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VINEETA PANDEY | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, MARCH 22

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The Prime Minister said the event marked the beginning of the nation's victory in a long battle against the Covid-19 menace. He urged people to bind themselves to the principle of social distancing with the same resolve and restraint. On Sunday, several people posted videos and audio of the sounds of birds chirping and cuckoo singing.

■ Page 8: ICMR issues guidelines for pvt sector

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TELANGANA

- Hyderabad
- Medchal
- Ranga Reddy
- Sanga Reddy
- Bhadradri Kothagudem

PRIVATE COVID-19 TESTING CENTRES

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S.A. ISHAQUI I DC
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He announced that all shops and establishments, shopping malls, supermarkets and wine shops would remain closed till March 31. However, small kirana shops are allowed to operate. He said all public transportation, including auto rickshaws, taxis, private bus and Hyderabad metro rail services stand suspended till March 31.

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Three of the six new cases are from the city and Ranga Reddy districts, while another is from Bhadradi Kothagudem district. Two others are originally from AP. All six individuals had a history of recent foreign travel, the state health department said in its daily evening media bulletin on Covid-19.

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■ Page 4: Oldest positive case is 50-year-old

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■ Page 4: Some returnees giving fake addresses

Foreign returnees flout home quarantine rules

MADDY DEEKSHITH I DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Despite the nation-wide and global alarm over the coronavirus pandemic, not everyone who has been asked by health officials to remain in home isolation and under quarantine after returning from an international trip are following the instructions.

One woman, who returned from Singapore on March 13, has been

missing, while a man who came from Doha, left for Andhra Pradesh without any notice, while a third has shifted his residence and is not traceable.

A young woman, who arrived in Hyderabad from Dubai on March 14, violated all home quarantine guidelines prescribed by the K. Chandrababu Naidu government.

After landing at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Shamshabad, she

did not go home in Chandanagar, and instead went to a residence in DD Colony.

She did not follow self-quarantine procedures, a fact confirmed by the staff of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC). Her location was finally traced by civic authorities through a phone call.

CITIZENSHIP | STIR 'Inflammable substance' hurled near site: Cops Shaheen Bagh attacked

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However, the protestors alleged that the attackers came on motorcycles and hurled petrol bombs. The incident happened around 9.15 am when entire Delhi was observing a 'Janata curfew' with people staying

indoors in a bid to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Police found a banner, rags, burnt bamboo and a few broken bottles. Some bottles were also found in a lane near the protest site, said deputy commissioner of police (Southeast) R.P. Meena.

Initial investigation revealed that a person set a banner on fire after "putting inflammable substance using a lighter," Meena said, adding a case

has been registered at Shaheen Bagh police station. One of the volunteers who did not wish to be identified said the men threw a petrol bomb in a lane near the protest site. "They had petrol bombs but there were not many people around then. Only five women were sitting on protest," he said.

He said there has been a difference of opinion between two groups over continuing the protest and police had to be called in when they fought on

Saturday. A police official said they suspect an insider's involvement in Sunday's incident as the protesters had clashed on Thursday too.

"We were informed about a fight at the protest venue and had to intervene to sort out the matter," he said. A section of protesters want to end the agitation due to the coronavirus outbreak but others want to continue. Many have left their slippers there as a symbol of their solidarity. —PTI

ONLY 1 PERSON PER FAMILY CAN GO SHOPPING

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He said there has been a difference of opinion between two groups over continuing the protest and police had to be called in when they fought on

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SHORT TAKES

UOH HELPS STUDENTS FLYING HOME

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

The University of Hyderabad's J&K Students' Association, in an attempt to help students living in the varsity's hostel facility, collected around ₹60,000 on Saturday to support students flying to their hometowns. The drive was started to fund those flying at the last minute to Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir and the northeast after the University's orders to vacate the hostel premises by March 23.

"We decided to set up this fund because a situation of panic and anxiety among students living far away from their home had started to build up. Students who could not afford the last minute tickets, that were priced between ₹15,000 and ₹20,000 had started to look at the railways as an option," said Hadif Nisar, president, Jammu and Kashmir Students' Association, UoH. Train services have been halted up to March 31.

The student body helped at least 10 students. "We have some extra funds left with us. We will use it as and when more students leave for their hometowns," Mr Nasir added. The UoH hostel facility was locked down until April 6.

QUARANTINE STAMP INK IN HIGH DEMAND

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

The indelible ink, a staple in Indian elections of all shapes and sizes, is back in action. But this time, it is for a different purpose, that of ensuring those identified for home quarantine after returning from a trip abroad, can be easily identified if they step out of their homes before the completion of their mandatory 14-day home quarantine.

All passengers who are international arrivals are being stamped on their hand identifying them as home quarantine bound. It was because of these stamps that several individuals who preferred to leave quarantine and go elsewhere were identified and placed back in isolation.

The indelible ink is manufactured by only two firms in India - Hyderabad-based Rayudu Labs, and the Mysore-based public sector unit, Mysore Paints & Varnish Ltd. The stamping of quarantine bound individuals that began in Maharashtra is now being replicated by several other states including Telangana.

"We received some orders from a few states. Officials from the Telangana health department also placed an order with us. Each bottle of indelible ink contains 10 ml of ink," VVS Rayudu, CEO, Rayudu Laboratories Limited, told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Bulk orders, he said, were coming in from Maharashtra, especially around Pune, where a 15 litre container was sent.

Meanwhile, officials from Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd, told *Deccan Chronicle* that they had not received any orders for the ink. "The officials must be using the left-over ink that was sent to them during the last elections," C Hara Kumar, a general manager at the firm said.

FAKE COVID NEWS: 2 BOOKED IN WARANGAL

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, MARCH 22

Police arrested two persons in different cases of spreading fake news on WhatsApp about outbreak of coronavirus in Warangal district.

In the first case, a message was floated on a WhatsApp account that coronavirus has surfaced in Kamalapur area of Warangal Urban district. Seeing this, Dr Samyuktha, who is working with the Primary Health Centre at Kamalapur, lodged a complaint with police that it was fake news being circulated only to spread fear among locals. Police, who took up investigation, identified Vadukari Rajesh of Pangidipally as the person who circulated the news. He was booked under sections 270, 504, 505(2) of the IPC and section 54 of the National Disaster Management Act.

The other case was booked against V. Rajendra Prasad, a resident of Oorjendra village, for spreading news that a pastor, who had returned from Kerala, had tested positive for Covid-19.

Total silence, then a huge noise

Entire city stays at home, steps out to applaud medical personnel fighting the virus

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU/SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH, 22

Hyderabadis on Sunday gave a resounding 'thumbs-up' to the 'Janata Curfew' call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They stayed at home all day as part of the exercise to observe home isolation and break the spread of coronavirus infection.

The people of the city also stepped out of their homes at 5 pm and applauded the overwhelming and selfless services rendered by health workers, service providers from various government departments and media persons.

On the streets, the story was, however, slightly different. The city police, which deployed teams of officials at nearly every major junction, checked everyone who was passing by.

Those found to be taking a joy-ride or were out on the streets without a specific reason were given civic discipline sermons. Some were also arrested by the policemen.

People held placards given to them by the police that carried messages like 'avoid crowd be proud', 'I support Janata Curfew', and 'Safety begins with cleanliness as a part of social service'.

According to assistant commissioner of police (ACP) Panjagutta, Thirupathanna, the police decided to put those who 'broke the curfew' to good use and "create more public awareness. And that is why we are asking them to hold these placards."

Speaking to reporters near the Legislative Assembly building, City Police Commissioner Anjani Kumar said that while law and order, and traffic police officials were stationed at every junction in the city, self-awareness and self-realization kept 99 per cent of the people indoors.

Barring some individuals staying on to the roads and some children on streets, even crowded areas like Begum Bazaar, Secunderabad railway station, Tolichowki, Moazzamjahi Market, Panjagutta and Ameerpet were totally deserted.

People began gathering outside the gates of their homes or on balconies in apartment complexes as the clock struck five to clap and thank the emergency service workers and the doctors.

Meanwhile, Prameela Naveen, a member of a 'task force' set up by two gated communities in the same area, said that they have also made plans to help each other and families in case of any health or other emergencies.



Residents, including elders, youth and children, clap to express appreciation for doctors and other staff who work relentlessly in the fight against the deadly coronavirus, at Mettuguda, Secunderabad, on Sunday. — GANDHI

Cops take extra care to make self-imposed curfew successful

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

While the police in Hyderabad tried to educate the people about the coronavirus, even holding up placards with informative slogans, the police in Secunderabad made it look like the janata curfew was imposed rather than voluntary.

The police there got into confrontations with citizens. Secunderabad is the only area where police carried lathis.

