per cent.

The foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net sellers of equities worth Rs 4,044.69 crore, the second highest one-day selling in March. Domestic institutions were net buyers by Rs 3,422.12 crore.

"Month to date, FPIs have pulled out Rs 51,000 crore from the domestic market, led by weak global cues on the worries of a slowdown across the globe. Coronavirus fear is intensifying worldwide and fresh travel bans seem to hurt the global economic sentiment," said forex analyst IFA Global.

Travel industry could lose 50% of annual business

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 17

The summer season could be washed out for the travel and hospitality sectors. Considering both inbound and outbound travel is affected, India could lose up to 50 per cent of the annual business, which is much higher than the losses during the global financial crisis, estimates the industry.

Several countries are closing their borders to keep further spread of Covid-19 away. India too has suspended tourist visas till April 15, restricted entry of passengers from the UK, Europe as well as Afghanistan, the Philippines and Malaysia. These restrictions have brought the tourism industry, which was already limping due to the infection, to a standstill.

The summer season, which starts from February and goes on till June, accounts for 60 to 70 per cent of the outbound tourism and 20 per cent of the inbound travel. Altogether the season accounts for about 50 per cent of inbound and outbound travel and the season might almost get washed out, said Kapil Goswami, MD, Big Breaks.com.

"Even during the Mumbai terror attacks or global financial crisis, the



impact was not this large. We would probably lose 50 per cent of our annual revenues this time," he said.

"Bookings have been cancelled till April-May, which are our peak season. Non-resident Indians used to come over during this period and they also have to put their travel plans on hold. It is 'zero tourism' now," said Iqbal Mulla, chief council, Global Tourism Council.

According to Goswami, the industry has come to a standstill. "South Asia has been closed since February. Travel to short-haul destinations like Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia has not been happening from February. Usually, by March we start seeing groups and families booking for long-haul des-

tinations like Europe and the US. This booking has either not happened or whatever had happened has been cancelled," he said. Even the business travel has got affected as most of the companies are cancelling their meetings and conferences.

Domestic travel by rail and air is also not spared. "Train bookings to Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai are down 25 per cent compared to the previous month."

"Since the past week we have seen a rise in the number of train ticket cancellations on the sudden outbreak of coronavirus. New bookings have also gone down by more than 25 per cent in the last few days," said Dinesh Kotia, co-founder, Confirmit.

Hotels too are bearing the brunt of the contagion. "Cancellations are happening in bulk. Most of the tourists have come to a standstill. Companies also are advising their executives to avoid meetings. Summer season usually sees a lot of domestic travel, especially to hilly destinations. This time, it is unlikely for things to improve before June end," said T. Natarajan, CEO, GRT Hotels and Resorts.

Salesforce hires Bhattacharya as India CEO

ADITYA KALRA & NUPUR ANAND NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, MARCH 17

US cloud-based service provider Salesforce.com Inc has hired Aditya Kalra and Nupur Anand as its India chief executive officer, a source with direct knowledge of the matter told ET. Bhattacharya declined to comment, while Salesforce did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Bhattacharya previously headed the State Bank of India and was the first woman to lead the more than 200-year-old bank. She retired from SBI in 2017.

"She is a hugely credible name who comes with a wealth of experience and will help Salesforce expand in India," said the source. Bhattacharya, 64, will be based in Mumbai and will join in April, the source added. She is currently chairman of SWIFT India, part of a global payments network. —Reuters

Banks to appeal for relief on bad loans



NUPUR ANAN MUMBAI, MARCH 17

The coronavirus pandemic has sparked concerns about a fresh surge in bad loans at lenders, and the industry body representing the banks plans to appeal to regulators to provide some reprieve in bad-debt classification, two sources told Reuters on Tuesday.

"Discussions are on at this stage and we will make a representation to the regulator to see if we can get some relief regarding non-performing asset classification in the small and medium enterprises sector," one of the bankers said. The appeal to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will be made via the Indian Banks' Association, the two senior bankers said, asking not to be named as the talks were still private. The economy expanded at its slowest pace in more than six years in the last three months of 2019 and analysts have predicted a further deceleration caused by the global Covid-19 outbreak. Small businesses that were already reeling under stress due to the economic slowdown have been among the worst affected and banks have begun to see delays in loan repayments from them. "Even though it is early we are beginning to see signs and as these are unprecedented times we want to ensure that we can provide some support," said the chief

financial officer of a public sector bank. The Reserve Bank had assured markets that it will take considered, calibrated steps to tackle the threat to the economy from the outbreak.

India has over 135 confirmed coronavirus cases, with several hundred people in isolation. Tourist sites and other places of mass gatherings such as cinemas and malls are being shut in major cities to curb the spread of the disease.

As fear grips the nation amid health concerns, the banks—already burdened with some \$140 billion in bad loans—worry their balance sheets could be under pressure as businesses grind to a standstill. —Reuters

Arcelor, Nippon sign \$5.15 bn loan pact for Essar Steel buy

Tokyo, March 17: Japan's biggest steelmaker, Nippon Steel Corp said on Tuesday that its joint venture with ArcelorMittal to take over bankrupt Essar Steel India Ltd.