When *Deccan Chronicle* enquired about the behaviour of the cops with citizens, OU police said that



Policemen stop motorists to enforce janata curfew on Sunday.

they had been given strict warnings from higher authorities to do so as the community spread of the

coronavirus began in Secunderabad and the city is a highly sensitive zone. "We are trying to please

people with a good gesture but with the current situation prevailing, we cannot explain to them about Covid-19 and create panic. People might abuse us behind our back but we are protecting them from the spread of the deadly coronavirus," was the somewhat vague explanation given by the policeman.

Since Secunderabad is one of the entry points to the city, police barricaded the Tarnaka, Alugadabavi, Paradise, Mahankali Police Station and Habsiguda. Police have confronted people for wearing face masks.

Hundreds stuck at railway station

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Hundreds of travellers who had boarded trains yesterday were stranded at railway stations on Sunday as there were no buses, autos or taxis to take them to their final destinations in view of the curfew announced by the central government. In many cases, it was the police that came to their rescue.

At the Secunderabad railway station on Sunday afternoon, hundreds of people had arrived in trains from Gorakhpur and Yaswantpur.

Most of them were looking to get to their homes in the city, but some were trying to reach other parts of the state.

Many finally simply stopped trying and decided to sleep in the courtyard of the station until tomorrow, hoping buses will run then.

A man who had come in from Itarsi in Madhya Pradesh, trying to go to Kurnool, lamented that there were no hotels in the area for him to stay in till Monday. He had a fight with a constable who told him to leave the area for his own safety.

A group of Telugu youngsters who had just finished a hotel management course in Lucknow wanted to get to Kukatpally. They said they were looking for autos but there were just a handful on the roads. "One of them asked ₹800 for the trip," said one of the group.

The Hyderabad police tried its best to salvage the situation. They made arrangements for a few SETWIN buses to come to the station and transport travellers whose destinations were on the most common routes.

Sub-inspector M Srinu of the Gopalapuram police, who was coordinating the effort, said, "We are deploying police vehicles to take people to places like Shamirpet and Patancheru."

Not everyone was cooperating with the policemen. Some travellers wanted the police to make sure they were dropped right outside their homes. A flabbergasted constable remarked: "All of these people knew about the curfew. Why couldn't they have delayed their travel plans? We are genuinely trying to help them, but they are treating us like a cab service."

Few violators amid curfew's success

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

The curfew was a massive success with people mostly staying at home. But, as always, there were the few socially irresponsible who stepped out to speed along the empty roads of Hyderabad.

One of them who was out at 9 in the morning, said he was on his way to a store in Secunderabad that he had heard was selling chicken for ₹30 per kilo! Others claimed they had medical reasons for stepping out.

"We are forced to allow people onto the roads if they claim a medical emergency. We do not know whether the claim is genuine," said traffic inspector Venkatramana, who was posted near the secretariat junction.

Anyone who violated the curfew for no reason was made to stand with a placard saying 'Social distancing is social responsibility', 'Avoid close contact with sick people' and 'Use

your forearm when you cough or sneeze'.

One individual in Secunderabad planned a tour of the city on his two-wheeler accompanied by a baby whose nose was covered!

The cops promptly sent him back home.

Some cabbies and auto drivers were caught near the state Assembly building and were fined ₹2,000 each by the cops.

Curious youngsters in groups drove their bikes on empty roads uploading videos of doing so on social media platforms. They claimed they were checking whether the curfew was being observed.

A fan of Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu mounted a loudspeaker on his white Ambassador car and campaigned across the city raising awareness about Covid-19.

Private e-marketing groups delivered groceries early in the morning with "This vehicle is carrying essential grocery goods" imprinted on the vehicle.

SOME claim, according to astrology, clapping at the prescribed time will kill coronavirus

Clapping will have magical effects, residents feel

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

At exactly 5 pm on Sunday, thousands of people living all around the country clapped, and for some reason also rang bells and made noise with their silverware though the Prime Minister who had mooted this idea in his public address, had only asked people to clap. This clapping was a gesture meant to express gratitude to doctors, policemen and others working tirelessly during the Covid-19 outbreak.

However, many citizens got the brief wrong.

Social media was flooded with messages claiming the gesture would have magical effects. Some claimed that according to astrology, clapping at the prescribed time would cause vibrations in the body and this would kill the virus within.

One message read: "At that time, the moon is passing to a new 'nakshatra' called Revati [...] The cumulative vibration will encourage blood circulation in the body."

BJP leader Shaina NC tweeted that blowing a conch will have the same effect; her tweet was taken down after users reported it as misinformation.

In fact, there was even more dangerous misinformation floating around. The most commonly shared and believed theory was one that claimed the coronavirus couldn't survive on its own for more than 14 hours, the duration of the Janata Curfew!

One elaborate message advocating this theory was

presented in the form of a conversation with an NRI doctor calling his friend in India to appreciate the prime minister for his "greatness". One version of the message read: "The man who gave Modi this advice should win the Nobel prize for Medicine".

The idea seemed so amazingly apt to many celebrities, that they shared it on social media platforms! Actor-politician Rajnikanth, actor Mohanlal and singer Sonu Nigam were those who bought into this idea.

Rajnikanth's video appeared on Twitter which he claimed was taken down by Twitter for spreading misinformation.

The problem got so big that Union Health Minister Dr Harshvardhan tweeted against "anti-social elements" spreading such false information.

He declared in stern words: "Social distancing must become a habit." Though these claims have been debunked endlessly by fact-checking

websites (and anyone who has basic common sense), netizens weren't willing to listen.

Soon after the clapping session ended, people started getting a new message.

It read: "NASA satellite's live telecast has revealed that coronavirus is retreating from India thanks to people's efforts at 5 pm." The message claimed NASA's "bio-satellite has shown Covid-19 strain diminishing and weakening" based on measurements of "cosmic waves".

As often happens, the far-ago of nonsensical claims hid the real purpose of the gesture.

Many didn't realise that it was to thank the medical fraternity, build rapport among citizens and inculcate a sense of association in a population looking at a possible nationwide lockdown.

Some burst crackers and took out impromptu rallies in the streets shouting "Bharat Mata Ki Jai". If such types prevail, the war against Covid-19 will be harder than it already is.



Chiranjeevi and his family members clap at 5 pm at their residence in Jubilee Hills on Sunday. — R. PAVAN



Actor Rajasekhar with his wife Jeevita and their daughters clap from the residence balcony on Sunday. — R. PAVAN



Upasana and Ramcharan claps from the balcony of their residence in Jubilee Hills on Sunday. — R. PAVAN

WEATHER

Max: 35.5°C
Min: 24.4°C
RH: 34%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Rain or thunder-showers, would occur in evening. Max/Min temperature 36/22°C

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari; Uttarayana

Tithi: Phalguna Bahula Trayodasi till 10.08 am

Star: Shatabisha till 10.26 pm

Variyam: 5.37 am to 7.24 am (Monday)

Durmuhurtam: 4.47 pm to 5.35 pm

Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Rajjab 27, 1441 AH

PRAVERS

Fajar: 5.18 am

Zohar: 12.33 pm

Asar: 4.44 pm

Maghrib: 6.34 pm

Isha: 7.41 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.27 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.17 AM

MOONRISE 5.10 AM

MOONSET TODAY 4.57 PM

COUNTER POINT



Sorry! He can't meet you... he is under self-imposed quarantine for next 5 years!

IN BRIEF

Man sells masks at higher price, held

Hyderabad: The West Zone Task Force arrested one Ganesh Ohatker for selling low-quality face masks for ₹20, against the mandated price of ₹8. Police said he had purchased low-quality disposable face masks.

Home calling



A passenger waits for transportation at Secunderabad Railway Station on Sunday

—S. SURENDER REDDY

Advised home quarantine, group lands up in isolation

T. JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Despite being officially home-quarantined, many people are unable to reach home either due to over-enthusiastic monitoring or public fear.

This mainly happened with 37 persons who had reached Mumbai from various Arab countries. They belonged to different places in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Authorities at the Mumbai airport advised them home quarantine and provided them a bus to reach Hyderabad, so that they could travel to their respective places from there.

In connection with Janata curfew announced



Commuters who arrived in India from Arab countries were stopped by the police at an inter-state border.

by Prime Minister Modi on Sunday, Telangana police had put up check-posts at 18 interstate borders to check if people returning from abroad are entering the state using road transport.

As the private bus carrying the passengers from Mumbai reached Madgi

near Zaheerabad on Sunday, the Janata curfew had already come into force. The bus was stopped there and not allowed to proceed ahead. Instead, they were all shifted to an isolation ward in Sangareddy district.

Zaheerabad (Town) inspector Siddeshwar said, "As

part of Janata curfew, no vehicle coming from other states was allowed to enter Telangana. Similarly, the bus carrying passengers advised home quarantine was also stopped. As of now, they are not allowed."

In another incident, a man who had returned from Australia was travelling to Nagpur from Secunderabad by Hazrath Nizamuddin Express, in an AC bogie. Other passengers noticed the home quarantine stamp on the man's hand and informed the ticket examiner on the train.

The passengers were apprehensive that he could be carrying the coronavirus. Following this, the passenger was de-boarded at the Bhongir railway station.

DSP flouts quarantine rules for son, gunmen carry his luggage

BALU PULIPAKA AND RAVINDRA SESHU | DC KHAMMAM/HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Embarrassments appear to be piling up for the Telangana State Government with respect to how individuals with influence, power and position in the government and administration continue to cock a snook at rules, regulations and guidelines with respect to prevention and spread of the dreaded Covid-19 disease.

The latest in a series of missteps that are likely to further establish in the public mind that VIPs would possibly be better off when it comes to coronavirus infections in the state, two gunmen, tasked by the State Police department to protect a deputy superintendent of police (DSP) in Bhadadri Kothagudem district, were actually put to work to help carry the luggage of the DSP's son from a hospital in Kothagudem from where he was sent to Hyderabad with strong symptoms of Covid-19.

The 23-year-old son of the Kothagudem DSP,

S.M. Ali, has since tested positive for the disease.

In a video clip of the young man leaving the Kothagudem hospital and getting into a 108 ambulance, he can be seen accompanied by two gunmen in safari suits. One of them, with nothing but a handkerchief tied over his nose and bare hands, can be seen carrying the now Covid-19 patient's luggage and placing it in the ambulance after the young man, who recently returned from London, sits inside the ambulance. Incidentally, gunmen provided by the police department to senior officials are meant for their protection and are not to be used as personal valets or servants.

As news of the Covid-19 positive test spread in Kothagudem, people began discussing how a senior police officer of the rank of a DSP flouted the State Government guidelines on quarantine procedures and took his son home instead of having him admitted to a facility run by the government.

It is learnt that Central Government officials

have contacted the district collector and sought an explanation on this issue.

It may be recalled that just a few days ago, a Telangana Rashtra Samithi MLA Koneru Konappa had flouted quarantine guidelines and went about taking part in a series of public programmes in Kagaznagar immediately after returning from a trip to the USA along with his wife.

Meanwhile, with the DSP's son testing positive for Covid, the two gunmen who appeared to have been at the hospital to serve the young man, are among those who were admitted to Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Warangal and kept under observation.

In all, 22 persons including the DSP are said to be among people with whom the Covid-19 patient, designated as Patient No. 26 by the State Health Department, was in close contact since his return from London on March 18. He first went to Khammam from Hyderabad and then to Kothagudem.

Janata curfew curbs air, noise pollution levels

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

The decision to lock down Hyderabad on Sunday improved its air quality and saw noise diving down even as people involved in ensuring essential services in the state capital received tremendous applause from the people at 5 p.m. with claps and banging of steel plates.

Courtesy overwhelming absence of vehicles on roads, the air quality index in Sanathnagar at 8

p.m. was 18, which on usual days is in high 90s.

At the Industrial Development Area of Pashamylaram, air quality index was 74, which is considerably low for an industrial area, which is always strewn by industrial effluents.

"Lack of any vehicles on the road meant there was no congestion. The bare few that were moving about released minimal emissions," said an official of the Telangana State Pollution Control

Board (TSPCB).

The decibel levels of the city too dropped down to two digits, as most of the city wore a look akin to a ghost town on Sunday.

The usually loud Paradise Junction in Secunderabad, which has never fallen shy of 100 decibels, registered only 69 decibels.

The Abids area in Hyderabad, where the noise level always registers 70 decibels and above, on Sunday it was noted only 60 decibels.

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IN BRIEF

3 held for trying to oppose curfew

Hyderabad: Three persons, including an independent councillor, who were involved in spreading a video appealing to the public not to participate in the curfew on Sunday, have been apprehended by the Sangareddy police. 34th ward councillor at Sangareddy, Mohammed Sami, Mr Sami believes the public should not follow the instructions of the Prime Minister unless the Citizen Amendment Act.

Cops make video for curfew

Hyderabad: Cyberabad police on Sunday made a video on TikTok social media application appealing to the public to take part in the janata curfew. In several parts of the city, the police had pickets out to prevent public movement. Police commissioners of Rachakonda and Cyberabad, Mahesh Bhagwat and V.C. Sajjanar respectively, thanked the public for taking part in the janata curfew. In the evening, the police personnel joined the 5 o'clock clapping session.

NO ENTRY FOR PVT VEHICLES TOO, SAYS CM

From Page 1

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao said, "No vehicles, including public and private transport buses, or private vehicles would be allowed into the state. Only trucks carrying essential commodities like milk and vegetables would be permitted."

He said that keeping in view hardships poor people would face during the lockdown period, it was decided to provide 12 kgs of rice to each member in family of 87 lakh white ration card holders besides giving ₹1,500 to each family to purchase vegetables and grocery, adding that his government has sanctioned ₹2,417 crore for this.

While appealing to people stay away from groups and gatherings, the Chief Minister said that groups of more than five people would not be allowed on roads anywhere in the state. He said that during the lockdown period, 20 per cent of staff and officers of government departments, other than those involved in emergency services, would function in offices on a rotation basis.

He announced that all educational activities, including invigilation of papers and anganwadi centres stands closed during this lockdown. Alternative arrangements would be made to supply nutritious food to mother and child during the interregnum.

The Chief Minister said that all private institutions and establishments, besides the government, should pay wages to outsourcing and contract employees during the lockdown.

The government has identified all pregnant mothers who are due for delivery from Monday to till March 31 and he has issued orders to ensure measures for safe deliveries and proper medical care for mother and new born.



The iconic spots in Hyderabad — Charminar (top), Hitec City and Tank Bund (above right) — were totally deserted on Sunday in view of the janata curfew. — P. SURENDRA, R. PAVAN, S. SURENDER REDDY

GHMC uses curfew to disinfect the city

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Telangana state was under a complete lockdown and roads in the state capital and other parts were a deserted look on Sunday as the 'janata curfew' proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to check the spread of coronavirus, was observed by the people.

The PM's call was endorsed by Chief Minister Chandrashekar Rao who urged people in the state to observe it till 6 am on Monday.

Since it was a Sunday, when most people anyway remain home, roads in most cities including Hyderabad, Secunderabad, Cyberabad, Warangal, Nizamabad, Khammam,

Karimnagar and Ramagundam, were empty. State-run transport buses were off the roads while Metro Rail also stopped its services. Barring medical shops and vegetable and milk stores, bars, restaurants, grocery stores and supermarkets kept their shutters down across the state.

The Chief Minister, Governor Tamilisai Soundarajan, Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, ministers K.T. Rama Rao, T. Harish Rao, and T. Srinivasa Yadav stayed at home. At many places police personnel could be seen discouraging those who came out of their houses from going further and explained the importance of social distancing.

In the twin cities, and

towns and cities across the state, temples were closed after performing the daily rituals in the early hours.

According to transport department officials, border check posts with neighbouring Maharashtra, AP and Karnataka have been sealed, and vehicular traffic has been suspended on the Vijayawada highway.

The police stopped a private bus at Madgi near Zaheerabad carrying passengers from Mumbai to Hyderabad who were said to have returned from Dubai, and referred them for medical examination.

There was heavy police presence at Secunderabad railway station and the Mahatma Gandhi bus station and other places.

In the morning, people in most parts of the Old City of Hyderabad were stayed in their homes. Shops and business establishments were closed. There was very little traffic on the roads.

The GHMC authorities are engaged in a massive cleaning-up operation in the old city. Teams from the Disaster Response Force are spraying disinfectants in public places.

Muslim scholars have urged the community to avoid large gatherings on Shabe-Meraj. Later in the evening, after 5 o'clock, people came out of their homes and clapped to express appreciation for the services rendered by health personnel and doctors in the war against coronavirus.

Some returnees give fake addresses

From Page 1

Another woman, who landed in city from Singapore on March 13, provided fake details to authorities, who now have absolutely no clue of her whereabouts. They are convinced that she had broken quarant

ment protocol. Meanwhile, a man who came to Hyderabad from Doha on March 15, violating all coronavirus preventive measures, fled to Tanuku in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh without intimating authorities. Even as the govern-

ment decided to lock down the state and close borders, several of those who returned home after a trip abroad, appear to not only have been trying to escape quarantine but have managed to give authorities the slip. In Chandanagar circle

of GHMC alone, of a total of 52 international passengers, three shifted their residence without intimating authorities. The GHMC staff is yet to track about 3,000 international passengers who arrived since March 1 into the city limits.

Shah thanks TS for curfew

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Responding to the call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Sunday participated in the applause programme by clapping to offer solidarity at Pragathi Bhavan at 5 pm, along with his family members and Cabinet colleagues and senior officials.