The 10-year-term loan would be used to refinance their acquisition of Essar Steel India, now known as ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India Ltd. Other banks part of the loan pact are Mizuho Bank, Sumitomo Bank, Sumitomo Bank, Mizuho Bank, Europe Bank, Sumitomo Bank, Mizuho Bank Ltd (London Branch), Nippon Steel said in a statement.

Last November, India's Supreme Court cleared the path for ArcelorMittal to take over bankrupt Essar Steel, following a legal tussle that had dragged through multiple courts for over two years. —Reuters

E-com firms spruce up supply chain as online orders rise

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 17

E-commerce players are sprucing up their supply chain to ensure availability of products as the demand for online products has increased due to Covid-19 fears. The pandemic fears is making more and more people go online for their purchases and availability has become a key issue for e-commerce companies, especially those who sell everyday products, to tackle.

"As Covid-19 has spread, we have recently seen an increase in people shopping online. In the short term, this is having an impact on how we serve our customers. In particular, you will notice that we are currently out of stock on some popular brands and items, especially in household staples category. You will also notice that some of our delivery promises are longer than usual. We are working around the clock with our selling partners to ensure availability on all of our products and bring on additional capacity to deliver all of your orders," Amazon said in a blog.

Flipkart too has updated its preparedness in the wake of the outbreak. "Our trial to check our system preparedness has given us the confidence that our teams will be able to meet their commitments to our customers during this time. Our supply chain and last mile delivery operations will continue to take necessary precautions while meeting our commitment to customers," Flipkart said.

In times of shortage, e-commerce companies are lowering the prices of essential goods. Artificial price escalation by the sellers is also a concern, as most of the e-commerce players are looking into.

"All essential supply chains are functioning normally both at Grofers and its suppliers. The company is committed towards stock availability and pricing at a time when market prices are sky rocketing," said Grofers.

"We are also working to ensure that no one artificially raises prices on loans, need products during this pandemic and have blocked or removed tens of thousands of items, in line with our pandemic policy. We actively monitor our store and remove offers that violate our policy," said Amazon.

France weighs nationalisation of large, virus-hit private firms

Paris, March 17: France's finance minister said on Tuesday that he was willing to nationalise large companies to protect them from bankruptcy, while warning that the country faces recession this year as the coronavirus epidemic sinks the economy.

Bruno Le Maire announced a 45 billion euro (\$50 billion) aid package to help businesses and employees cope with the escalating health crisis.

"I will not hesitate to use any means at my disposal to protect large French enterprises," the minister said during a conference call with journalists.

"This can be through capital injections or stake purchases. I can even think of nationalisation if necessary," he said.

Le Maire earlier described the struggle against the coronavirus pandemic as an "economic and financial war." It will be lengthy, it will be violent... This war will require us to mobilise all our forces," he told RFI radio.

Additional economic support measures will be announced shortly,



he said, and will be based "on a growth forecast of minus one per cent, that is to say negative growth."

France's national debt will exceed 100 per cent of GDP this year, he added, well above European Union's guidelines of not more than 60 per cent.

France's markets regulator also moved Tuesday to ban short-selling in 92 stocks for the day in a bid to tame the fierce volatility on financial markets as nervous investors try to assess the virus' economic toll.

Short-selling involves borrowing shares to sell them, effectively betting their price will go down. They can be bought back cheaper, allowing the investor to pocket the difference. The practice can put immense downward pressure on prices at times when buyer interest is virtually non-existent.

France's Financial Markets Authority (AMF) said that "taking into account the significant losses in recent days on the financial markets" it had decided "an urgent step" was needed.

The short-selling ban would last all day on Tuesday for stocks especially hard hit when a global sell-off saw Wall Street plunge nearly 13 per cent on Monday.

Le Maire said he was prepared to impose a short-selling ban for up to a month if necessary.

The Paris market, like its European peers, did slightly better in early trade on Tuesday, gaining 4.0 per cent, helped in part by the short-selling ban, dealers said.

By mid-morning, however, gains were being eroded as virus worries once again came to the fore. —AFP

Private jets for stranded rich

ANURAG KOTKY MARCH 17

Private jet operators are trying their best to get rich clients as coronavirus-related travel bans restrict their ability to operate. Desperate to get requests from people willing to shell out as much as \$150,000 to secure a spot on what some operators are suddenly not allowing pilots of private jets have shot up nine-fold, said Kanika Tekriwal, founder of New Delhi-based JetSetGo, as individuals with vast financial means try to escape virus hot spots. One of her clients, an Indian tycoon, tried to book a jet to fly with his family to New Delhi from London last weekend, but he remains stranded in the UK after a sudden travel suspension in a stopover country came in just half an hour before they were due to depart.