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundarajan also joined in along with family members at Raj Bhavan and saluted all those helping the people in fighting the virus with their selfless services in the particularly critical times.

The Governor said, "all of us should be aware of the gravity of the situation and at the same time must not get panicky. I am afraid that some of them with symptoms of the virus are min-



Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundarajan claps at 5 pm on the steps of Raj Bhavan. — DC

best way to curb the spread of the highly contagious virus.

The Chief Minister, addressing a press conference, said that the people of Telangana have shown incredible response to the janata curfew.

He said he was urging the people of the state with folded hands to continue it till March 31.

"We will hope that the pandemic will disappear from the state," he said, adding that this was a symbolic indication to show the world that "we all are one."

Later in the night Union home minister Amit Shah congratulated Mr Rao for the successful and wonderful conduct of 'janata curfew'.

Speaking over phone, Mr Shah praised the spirit of the Telangana people and the way the entire administration implemented the action plan.

OLDEST +VE CASE IN TS 50 YRS OLD

From Page 1

The fifth patient is a 23-year-old male and a resident of Kothadugem of Bhadradi-Kothagudem district, who flew in from London on March 18.

The oldest among all these individuals to have tested positive for Coronavirus announced by the government on Sunday, is a 50-year-old woman from the city, who came back home here from Dubai on March 14.

The bulletin said that health minister Etala Rajendar held a meeting with Somesh Kumar, Chief Secretary, and other senior officials, where various strategies to ensure preparedness to contain the spread of the virus, management of positive cases, strengthening of hospitals, diagnostics and surveillance were discussed.

ENSURE PADDY FARMERS DON'T SUFFER: KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Sunday instructed agriculture minister Niranjan Reddy and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar to take appropriate measures so that farmers will not face any problems in the procurement of paddy during the Rabi season.

The CM said the action plan should be prepared to procure paddy from Indira Kranthi Patham centres, primary agriculture cooperative societies and market committees from the village level itself.

The Chief Minister said that the Food Corporation of India is ready to procure one lakh tonnes of paddy and he instructed the Chief Secretary to convene an emergency review meeting on the matter on Monday to prepare the guidelines.

OBITUARY SR. NAZARENE D'SILVA Expired on 22.03.2020 at 8.13 A.M. Funeral Service at 3.00PM on 23.03.2020 At Capitanio Convent, Begumpet, Uma Nagar Colony, Street No. 3, Kundanbagh, Hyderabad -500016, Followed by burial at Bhoiguda Cemetery. Sisters of Charity, Secunderabad Province Sr. Alphonsa Vally (Provincial Superior) Ph No: 8374601300 / 7702683177

OBITUARY Dr. A.S. GAJENDER MUDALIAR (M.S.) Retd. Superintendent Gandhi Hospital Retd. Prof. & Head of Dept of Surgery Reached heavenly abode on 21.03.2020 Cremation on 23.03.2020 Forenoon at Bansilipet Dr. Jyothi Lakshmi (Daughter) Dr. Ravindran (Son-in-law) 9848097635, 9866571208 (L/1920/D00022)

OBITUARY "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." - 2 Timothy 4:7 THOGURU GEETHA SAMSON 19-2-1961 to 22-3-2020 Funeral to be held today 23-03-2020 - 2:30 PM at St. John's Cemetery Behind Tivoli Theatre For Details Call : 9052955525 / 9963979410

SAD DEMISE He led a blessed life and kept his faith in the Lord FRANCIS JOHN DORAIRAJ (M.S.) DOB: 31-05-1933 DOD: 22-03-2020 Memorial Service : 4:00 p.m. Mettuguda Cemetery, Secunderabad. Mourned by: GRIEVING FAMILY MEMBERS Phone: 9855809171, 9618891786 (L/1920/D00023)

BHOG AND ANTIM ARDAS Sardar Jasvir Singh Chadha (S/o. Late Sewa Singh Chadha) Left for heavenly abode on 19-3-2020. Kirtan & Antim Ardas will be held on Monday, 23-3-2020 From 12 noon to 1p.m. at Sri Gurudwara Sahib Guru Singh Sabha, Afzal Gunj, Hyd. Followed by GURU KA KADA PRASAD. Inserted by: Smt. Jasbinder Kaur Chadha Children and Grand Children SRI SAIBABA AUTOMOBILES RAMKOTE, HYDERABAD

OBITUARY KENNETH FOREGARD DOB: 03-02-1953 D.O.D: 22-03-2020 Burial at Bhoiguda at 1 pm on 23-03-2020. Ph: 9885025144 Inserted by: FAMILY MEMBERS (CA: 3296)

1ST DEATH ANNIVERSARY I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23:6) In ever loving memory of THADIGIRI SHADRAG PRASAD Rtd RBI ENGINEER S/o. Late Thadigiri Shourayya Called to glory on 23-03-2019 Inserted by : Family Members Cell : 9440967578

1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalms 23:6 U.B. ALBERT SUKUMAR DOB: 24-09-1961 DOD: 23-03-2019 Inserted by: Mrs. Shanthi Jyothi Albert Son : U. Benny Prashesh Kumar & Relatives (S/1920/D01978)



Muslims offer Isha prayers at the Macca Masjid on Shab-e-Meraj. The attendance at the masjid was less compared to the previous years in view of the coronavirus outbreak. — P. SURENDRA

Night sermons suspended for Shab-e-Meraj

ATHER MOIN | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Shab-e-Meraj congregations have been suspended in almost all mosques and public places in response to an appeal of quarantine in the wake of Covid-19 by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Sunday.

The regular Isha (night) prayer offered as usual in mosques, but people were not allowed to stay in the mosques after the prayers. Shab-e-Meraj, observed on 27th Rajab of the Islamic calendar, is an occasion when thousands of devotees throng usually masjids and shrines and offer night-long

prayers, but in view of the outbreak of Covid-19 and precautions and prevention against this disease the managing committees of the mosques decided decision to suspend the Shab-e-Meraj observance. Almost all mosques shut down after 9.30 pm, including the historic Macca Masjid. Hand sanitisers supplied for the worshippers in many mosques. However, the religious scholars and Ulema including MIM president Asaduddin Owaisi went on online and delivered sermons from their homes.

The speeches of the Ulema were posted live on various social media platforms.

FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psa 23:6 Mr. GANDLA KESHAV RAO D.O.B: 27.12.1957 D.O.D: 23.03.2019 You are dearly missed by Loving Wife D. Jyothina Kalabhashini Ph: 8466841526 (S/1920/D02034)

In Remembrance I will dwell in the house of the Lord (Ps. 23:6) Mrs. MAVIS GOVIND (W/o. Late C.S. Govind) Retd. Nurse. E.S.I Hospital, Sanathnagar DOB:20.03.1934 DOD 23.05.2019 9985756962, 9849727770

He will be our guide even to the end. Ps 48:14 5th ANNIVERSARY In Loving Memory of T. PALLAVI PREMNADH D.O.B: 11-08-1969 D.O.D: 23-03-2015 Your Memory will remain in our hearts forever Inserted by: Husband: T. Premnadh Sons: Sanjay & Rohan Father: V.A. Levi Brothers: Prashanth & Prasanna's Family Sisters: Saphora & Debora's Family Ph: 9550478212, 9898430276 (Vuppula & Velpulla)

IN LOVING MEMORY SRI PANASA JAGAN BABU DOB:30-07-1943 DOB:14-03-2020 "Gone from our Sight, but not from our hearts" From Kamshetty Narshing Rao & Family

8th Anniversary "A righteous man will be remembered forever" Psalms 112:6 RAYMOND PEREIRA F/o. Rev. Dr. Peter Pereira Hope For Today & ILL DOB :12-08-1919 - D O D : 23-3-2012 Inserted by: Sons, Daughter, Daughters-in-Law Grand Children & Great Grand Children and Hope for Today Family

40th ANNIVERSARY Late BATHULA JOHN SWAMY DASS Supdt. Agriculture Dept DOB: 23-07-1930 DOD: 23-03-1980 "Still in our memories" - Family Members (CA:3295)

SHORT TAKES
TROLLED
COVID VICTIM
URGES HELP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 22

A confirmed coronavirus victim of the city has requested people not to spread rumours regarding him and his family. Instead, he sought their support in getting rid of the disease.

This first case of Covid-19 registered in Vijayawada has increased the total number of corona victims in AP state to five.

The victim released a selfie video on Sunday asserting that he had voluntarily disclosed his coronavirus status and was currently quarantined in an isolation ward. He said once cured, he will work towards bring awareness within masses on coping up with the disease.

The virus victim's selfie came after he was trolled over social media that he had hidden from authorities information about him contracting coronavirus. Refuting the same, he said he is a student who returned from Paris to Delhi on March 16 at 9 a.m. He went through the screening at Delhi airport, which cleared him of having any Covid-19 symptoms. Thereafter, he took a flight and reached Hyderabad on March 17 at 12 noon. From there, he took a private cab to Vijayawada and reached home at 6 p.m.

The same day (March 17), a representative of Vijayawada municipality vigilance wing came to his house and directed him to observe self-quarantine at home for 14 days.

The student said he started honouring the quarantine order.

However, when he developed fever and other symptoms, he called the Covid-19 emergency team, which found that he had contracted coronavirus and shifted him to a government isolation ward.

Lamenting over circulation of rumours about him and his family, he stated he did not hide the status of his health at any point in time. Soon after he realised his ill health, he voluntarily called the emergency health team.

Covid-19: AP to be shut till March 31

Inter-state borders will also be closed

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 22

Andhra Pradesh has decided that it would remain locked down till March 31, in a bid to prevent further spread and to contain the Coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic. Announcing this here on Sunday, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy appealed to people to remain indoors till end of this month as social distancing was best available remedy to make the country virus-free.

This comes in welcome contrast with his earlier public pronouncement during his government confrontation with the State Election Commission, when CM Mr Reddy maintained that the Covid-19 was in an early stage in the state and would pose no risk to conducting local body polls.

Elaborating on the shutdown of the state, the Chief Minister further announced that inter-state borders would be shut, all public and private transportation

would be suspended and only essential establishments like hospitals, medical shops, grocery stores, and petrol pumps would operate.

Supply of all essential commodities, including LPG cylinders, would continue, Mr Reddy assured.

The SSC examinations will however be held as per schedule and so was the case with the budget session of the Assembly.

Coming to rescue of the poor and daily wage earners who would be the first and worst affected by the shutdown, CM Reddy decided to extend a cash incentive of ₹1,000 for each household of poor towards compensation for loss of wages during the lockdown.

The amount would be handed over to these families by volunteers on April 4. Besides, each poor household would be provided with one kilo of red gram, along with free ration, which would reach their doorstep on March 29, he said.

"I know this is not sufficient but we are trying to extend help to extent

possible. These additional measures will cost the exchequer ₹1,500 crore," CM Reddy said, adding that the lockdown was painful but inevitable.

"We are following remaining states to bring a synergy to country-wide efforts on this front," he said.

Mr Reddy gave a stern warning to traders against exploiting the crisis by enhancing prices of commodities. District collectors and SPs would release item-wise price list and it would be their responsibility to ensure traders sell at those prices.

A toll-free number would be advertised for people to lodge complaints of hoarding or excess pricing. "I will not hesitate to send such traders behind bars," he said. Maintaining that the government had already issued orders to operate its office with 50 per cent workforce at a time, Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy appealed to all commercial establishments and factories to operate with skeletal staff.

Hunt for 3 passengers with Paris returnee

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 22

The travel patterns of foreign returnees is creating a dangerous risk for the country and its people, and is loophole in the battle to combat and contain the spread of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Foreign returnees, who came back home using public

and private transport and refusing to quarantine or report hospitals are now easily one of the biggest health risks for the country, and state of Andhra Pradesh.

A student who returned from Paris reached Vijayawada city in a private cab from Hyderabad. The cab then ferried three other persons in the return jour-

ney to Hyderabad belongs to a driver-owner based in Guntur. The AP police, which have started "contact tracing" of the Covid-19 victim, further started searches to trace the three persons who travelled in the same cab.

The Vijayawada police on Sunday announced a high alert in the entire city.



ASSOCIATION OF MUTUAL FUNDS IN INDIA

ATTENTION - MUTUAL FUND INVESTORS & DISTRIBUTORS

In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic threat, the government and municipal authorities have already ordered private offices to implement social-distancing measures (such as instructing their staff to work from home, and keeping their offices closed, etc.) to avoid and discourage assembling of people in offices.

Considering the current situation, it is imperative for ALL offices to ensure that not only their employees, but also their customers and visitors follow these social-distancing measures and are dissuaded from travelling & visiting the offices by providing alternative solutions.

Under the circumstances, as a social-distancing measure to ensure safety of investors, distributors, visitors and the employees of the Mutual Funds & their RTAs, all Mutual Funds shall keep their collection centres / branch offices ("official points of acceptance") closed with effect from Monday 23rd March, 2020, and allow only online transactions through various electronic modes, such as Mutual Fund websites / web-portals / various digital platforms / apps or virtual channels etc. till the situation comes under control and until the social distancing advisory is withdrawn by the authorities.

All Mutual Fund investors and distributors are requested to bear with the Mutual Funds and to use the digital / electronic modes for their Mutual Fund transactions.

Please avoid travelling except for medical reasons or emergencies till the situation becomes normal and stay healthy.

Issued in Public Interest



Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Government of India

Help us to help you

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Are you washing your hands regularly? Soap and water work best!

Wash your hands with soap and water

After coughing or sneezing

Before and after caring for a sick person or treating a cut or wound

After using or cleaning the bathroom

After touching an animal, its food or waste

Before and after eating or preparing food

After touching garbage or anytime your hands appear visibly dirty/greasy

Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds

Use hand sanitizers when

If soap and water is not available, use sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol

Any other public place or situation where soap and water isn't available

Before and after visiting a hospital, nursing home or any health facility

Together we can fight COVID-19!

For further information:
Call the State helpline numbers or Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India's 24x7 helpline numbers

1075 (Toll Free) | 011-23978046

Email to: ncov2019@gov.in , ncov2019@gmail.com

dayp 17102/13/0027/1920

mohfw.gov.in

[@MoHFWIndia](https://www.facebook.com/MoHFWIndia)

[@MoHFW_INDIA](https://twitter.com/MoHFW_INDIA)

[mohfwindia](https://www.youtube.com/mohfwindia)

You may cut it this out and paste in your office/public place/home

Insects, clogged drains add to virus woes

Path to water camp blocked at Musheerabad

Beside the government school at Musheerabad, a drinking water camp is being arranged for the last 12 years. This year, the road has been damaged by Metro Rail road cutting and there are potholes which is affecting traffic. This is preventing pedestrians and school children from reaching the water camp. GHMC staff is not taking action even though we have lodged a complaint and sought the repair of the road.

Mohammed Afzal
Musheerabad

Mosquitoes, hyacinth at Safilguda lake

In spite of taking it to the notice of the GHMC, there is no respite from mosquitoes and hyacinth at the Safilguda lake. The lake is covered by the weed, and swarms of mosquitoes are seen every evening. Recently the local MLA and the corporator while inaugurating a road promised to get the hyacinth removed but no action as been initiated. Fogging has not yielded the desired results. Spraying by using drone technology can kill both mosquitoes and hyacinth. We, the residents of Balrampur Colony and adjacent areas, request the GHMC to tackle the problem.

P. Satyanarayana,
BN 340, Balrampur Colony,
Safilguda.

Wrong-side driving at Saraswatinagar

Live at Saraswatinagar behind the dargah at Chintalkunta. When we come on to the main road to go to Vanasthalipuram which is to our left, there are many vehicles coming on the wrong side which we cannot see. Also there are four shops on the road in front of dargah. When people stop at these shops, the road is blocked further. Because of these two violations, many accidents are taking place. I requested the traffic police to conduct random checks to catch these traffic rule violators but no action has been taken so far.

M. Prasad Rao
Saraswatinagar
Chintalkunta

Move illegal vendors from Pragatinagar

I am a retired government officer residing in Pragatinagar, Kukkatpally since 18 years. I would like to invite your attention to the vegetable market which is set up in the vicinity of Ambedkar Park. Of late, I have observed that many unauthorised vendors have started occupying the road sides from Elephant Square to Mithilnagar Road making it difficult for the movement of public as well as vehicular traffic. Moreover, these vegetable vendors do not allow parking of vehicles in the vicinity of their shops. As such people have to walk a long distance to keep their vehicles. Hence it is requested to remove such unauthorised vendors from the road and ask them to shift near Ambedkar Park.

Mahesh Sonney
Hyderabad

Steps near Sitaphalmandi flyover, please!

We, the residents of Ravindernagar in Sitaphalmandi, are facing problems because of the railway crossing at Modern School. Though, the flyover is helpful to motorists and buses, it is proving problematic for pedestrians, who have to cross the railway line to go to the other side. Checking by TTEs is adding to the problem as trains are halted. As such, GHMC has to also build steps on either side of the flyover so that pedestrians need not take the crossing. We appeal to GHMC to construct steps on a priority basis.

T.S. Chandramohan,
Secunderabad.