The pandemic has driven aviation into an unprecedented crisis that, according to Sydney-based CAPA Centre for Aviation, could push most of the world's airlines into bankruptcy by the end of May as governments hastily impose entry and quarantine rules. The private jet industry isn't immune to these restrictions, even as inquiries surge about bookings, including from

Americans in Europe. "There is a new directive or advisory coming out every day," said Rajan Mehta, CEO of business aviation company Club One Air.

JetSetGo's Tekriwal, who oversees a fleet of private aircraft, said the surge in inquiries is essentially for one-time flights. Her company has been cancelled, she said, Mehra's company, which operates 10 planes, has seen travel decline as much as 70 per cent.

"We are extremely worried about what the future holds, how we're going to pay salaries," Tekriwal said. "It's a ripple effect. If impose entry and quarantine rules, the private jet industry isn't immune to these restrictions, even as inquiries surge about bookings, including from

Americans in Europe. "There is a new directive or advisory coming out every day," said Rajan Mehta, CEO of business aviation company Club One Air.

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—Bloomberg

Global markets world into recession

Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, S&P Global predict prolonged slowdown; Experts calls for huge stimulus

New York, March 17: Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and Morgan Stanley economists joined the rush on Wall Street to declare that the coronavirus has triggered a global recession...

virus's spread to Europe and the US, as well as new evidence that China — the first to be hit — is now a pandemic — experienced a harder hit to its economy than originally projected...

growth would range one per cent to 1.5 per cent. Such slumps would not be a surprise for the 2009, as measured by the International Monetary Fund...

The projections will apply further pressure on policy makers to do more to limit the health emergency and to deliver stimulus that helps companies and consumers...

banks have been active in loosening monetary policy, most governments have been slow in responding and are only now crafting fiscal packages that may still fail to pacify worried investors...

While the policy response will provide downside protection, the underlying damage from both Covid-19's impact and tighter financial conditions will deliver a material shock to the global economy...

cent to two per cent of gross domestic product. George Saravelos, a currency strategist at Deutsche Bank AG, said governments may also need to step in to guarantee support for households and companies...

Virus hits India's plan to cut import tax on veg. oils

New Delhi, March 17: India has dropped at least three crucial policy initiatives, including lowering import taxes on vegetable oils, the outbreak of the coronavirus hits government revenue collection, two sources said on Tuesday...

Market volatility hints at depression, says experts

New York, March 17: The coronavirus shockwaves rippling through US stocks are forcing investors to contemplate outcomes more dire than a recession, including several quarters of declining economic activity...

Strategists at Deutsche Bank said in a note last week that the market's recent volatility, marked by the swings of over three per cent in the S&P 500, was coming at "a frequency previously seen only in the Great Financial Crisis and the Great Depression..."

investor Ray Dalio, whose main Bridgewater Associates LP hedge fund fell sharply amid the coronavirus market rout, he worried that the US Federal Reserve and other central banks may have already priced in most of a garden variety recession...

Following the Fed's action, Wall Street's focus is now on what fiscal policies governments will enact, and even more so, on what can be done to contain the virus. "Nothing else matters if we can't get this under control," said Eric Winograd...



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Tuesday in New York City.

This market looks like it has already priced in most of a garden variety recession, said Frances Donald, global chief economist at Manulife Investment Management. "It is now on top of that having to price in some probability of a credit crisis..."

In a note on Monday, Dalio said he had been concerned that the next economic downturn would lead to hitting the zero per cent rate in the S&P 500, a lot of debt outstanding and big wealth and political gaps in the same way that configuration of events happened in the 1930s...

"I don't think it is quite pricing in a prolonged depression scenario at this stage and I think it is probably appropriate not to," Winograd said. "That's not the base case, however, Winograd said he was concerned the situation could turn into a 'durable recession' as the world part from distress in the banking sector..."

The market's pullback has taken the S&P 500 down to the level it was last at in late 2018 and mid-2017. "I don't think it is quite pricing in a prolonged depression scenario at this stage and I think it is probably appropriate not to," Winograd said...

Philippines shuts stock market Covid-19 blamed for first shutdown of equity market in world

Manila/Singapore, March 17: The Philippine Stock Exchange closed indefinitely on Tuesday while currency and bond trading were suspended, the first shutdown of markets worldwide in response to the coronavirus, with authorities citing risks to the safety of traders...

Global markets are in meltdown as the pandemic spreads, with roughly \$14 trillion in shareholder value erased and even safe assets such as gold have been sold to cover losses. AdMacro research head Patrick Perret-Greem had also raised the possibility in a note issued over the weekend, before the Philippines move...

Malaysia, where a similar lockdown comes into force on March 18, the securities regulator said all capital markets will operate as usual. Settlement of trades in Sri Lanka is due to be available on March 18, though it is unclear if trade will resume before the nation is set to return from holidays on Friday...

China economy may contract by 9% in Q1

Beijing/Shanghai, March 17: Goldman Sachs said on Tuesday that China's economy will likely shrink nine per cent in the first quarter, underscoring how the coronavirus has disrupted normal business activities, while China reported an uptick in new cases of the disease, most of them imported...