Drainage overflows at Maharaja Colony, Tadbund

Even as we are caught in the grip of coronavirus fear, people in some parts of Secunderabad faced a bigger threat following Thursday's hailstorms. The drainage passing through Maharaja Colony, SBI Colony, Sanjeevaiah Colony, Temple Rock Enclave and right up to Tadbund Circle was overflowing. To make matters worse, the drain water was stagnating in and around compound walls of several houses. Quite a few houses in these areas are rented to working class and landlords have covered drainage by constructing garages or

washrooms. Drain lines have not been cleaned for years together thereby exposing the neighbourhood to health hazards, particularly when water gets stagnated and remains so for several

days. Will the Cantonment authorities take steps at least now by removing the encroachers and restoring a proper drainage system?

Rinki Jangawat
Secunderabad



Officials refuse to clear worms, give clean water!

This is to bring to the notice of the authorities about the pitiable conditions that people are living in the AC Guards area. For the past two months, we are getting worms in the water that is supplied here. We have submitted a complaint but the water department officials bluntly informed us that they cannot do anything about it. It is shamefully regrettable that we cannot get clean water despite paying all taxes.

Rajiv Lui,
Hyderabad

ROAD LEADING TO NIVEDITA SCHOOL TERRIBLE

I walk daily along the Begumpet MMTS line to Sister Nivedita School. The manhole is open and there is also a public toilet for men which is dirty. These spread a bad smell in the area. Also, near the Sister Nivedita School, drainage water is leaking. The authorities should take necessary steps to clean the place and make India better.

Preethi
Hyderabad

A threat as dangerous as dreaded Covid-19

We, the residents of Defence Colony, near railway under bridge in Ramakrishna Puram, wish bring to your notice the harrowing time we are having these days. The sewerage board cleared the sewers after opening the manholes in our lane and the silt was deposited there. However, despite innumerable plea, they have not cleared the mess.

We knocked on the doors of the local corporator Ms Sridevi but to no avail. In the present times when are all grappling with the threat of coronavirus, the dried up silt, which is highly contaminated, is spreading into our homes. A health hazard is waiting to happen, quite literally I hope the concerned authorities will act at least now.

Dr Prasad,
Secunderabad.

ERRATIC WATER SUPPLY AT SPR HILLS

This is to bring to the notice of the authorities that there has been no regular water supply at SPR Hills, T. Anjaiah Nagar, Yousufguda, Borabanda. Although, we have made several representations they have fallen on deaf ears. I hope at least now the officials will step in and bring relief. Moreover, summer is round the corner and the problem gets worse.

Farheen Begum
Hyderabad



RESTORE WEEKLY VEGETABLE MARKET AT AZAMPURA

The weekly vegetable markets that are organised in every locality on a specified day come as a major boon to every household, particularly working women. Unfortunately, for almost a year now, this weekly market (Wednesday) has been

stopped in Azampura under Chaderghat limits. It is believed that the decision was taken when nearby houses complained about traffic problems every Wednesday evening. We, the residents of Azampura, request the authorities to make use

of the huge GHMC ground, Doodh Khana, which is situated opposite the Corporation's ward office for a few hours once every week. This will not disturb anyone and there is ample space for parking.

S.I. Hussaini
Azampura, Hyderabad

Seal the illegal bypass, now

There is a narrow path adjacent to Gopi Krishna Residency at Road No 2, Netajinagar, Jai Jawan Colony. This is because of an unauthorised construction of an apartment abutting the road. Consequently, it has turned into an unauthorised entry point for residents living beyond Nethaji Nagar. At times, it is used by anti-social elements to escape from the police. The stretch has become dangerous for those residing at Road No 2. I request the authorities to close this unauthorised by-pass and bring respite to us



N. Nagarajan, Hyderabad

Kishan Bagh allowed to stink by civic body

GHMC, 'disgusting' like always! It is very pathetic that contrary to its tall claims of doing this and that, GHMC presents a ground reality that is in stark contrast to their cleanliness claims.

By all logical standards, they should have cleaned up the stink in their jurisdiction before the commencement of the annual examinations. In most localities drainage overflows and parents, who accompany their children to the exam centres, have no healthy place to sit near the City Boys School in our area. It is shameful that the Corporation has not taken any initiative to have the area cleaned. The situation is loathsome as those in the vicinity of the school have to bear the constantly emanating bad smell from open dump yard. Children, already caught in the exam fever, are most vulnerable.

Syed Abdul Bari
Kishan Bagh, Hyderabad



SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
Tender Notice No. 09/2019-20 of CGM/Projects/SE/Civil/Corporate Office/HYD, Dt.21.03.2020.
Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender Specification No.24 to 27/2019-20 - (1).
Providing of House Keeping and maintenance Services to corporate office of TSSPDCL, located at Mini Compound
Hyd for the period of 01.05.2020 to 31.03.2021 (2). Providing of House Keeping and maintenance for the Indoor
Lab, CPTI, CGRE, Rural & Greater Hyd, Director Quarters Block-I, Erragadda, Hyd for the period 01.05.2020 to
31.03.2021. For further detailed notification specifications and other T&C. Please visit
www.tenders.telangana.gov.in (3). Providing of Street light fixtures, Circuit Breaker at Switch yard, Change over
Switch at Corp. office, Mini Compound, Hyd. (Reserved for SC category) (4). Housekeeping and gardening for the
Director Quarters Block No. 2 at Erragadda, Hyd. for the period from 01.05.2020 to 31.03.2021. For the detailed
specifications, eligibility criteria and other terms and conditions etc may be downloaded from the website
www.southpower.com. For further details please contact: SE/Civil/Corporate office/TSSPDCL,Hyd. Last
date for sale of tender is 31.03.2020 and tender opening date on 01.04.2020.
Sd/-
Phone No. 7382629865. Fax: 23431006 ID: CGM/Projects/TSSPDCL

SEBI SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA
Recruitment of Officers in Grade A (General, Legal, Information Technology, Engineering, Research and Official Language Streams)
Corrigendum to Advertisement dated March 07, 2020
Due to unforeseen prevailing circumstances, the schedule of the recruitment process has been changed. The revised schedule is as under.

Activity	Earlier	Rescheduled
On line application and Payment of Fee	March 07, 2020 to March 23, 2020	March 07, 2020 to April 30, 2020
Phase - I On-line Examination	April 12, 2020	July 04, 2020
Phase - II On-line Examination*	May 03, 2020	August 23, 2020

* Paper 2 of Phase II of Information Technology Stream shall be held separately, the details of which shall be available on SEBI website (www.sebi.gov.in) in due course.
For the detailed advertisement and online application form, visit SEBI website at: <https://www.sebi.gov.in/departments/human-resources-department-377/career.html>.
davp 15204/11/0558/1920



TILTED ELECTRIC POLE POSES DANGER

An electric pole that is leaning precariously at Hussaini Alam Road, next to Dargah Hazrat Syed Shah Moosa Quadri Gulab Singh Bowli, Puranapur is posing danger to motorists and pedestrians. This is also worrying the locals as it could fall on someone moving along the road. I urge the authorities to replace it with a new pole immediately in the interest of public safety.

Syed Hameeduddin Quadri, Hyderabad

Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation
Inviting R&D proposals for potable drinking water and sanitation in rural areas
Government of India in partnerships with States has launched Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Swachha Bharat Mission (SBM-Grameen) with objectives of (i.) providing Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household by 2024, and (ii.) Open Defecation Free (PDF) sustainability & Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM), respectively. To achieve these goals with 'scale and speed', high-end R&D proposals are solicited for funding. Following are the indicative thrust areas for funding:
i.) Drinking water treatment technologies to supply potable water in quality-affected areas;
ii.) Long-term potable water supply in harsh edapho-climatic conditions and disaster-prone areas;
iii.) Monitoring the service delivery of water supply system using smart technologies;
iv.) Action research on behavior change, social aspects and governance in rural water supply and sanitation; and
v.) Solid and Liquid Waste Management (plastic waste, bio-degradable solid waste, grey water and fecal sludge) in rural areas.
The proposals would be appraised by the Technical Committee for examination of innovation and technologies in drinking water and sanitation sector chaired by Principal Scientific Adviser to Government of India. Interested individuals/ scientific, academic, and R&D institutions are requested to send their proposals. For any queries and sending the proposals, please write to mnd-ddws@gov.in
davp 35301/11/0014/1920

Seal Illegal function hall at Mallepalli

This is regarding problems faced because of a function hall at Mallepalli beside Amba Hospital. The Telangana State Housing Board (TSHB) has put up notices cautioning the public not to entertain any business with the functional hall management. However, the owner of the illegally constructed function hall had the warning boards removed, making a mockery of the judiciary. I request GHMC and TSHB officials to take immediate action against the owner and have the hall sealed.

Md Kalesha Mallepalli

Waiting for my cash back on iPhone

We purchased an iPhone 11 on October 25 last year from Apronix, Parklane. As suggested by the sales incharge, we made a transaction using the HDFC debit card as a ₹6,000 cash back was offered after four months from the date of purchase.