Companies scramble for rescue funding

London, March 17: Law firms and banks are scrambling to reinstate senior staff in restructuring so they can help dozens of companies looking to raise emergency funds and rearrange debts as the coronavirus pandemic eats into corporate cash...

World stocks suffered their worst run since the 2008 financial crisis last week as fears the pandemic could wreck havoc on the global economy and spell disaster for many firms. "It has been pretty much non-stop," said a partner at a major US law firm, who has been on calls all day on Friday and had four deals closing on Monday alone...

Several other firms are close to announcing plans to raise funds to fend off a cash crunch, bankers and lawyers said, saying they had been fielding dozens of calls. The scramble for cash bears echoes for many of the financial crisis of 2008. Then it was real estate firms hitting the skids, keeping lawyers busy redrafting documents prepared for stock market launches to allow for rights issues instead...

Goldman cut its estimate for China's first-quarter gross domestic product growth to a nine per cent contraction, from a previous forecast of 2.5 per cent growth, citing "structural weakness" economic data in January and February that was reported on Monday...

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Global airlines running out of cash, need state support: IATA

London, March 17: Swift government action is needed to help global airlines that are in a desperate situation and running out of cash, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) warned on a media call on Tuesday. "If we want to maintain a strong airline sector able to cope with this difficult crisis and provide resources to ensure the recovery will happen in due time (then) we need governments to act strongly and quickly," IATA chief Alexandre de Juniac said...

not say what the assistance might look like. The trade group is asking for \$29 billion in federal grants, loans and tax relief that could easily top \$50 billion to help them recover from a sharp downturn in travel due to the new coronavirus. Airlines for America, the trade group representing the carriers, disclosed its request for financial help over a sharp downturn in travel due to the new coronavirus. Airlines for America, the trade group representing the carriers, disclosed its request for financial help over a sharp downturn in travel due to the new coronavirus...

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For the fourth straight day, imported coronavirus cases in China outnumbered cases of local transmission. "The rising risk of imported cases has prompted the various parts of the country to tighten monitoring of foreign travellers, and the Chinese foreign ministry on Tuesday advised its citizens to avoid travel to high-risk countries..."

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Yes Bank's books get SBI's thumbs up

FALAKNAZ SYED MUMBAI, MARCH 17 The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) on Tuesday said there was a lot of due diligence done on the books of Yes Bank and that they have found nothing wrong in the books of the beleaguered lender. "Whatever has been declared by the bank is a true representation of the bank's financial position," Mr Kumar told Reuters. Yes Bank's conference while ruling out a forensic audit for the resuced lender...

Mr Kumar also said that Yes Bank may receive a second round of funding in the future. "The current ₹10,000 crore worth funds would lead to meeting all capital needs for the next three years while other private sector banks who have put in a total of ₹3,800 crore are waiting for the next round. SBI will not sell even a single share of the 49 per cent stake it has picked up in Yes Bank."

State Bank of India and a dozen domestic financial institutions have infused ₹10,000 crore in new equity capital into Yes Bank. According to the scheme, SBI has to hold at least 26 per cent of the stake for three years while other private sector banks who have put in a total of ₹3,800 crore are waiting for the next round. SBI will not sell even a single share of the 49 per cent stake it has picked up in Yes Bank."

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Fada moves SC for extension BS-IV vehicle sale till May-end

MICHAL GONSALES PUNE, MARCH 17 The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations or Fada on Tuesday filed an application with the Supreme Court seeking extension of sale and registration of BS-IV vehicles till May 31, 2020, an extension of two months from March-end deadline to clear the stock of such models. "The automobile dealers' body once again approached the Supreme Court, and has filed an application with the Supreme Court for extension of registration process of BS-IV vehicles till May 31, 2020," said Fada president Ashish Harsharaj Kale, adding that "We are now seeking an urgent hearing on the matter..."

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body once again approached the Supreme Court, and has filed an application with the Supreme Court for extension of registration process of BS-IV vehicles till May 31, 2020," said Fada president Ashish Harsharaj Kale, adding that "We are now seeking an urgent hearing on the matter..."

14 power plants get notices for not complying with green rules

New Delhi, March 17: As many as 14 power plants with total power generation capacity of 13,800 mega watt (MW) have been issued show cause notices by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for not complying with environmental norms. Parliament was informed on Tuesday. The CPCB has also issued directions to another four power plants with total generation capacity of 1,495 MW for not obliging to environmental provisions...

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SHORT TAKES



Jofra Archer
Archer hits out at racist abuse

London: England pace bowler Jofra Archer said racism should be "addressed properly" after he posted on his Instagram account racist messages he had received. The 24-year-old has been subjected to racist abuse in the past, notably during the second Test defeat by New Zealand last year. A spectator was subsequently banned from international and domestic matches in New Zealand for two years. Archer — who in just seven Test matches since making his debut last year has taken 30 wickets including three five-wicket hauls — said it beggared belief people could post such hateful comments. "I will never understand how people feel so freely to say these things to another human being," he said. "I have given a lot of thought about reacting to this and I hope that no one else has to deal with stuff like this on a regular basis, it is never acceptable and should be addressed properly in my opinion." Archer is presently covering from a stress fracture but is seen as the future pace man for England pace bowling with Stuart Broad. — AFP

Waqar wants ICC to take initiative

Karachi: Former pace great Waqar Younis said it doesn't make sense that the ICC World Test Championship don't feature any match between rivals India and Pakistan. The World Test Championship features nine top-ranked Test teams, who will play a bilateral Test series against mutually chosen opponents with the top two nations with the most wins at the end of the league clinching the final in England in June 2021. "I know it is a difficult situation between the worsening COVID-19 situation. I've even at government to government level but I think the ICC needed to play a more proactive role in this championship," Waqar said in an interview to the YouTube channel Cricket Baza. "The ICC should have intervened and done something because to me having a Test championship without Pakistan and India Test matches makes no sense," he said. Since the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, India hasn't toured Pakistan. The two neighbours have also not played a full Test bilateral series since 2007 due to strained political and diplomatic relations. Waqar lamented that due to the tensions and off strained relations with India, he got to play only four Tests against them in his international career spanning 14 years, featuring 87 Tests and 262 ODIs. "It's always been like this that it is why we have not debuted against India is something I don't forget." — PTI

SIX SURREY CRICKETERS TO SELF-ISOLATE

London: England cricket county Surrey has asked six of its players to self-isolate as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus pandemic. The club also informed that all six players have not reported symptoms but their close proximity has played a role in asking them to self-isolate. "While not all six have reported symptoms, close proximity means that they have been instructed to stay at home this week. The six players will not be named at this point," the club said in an official statement. Last week, England Cricket Board (ECB) announced that the country's president Cyril Ramaphosa declared a state of disaster on Sunday. — Agencies

Cricket Australia says T20 World Cup is on as per schedule

Sydney, March 17: Cricket Australia is planning to host the men's T20 World Cup as per schedule in October despite the COVID-19 pandemic causing a collapse of sports events worldwide.

The novel coronavirus outbreak has shredded sports calendars worldwide, including international and domestic cricket. "We're really hoping that all forms of sport can be played again in a few weeks or a few months' time," CA chief Kevin Roberts was quoted as saying by *cricket.com.au*. "None of us are experts in this situation obviously. Our hope is that we're back in very much normal circumstances come October and November when the men's T20 World Cup is to be played." The men's T20 World Cup is slated to begin with from 18-23 October followed by the main 12-team competition from 24

October. The final will be played on 15 November at the MCG and CA is planning for a full house.

"And at this stage we're planning on November 15, to have a full house at the MCG to inspire the world through men's cricket as the women's cricketers did here just last week," Roberts said. As governments across the world are urging people to self-isolate, South Africa head coach Mark Boucher suggested cell phones should also be turned off for two weeks. "The only thing missing in this global lockdown is cellphone use! What about turning that off for 2 weeks as well? #bliss #maturesway #oldschool," Boucher tweeted.

CA LIKELY TO REVIEW IPL CONTRACTS

Australian cricketers may have to forego their lucrative IPL contracts in the wake of fast-spreading novel coronavirus, the local media reported on Tuesday.

Cricket Australia has not directed the players officially with its chief executive Kevin Roberts on Tuesday saying that players were individually contracted to their IPL teams and can make up their own minds to compete in the 2020 IPL or not. "We can provide advice. We're conscious of the fact that Australian players are individually contracted to the IPL and the time will certainly come very soon where players are going to be really interested and leaning on our perspective as their leaders," to advise them in that regard," Roberts said. "And then there will also be a perspective from the BCCI and their IPL division within that and together with our players and the BCCI, I am sure players will reach the best possible decisions in uncertain circumstances."

The Australian newspaper reported that Cricket Australia is reviewing whether it should permit its players to participate in the IPL or The Hundred series in the UK. There are 17 Australian players contracted with different IPL franchises. The Australian report said that Pat Cummins, Steve Smith, David Warner and Glenn Maxwell could be asked to give up their rich contracts. — PTI

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— KEVIN ROBERTS, CA chief

I thought it was a joke: Richardson recalls his coronavirus nightmare

Melbourne, March 17: Quarantined briefly for suspected COVID-19 before being found negative, Australian pacer Kane Richardson says he thought it was all a joke at first. "I thought it was the ODI series against the ODI series against New Zealand but he did not rein the squad as the series was called off considered to begin with was doing the right thing and got the biggest swab I've ever seen out and stuck it into the back of my nose and back of my mouth, so it wasn't a

pleasurable experience but that was the protocol so I was happy to go along with it. "I wasn't expecting a positive result and thankfully that's what happened... I'm all good and I got the OK to go outside and in the fresh air again," said Richardson. With sporting events cancelled or postponed indefinitely, there is also uncertainty over the IPL which has been postponed till at least April 15. — PTI