I followed up with Apronix since the first week of March. Apronix escalated the matter to their channel partner, Pinelabs. At their request, I also provided the bank statement from the date of purchase till date, showing evidence that no cash back was credited into the account. Since then I have followed up with Apronix and Pinelabs over emails and phone calls but each one is trying to throw the ball into the other's court.

While I spoke to a representative of Pinelabs, after being in a queue for about 15 minutes, the person at the other end said the matter was to be settled by Apronix.

Satish Vinayak Hyderabad

Give my papers back, Shehwar hospital

I would like to bring to your kind attention the ill-treatment by a hospital. My wife Akhtar Begum, 60, was admitted in the Princess Durrus Shehwar Hospital at Purani Haveli, Hyderabad, in October and November last year. Since I am a retired employee of the Directorate of Health, Koti, I am eligible to get my wife's medical expenditure reimbursed. I have made tens of visits to the hospital to get the required formalities completed so as to submit the forms for reimbursement. I have met the superintendent, accountants, clerks and other officials to get clearance. Despite this, nobody cares and they use harsh words. I am 80, diabetic and suffering with knee problems and going through very tough financial conditions. I request the authorities concerned to look into my issue and help me to get the formalities done.

Abdul Khader Hyderabad



We wish to thank Deccan Chronicle for publishing our plea about the deep-cut road at Kacheguda crossroads. Following the publication, GHMC authorities have repaired and filled up the 'deep-cut' road thereby bringing relief all around.

S.Vivaanramvikas Raj Hyderabad

Ola took taxi back, KCR must help

We have taken a leasing car from Ola but bookings were affected due to the coronavirus and Ola recovered my vehicle (TS10 UB 0952). I am going to the office every day but they are saying they will escalate it to the central team. When I called the central team, I was told they were unaware of my car recovery. Besides, Ola has raised a bill of ₹50,001. The business has been affected. CM K. Chandrashekar Rao must help out.

Shaik Ahtesham Hussain Qadri, Hyderabad

Service providers give cashback worries



Traffic cops needed at Tolichowki crossroads

The sharing autorickshaws that are parked right in the middle of the road are causing inconvenience to the commuters to pass the Tolichowki crossroad. A regular

user since two years, I have had to bear the auto nuisance to proceed on my work. Not only do they park haphazardly, the drivers argue in unparliamentary language when asked to

move their vehicles. We don't see any traffic constable, who is required to control the congestion and regulate traffic, particularly because the area is always crowded. I wish to appeal to traffic

police commissioner Anil Kumar to step in and bring relief to the commuters at the Tolichowki crossroads.

Mohammed Rasheed Hyderabad

Indigo not refunding the full fare

I booked three tickets on Indigo to Varanasi from Hyderabad on March 21 and return on March 25 paying ₹24,501. Due to the spread of coronavirus I wanted to cancel the tickets. Unfortunately the refund amount was around ₹1,200. Is this proper? Neither Indigo nor Cleartrip, through which I booked the tickets, are not coming on line.

In fact the government should instruct the airlines to refund the full amount.

K.V. Krishna Rao A2/44, Mayuri Apartments Mayur Marg, Begumpet Hyderabad



Garbage mess at Khanamet area

Garbage clearance in Khanamet is appalling, to say the least. People gather waste from different residential colonies and dump them into the huge garbage containers that do not have the capacity to cope with

waste that is being generated after new shops and eateries have come up in the neighbourhood. The smell is nauseating and bearing the brunt are motorists and pedestrians. For the two-wheeler riders, it is even more horrific. The

ideal solution would be to either increase the number of containers or to employ more manpower to remove the trash, which is harmful to the community.

Nagarajamani M.V., Iris Residency, Khanamet



Dumped car near Hitec spreading fear!

The car in the picture, bearing an illegal number plate, has been left lying in Hitec City for quite some time. The concerned officials should come and clear it from there as the locals are worried about the criminal purpose for which the vehicle has been kept there.

Rhea Papali Hyderabad

BSNL non-responsive

This is with regret we inform that the BSNL authorities have ignored our representations about a precariously placed pole in the lane opposite Dena Bank in Red Hills. We have lodged

four complaints with the BSNL authorities but to no avail. We hope they will at least respond now before disaster strikes.

Tariq Sultan President, Moghul Mezonet Apts



Open nala hits traders at RP Road

In what can easily be blamed as ineptness of GHMC officials, a nala is making life a hell for over one year to all shopkeepers of Rashtrapathi Road Opposite General Bazaar dargah.

Ever since it has been opened, dirty water from the nala is entering

almost every shops and in the process blocking the main and causing health hazards to us.

We have lodged several complaints with the civic body but the officials tell us that after cleaning the waste and removing silt, they would close the nala. However, till date none

has come from the Corporation. I hope at least its engineering team will attend to the problem and come to our aid. This is affecting our business also.

Rajkamal Electronics Management Secunderabad

MONKEY BIZ AT PADMARAONAGAR HAS TO STOP

I'm a resident of Padmaraonagar, Secunderabad which faces a monkey menace everyday. There is a troop of monkeys that destroys plants on the balconies and enters houses through the windows. I request the GHMC to take immediate action.

Radhika Naidu Padmaraonagar

WAITING FOR BSNL REFUND SINCE OCTOBER

I had surrendered my landline telephone (27733230) on October 17 last year and requested refund of the deposit. I have not received the money till now. On contacting their office, I was informed that it will take time due to the shortage of funds. It is really sad that BSNL, run by the government, is taking so long to refund the deposit when it expects customers to pay their bills in time or face disconnection. I request BSNL to refund the deposit soon without keeping me waiting further.

Chandrasekhar, East Marredpally, Secunderabad.

DISCOM ADDS MORE DAYS TO POWER BILL

My multiple efforts to get billing errors rectified by TS Southern Power Distribution Company Limited have failed.

In June 13, 2019, the total units billed was 187 units for 39 days. As per rules, the billing for 31 days must be 149 units. The remaining 38 units must be billed the following month. Slab rates say the cost for 100 units is ₹330.00 and the cost for the rest 49 units ₹210.70. The bill should be ₹540.70. The amount was ₹678.10. The excess ₹138.60 which has not been adjusted.

Chandrakanth East Marredpally

FASTag boys at Pantangi toll plaza cheated me

On February 9, I was travelling from Hyderabad to Vijayawada. At the Pantangi toll plaza, I was stopped as my vehicle does not have FASTag. Just outside the toll plaza, there was a tent where two or three boys were selling FASTags. They took ₹200 for the FASTag and made me transfer ₹1,200 through SBI net banking for tag loading and assured that it will be charged within a few min-

utes. The FASTag is not being identified by any toll plaza nor has the vehicle number been registered. I made numerous calls to 1033 and but got no proper reply or no reply at all. When I asked for the mailing address, the customer centre didn't have one. (FASTag complaint Ref no: 16738899 /1729345; Vehicle No. TS09 EQ 8091)

A.S.C. Bose, Hyderabad

Shringar bindi is irritating my skin

I have been using Shringar Kumkum for 30 years. For the past year, it has been giving skin problems like allergy and stain on the skin. I consulted dermatologists and took medicine but I don't see any relief. I strongly feel the product quality has deteriorated or Shringar must be using some chemicals which is not going well with the skin.

Anita M. Hyderabad

Not getting incoming on Airtel

I wish to complain about the problem I am facing with Airtel (9885712399). I have not been getting incoming calls and messages since March 18. I have tried many times to contact Airtel customer care and via Twitter but the response was not as I expected. The customer care personnel do not have any answer to what exactly is the problem.

Aditya Madala Hyderabad

Dear Readers, We at Deccan Chronicle request you to kindly send all your complaints, issues, grievances, feedback and suggestions to our government and all its departments by writing to Speak Out, the voice of the people, to our email ID DCSpeakOut@gmail.com

— Editor

HINDUSTAN PETROLEUM CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Govt. of India Enterprise)
Hyderabad LPG Regional Office
IDA, Phase III, Cherlapally, Hyderabad - 51

NOTICE FOR AUCTION FOR DISTRIBUTORSHIP RIGHTS
Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) proposes to auction the Right to get appointed as Distributor of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (herein after referred to as LPG) of M/s Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, to cater to the customers of following distributorships in their respected marketing areas on the terms and conditions mentioned in the agreement to be executed with M/s HPCL, LPG RO, Hyderabad.