Need finger spinners: Ex-players

New Delhi, March 17: Indian cricket has celebrated the emergence of a potent fast bowling unit but it is high time that a younger pool needs to be created as Ashwin still has "good three years of Test cricket left in him". "Ashwin is a very hard-working bowler and he has not taken his place for granted. He still has three good years left and it's time now that we find the next crop of young spinners which is ready to take over when time comes," Sivaramakrishnan said. But Harbhajan has a different idea. "Jalaj Saxena and Akshay Wakhare have performed year after year at the

domestic level, at times on flat tracks. I have seen Akshay closely at the Mumbai Indians nets," the "Turbanator" said. But why have we not produced any second line of off-spinners in these years? "I haven't seen a good off-spinner at the Ranji level. That's because of bad captaincy at the Ranji Trophy level. If an off-spinner gets hit by a right-hander, captains take him off and that hits his confidence. Harbhajan Singh became a great bowler because the captain was Sourav Ganguly, who gave him encouragement," said Sivaramakrishnan, the hero of 1985 Benson & Hedges Cup. — PTI

Hales confirms symptoms, yet to be tested



Crew members pack up their equipment at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore as the Pakistan Super League was suspended on Tuesday. — AFP

London, March 17: England batsman Alex Hales on Tuesday said he has gone into self-isolation due to fever and persistent dry cough after returning midway from the now-postponed Pakistan Super League (PSL) but is yet to get himself tested for the dreaded COVID-19.

"Like many other overseas players, I reluctantly left the Pakistan Super League early because with COVID-19 reaching global pandemic status, I felt it was more important to be with my family rather than face a period of lockdown thousands of miles from home," Hales said in a statement after the PCB's comment. "I returned to the UK in the early hours of Saturday morning feeling perfectly fit and healthy and with absolutely no symptoms of the virus," he added.

Hales plays for Karachi Kings in the PSL. "However, I awoke early on Sunday morning having developed a fever and followed the government's advice of self-isolation, a process I am obviously still following having developed a dry and persistent cough." — PTI

PCB call off PSL on day of the semifinal

Karachi, March 17: The ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) was on Tuesday suspended after the country's Cricket Board revealed that a foreign player showed symptoms of the dreaded COVID-19 with former captain-turned-commentator Kamiz Raja claiming that it could be England's Alex Hales.

● **The whole of PSL is being held in Pakistan for the first time in the league's history.**

The PSL had entered the knockout stages and semifinal matches were due to be played on Tuesday and decision after thorough deliberation," PCB CEO Wasim Khan said. "But before this there was no suspected case at all, which is why the decision wasn't made before," he added.

● **PCB announced that the remaining PSL 2020 matches will be rescheduled later.**

PSL isn't in light of being panicked...we made our decision after thorough deliberation," PCB CEO Wasim Khan said. "But before this there was no suspected case at all, which is why the decision wasn't made before," he added. Pakistan's former Test captain Raja claimed that Hales might be the player being suspected. As a pre-

cautionary measure, all PSL players and broadcasters are now being tested for the virus. "What I know is that he is yet to have tests but we don't know whether the symptoms he has is of Corona or not. But we all now need to be very cautious and obviously adopt a common sense approach to deal with this problem," Raja said. Responding to a question Khan said that the Karachi Kings team had reservations about playing in the tournament and the decision was then made after consulting all the franchisees. "We have done everything to ensure health and safety of everyone because of the coronavirus and we consulted the government and health officials in all decisions," he said. — PTI



Alex Hales plays for Karachi Kings in the Pakistan Super League.

New avenues



Apex Council members of the Hyderabad Cricket Association led by president Mohammad Azharuddin, secretary Vijayanand, vice-president John Manoj and treasurer Surender Agarwal visited Nizamabad district on Tuesday to inspect land as part of their plan to build a Mini Stadium there.

CORONA PANDEMIC BENGAL CA SHUTS OFFICE

Kolkata: The Cricket Association of Bengal on Tuesday closed its office for five days and the employees were asked to work from home. In their general advisory, CAB secretary Debabrata Das said: "It is for restricting the people movement in office. Therefore, the office of the Association will remain closed from Tuesday to Saturday as a precautionary measure against the ongoing coronavirus outbreak." "However, it is clarified that managers and functional heads can take a decision to get employees to report to office as per work exigency/priorities. During this period, it would be work from home which implies that the employees must be available on phone calls, emails and any other mode of communication," Das said. — PTI

BE SAFE: HARMANPREET

New Delhi: Indian women's skipper Harmanpreet Kaur urged everyone to follow the guidelines issued by the health officials. "Taking this time off to spend some quality time with my dog. Oh, a serious note, a gentle reminder to everyone out there to follow the guidelines issued by the health officials. Take care of each other & love yourself!" Harmanpreet tweeted. — Agencies

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SHORT TAKES

French Open put off to September

Paris: The French Open tennis tournament has been postponed for about four months because of the coronavirus pandemic, shifting from May to September.

German league on hold until April 2

Frankfurt Am Main, Germany: The 36 clubs in Germany's two top divisions have accepted the proposal by the German Football League (DFL) to put the competitions on hold until April 2 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It doesn't mean we will restart the competition after this date," chief executive Christian Seifert said.

Diamond League events postponed

Paris: The opening three track and field meetings on the elite Diamond League circuit have been postponed in response to the growing concern around the new coronavirus.

"This decision was made in close consultation with organising committees, local authorities and sports governing bodies," Diamond League organisers said in a statement.

FOUR JUNIOR ATHLETES FAIL DOPE TESTS

New Delhi: Four minors, including two track and field athletes, have been placed under provisional suspension after they returned positive for banned substances in tests conducted by the National Anti-Doping Dope Agency.

The boxer was handed provisional suspension on February 6. The volleyball player also returned positive from the test conducted during the 65th National School Games Championship last year and was provisionally suspended on January 31.

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Not the time for drastic changes: IOC

Lausanne, March 17: The International Olympic Committee said on Tuesday that it was not the time for "drastic decisions" over the staging of the Tokyo Olympics, which has not yet been postponed because of the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

"The IOC remains fully committed to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, and with more than four months to go before the Games there is no need for any drastic decisions at this stage," the IOC said in a statement after its executive board met in Lausanne.

"The Tokyo Olympics are scheduled to run between July 24-August 9, but the year's biggest sporting event is as yet one of the sole sporting competitions to have survived a postponement in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak that has caused more than 7,400 deaths and infected more than 180,000 around the world."

"The IOC statement fell shortly after news that both this summer's Euro 2020 and Copa America will be postponed by one year to 2021.

"This is an unprecedented situation for the world and our thoughts are with all those affected by this crisis," the IOC said.

"The situation around the Covid-19 virus is also impacting the preparations for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, and is changing day by day," the IOC added.

"Today, my test result showed positive for the new coronavirus," Tashima said in a statement, issued via the Japan Football Association, which he also heads.

"I have a mild fever. Examinations showed a symptom of pneumonia, but I'm fine. I will concentrate on team follow-up following the advice of the doctors," he said.

Japanese officials insist that the summer Games will take place as scheduled despite rising speculation that it might be postponed or even cancelled due to the virus.

Tashima said he had been on a business trip since February 28, first heading to Belfast to attend the annual general meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB). From March 2, he visited Amsterdam for a Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) meeting to give a presentation on Japan's bid for the 2023 Women's World Cup.

And on March 3, he attended a general meeting of the same body in Amsterdam and in Europe in early March.

Japan engaged in the United States, too, the sense of crisis about the novel coronavirus was not as serious as now," he said.

He began feeling chills and experienced a mild fever from Sunday. He went to a local public health centre on Monday and told them about his travel history.

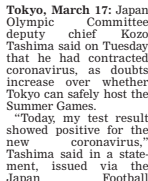
"In the United States, too, the sense of crisis about the novel coronavirus was not as serious as now," he said.

"Everyone was still doing hugs, handshakes and 'bises' (cheek kissing)," he said.



A woman wearing a facemask, amid concerns over the spread of coronavirus, sits at a bus stop in front of a Tokyo 2020 Olympics advertisement in Bangkok, Thailand, on Monday.

Pandemic hits Japan Oly biggie



Kojo Tashima

Tokyo, March 17: Japan Olympic Committee deputy chief Kojo Tashima said on Tuesday that he had contracted coronavirus, as doubts increase over whether Tokyo can safely host the Summer Games.

"Today, my test result showed positive for the new coronavirus," Tashima said in a statement, issued via the Japan Football Association, which he also heads.

Japanese officials insist that the summer Games will take place as scheduled despite rising speculation that it might be postponed or even cancelled due to the virus.

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Japan Olympic Committee deputy chief Kojo Tashima, who had been on a business trip since February 28 to Ireland, the Netherlands and other European countries, has tested positive for Coronavirus.

the level of nervousness against the novel coronavirus was not the same as now," he said in the statement.

"Everyone was still doing hugs, handshakes and 'bises' (cheek kissing)," he said.

He then travelled to the United States to watch the Japanese women's team in action and to lobby for the women's World Cup, before returning home on March 3.

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Euro postponed until next June

Lausanne, March 17: UEFA has postponed the European Championship, due to take place across the continent in June and July this year, until 2021 after holding crisis meetings on Tuesday.

The move comes with global sport having largely ground to a halt due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic which has led to lockdowns in several countries and border closures.

"The move will help all domestic competitions, currently on hold due to the Covid-19 emergency, to be completed," UEFA said in a statement.

The move comes with most of Europe's domestic leagues having ground to a halt over the last week as football confronts its biggest issue in modern times.

The UEFA Champions League and Europa League competitions, which have also been suspended, with both still in the last-16 stage, but postponing the European Championship for national sides means they, along with national leagues, will have the chance to be completed, assuming travel restrictions are lifted in time.

Italy was supposed to host the opening game of Euro 2020 in Rome. The head of the Italian football federation, Gabriele Gravina, had already led calls for the Euros to be postponed. Euro 2020 was due to be held in 12 different cities across the continent, from as far apart as Dublin and Bilbao, to Saint Petersburg and Baku.

The semifinals and final were due to be played in London and there would considerable knock-on effects to postponing the competition.

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- REVISED DATES
Euro: June 11 to July 11, 2021.
Nations League: June 2 to 6, 2021.
Euro U-21: June 9 to 26, 2021.
Euro Women: July 7 to Aug. 1, 2021.

women's European Championship is scheduled to run from July 7 to August 1 next year.

UEFA have also planned to stage an Under-21 Euros in Hungary and Slovenia in June next year.

Twenty of the 24 teams set to take part in the Euro have already qualified, but play-offs to determine the final four participants, due to be played later this month, will have to take place at a later date.

COPA AMERICA ALSO GETS CALLED OFF

The Copa America was postponed until 2021 on Tuesday because of the coronavirus outbreak.

South American soccer body CONMEBOL said the tournament in Colombia and Argentina will be played between June 11 and July 11 the same dates as the postponed European Championship.

"It is an extraordinary measure for an unexpected situation, and it answers the fundamental need to avoid an exponential development of the virus, which is already present in all countries that are members of the confederation," CONMEBOL President Alejandro Dominguez said in a statement.

Youth coach loses life to coronavirus

Madrid, March 17: A 21-year-old youth football coach has died in Malaga after contracting the dreaded coronavirus, his club said.

Francisco Garcia, a youth team coach in Spanish league second division side Atletico Portada Alta, was found to be suffering from leukaemia after being rushed to a local hospital with severe Covid-19 symptoms.

"We want to express our deepest condolences to the family, friends and close friends of our coach Francisco Garcia who has left us, unfortunately. Now, what do we do without you, Francis?" the club, which played in Spanish league's second tier, said.

"How are we going to continue conquering in the league? We don't know how, but we will surely do it for you. We will not forget you, rest in peace, phenomenon. Until forever," the club added.

Local media quoted medical experts as saying that Garcia could have survived had he not been suffering from leukaemia.

Garcia has become the fifth and youngest victim of the illness in the region.

The Spaniard died on Sunday after testing positive for Covid-19 last week, having been sent to the Regional Hospital of Malaga for treatment.

Garcia was one of the most affected countries in the world with more than 300 deaths and above 1,000 confirmed cases of the dreaded virus. —PTI



Francisco Garcia

Footballer positive for Covid-19

Berlin, March 17: An unnamed German footballer tested positive for the new coronavirus on Tuesday, prompting the club to restrict the team and staff in quarantine at home for 14 days.

The team was due to return to training after three days of individual exercise, but this was scrapped in a bid to contain the virus. The club did not say which player contracted Covid-19.

The player complained about the flu-like symptoms and we immediately separated him from the group. A test then produced a positive result for the virus. All players in our squad must now stay at home for the next two weeks," Herthra's doctor Uli Schleicher said in a statement.

1940 Tokyo Games that went 'missing'

Tokyo, March 17: Fears are growing that this year's Olympics may be postponed or axed because of the coronavirus pandemic but Japan has been here before the cancelled summer Games of 1940 were also due to be hosted in Tokyo.

Japan's military aggression in Asia forced the annulment of what became known as the "Missing Olympics" after the Games were switched to Helsinki before finally being cancelled because of World War II.

Tokyo officials originally touted a bid for the 1940 Games as a way to show the city had recovered from the devastating 1923 earthquake, according to author David Goldblatt in his history of the Olympics entitled "The Games."

In much the same way, Japan has framed the 2020 Olympics as the "Recovery Games" — a chance to show the country is back on its feet after the catastrophic 2011 triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown.



A souvenir flag of the 1940 Tokyo Olympics.

They don't, the reason for this must be something unjust," said Kano in his plea to the IOC.

The Japanese had a special reason for wanting to celebrate 1940, as it coincided with the 2,600th year since the enthronement of the nation's legendary first emperor, Jimmu.

Tokyo launched an official bid in 1932 and found themselves up against Rome and Helsinki.

This is just a temporary and precautionary step for the safety of our sportspersons. I appeal all our young athletes not to be disheartened. We will resume the academic trainings soon after assessing the situation."

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Minister cancels camps barring ones for Olympics

New Delhi, March 17: All national camps, except for those where athletes are preparing for Tokyo Olympics, were on Tuesday postponed until further order in view of the Covid-19 pandemic with the Sports Authority of India (SAI) making arrangements for return of the trainees to their homes.

SAI (Sports Authority of India) has decided that: All National camps shall be postponed except for those where athletes are being trained as part of Olympics #Tokyo2020 preparation.

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