1. M/s GURUKRUPA GAS SERVICE, Shadnagar, RangaReddy District. The details of eligibility criteria, application form, other terms and conditions of the auction are available at the HPCL's website : www.hindustanpetroleum.com. Duly filled signed application form must be submitted either in person or by post on or before 24.04.2020 by 1600 hours at the office of Deputy General Manager, HPCL, Hyderabad LPG Regional Office, IDA, Phase-III, Cherlapally, Hyderabad - 500051. Application must be submitted along with non-refundable application processing fee of Rs. 10,000/- (Rs. Ten Thousand only) by way of Demand Draft/ Pay Order issued by scheduled Bank, drawn in favour of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited payable at Hyderabad. Applications without processing fee will be rejected. All revisions, clarifications, Time extensions, corrigendum, addendum etc. will be hosted at the above website only. Applicants should regularly visit the website and keep themselves updated.

Deputy General Manager
Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited
Hyderabad LPG Regional Office

సింధ్రమామి
సచిత వారపత్రిక

నవవత్సరానికి వీనకాంతుల జరగా

కథలూ, కార్టూన్లూ, కలర్ ఫుల్ చిత్రాలతో బాటు మరెన్నో ఆకర్షణల ఉగాది సంచిక మార్కెట్లో ఉంది.

వెంటనే కొని చదవండి

15
రూపాయలే

HEFTY FEE AT SEC'BAD FOR 8-MIN PARKING

I would like to inform you that at the Secunderabad railway station Platform 10 side, the parking lot operator is collecting between ₹100 and ₹500 for waiting for more than eight minutes. This is illegal in a government parking lot. At public places, the maximum parking rate should be ₹30 to ₹40.

At a place like the Secunderabad station, it is difficult to pick up someone within eight minutes and leave.

Noorulla Shariff Secunderabad

IN BRIEF

NORMAL LIFE COMES TO A HALT IN ASSAM

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MARCH 22

The North-Eastern states including Assam on Sunday came to almost standstill along with rest of the country to observe 'Janata curfew' a call by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to put a brake on the chain of coronavirus spread.

Streets in the state capital like Guwahati, Itanagar in Arunachal, Kohima in Nagaland and Imphal in Manipur wore a deserted look throughout the day and only a very few vehicles engaged in essential services were seen plying.

The response of Prime Minister's call to do clapping for those fighting against coronavirus was amazing in Guwahati as entire capital city started vibrating with sounds of clapping and beating utensils. In some locality people started bursting crackers too.

All business establishments including small shops and markets remained closed. Pharmacies, however, remained open. Essential services like ambulances, water supply etc. continued to operate.

ICMR ISSUES GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE LABS

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 22

In view of the increasing number of cases and more people reporting symptoms, the Centre has decided to increase the number of testing laboratories by bringing in the private sector.

The Indian Council of Medical Research has issued guidelines for private sector testing, based on which around 60 labs have applied to the government seeking permission for testing.

These will be in addition to the 111 government testing centres already functional. ICMR director-general Balram Bhargava warned against indiscriminate testing and raising the rates of tests.

He said India at present has the capacity to do 10,000 tests per day to detect Covid-19 though only 5,000 are being tested per week so far. "The strategy is to test only those who show symptoms," Mr Bhargava said.

He said the states have been asked designate separate hospitals for Covid treatment only. "For example, in Delhi, AIIMS division of National Cancer Institute (NCI) in Hjaraj (Haryana) — which has around 800 beds — will be used only to treat Covid-19 patients," Mr Bhargava said.

J&K FORMALLY ANNOUNCES CLOSE DOWN

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, MARCH 22

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Sunday formally announced closure of all establishments and services across the Union Territory till March 31 in an effort to limit the spread of deadly novel coronavirus. However, 16 services and commodities have been declared as essential and exempted from the shutdown. These include supply and sale of groceries, fresh fruits and vegetables, gasoline, milk and milk products, medicines and other pharmaceuticals, cooking gas (LPG) and cattle feed and fodder. Also banks and ATMs, health services, manufacturing of health and medical equipment, telecom services, newspapers, post offices, electricity and potable water supplies and municipal and sanitary services.

Meanwhile, Kashmir Valley remained under virtual lockdown on the third and capital Srinagar and the towns of Budgam and Pulwama on the fourth consecutive day on Sunday with J&K police and Central armed forces enforcing a strict curfew or curfew-like restrictions. In Jammu region of the UT, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's, 'Janata Curfew' call was obeyed by vast majority of population and official agencies turning cities and towns into 'ghost towns'.

J&K has, so far, reported four-three in Jammu and one in the Valley and Ladakh thirteen positive cases of Covid-19 but no deaths. Updating the tally, an official spokesman in Jammu said on Sunday that as many as 3,938 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been put under surveillance.

'Janata curfew' gets stellar response

Several people posted videos and audios of sounds of birds chirping, cuckoos singing on social media

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, MARCH 22

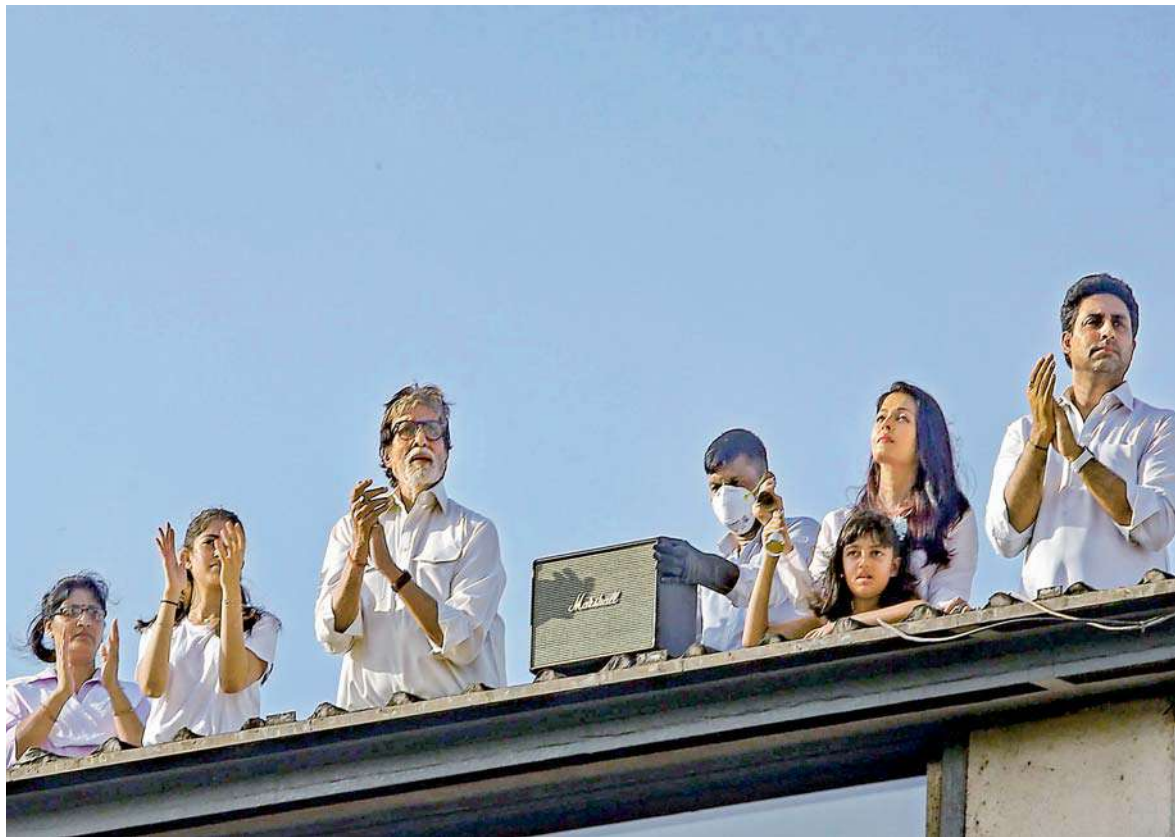
Deserted roads, empty parks and silent neighbourhoods — India saw an unprecedented self-imposed shutdown due to the 'Janata Curfew' as millions stayed indoors following the appeal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At 5 pm the silence was broken by the sound of clashing thalis, conches and bells.

The applause was to be a gesture of appreciation for the efforts of the health care providers and all others involved in essential services in this time of crisis.

While essential services were allowed to remain open, cities largely saw milk booths opening for only a brief while even as ration and groceries shops remained closed in most parts of the country. Ambulances, police and media persons were the only things out on the roads.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi thanked people for expressing gratitude towards those who are at the forefront of the battle against Coronavirus. In a series of tweets, PM wrote "The country thanked each person who led the fight against the Coronavirus. Many thanks to the countrymen."

The Prime Minister added that the event marked the beginning of the nation's victory in a long battle against the Covid-19 menace. He urged the people to bind themselves to the principle of social distancing with the same resolve and restraint.



Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan claps as a gesture to show gratitude to the helpers and medical practitioners who are working relentlessly to fight coronavirus along with family members in Mumbai on Sunday. — PTI

On Sunday, several people posted videos and audios of sounds of birds chirping and cuckoos singing. With people and vehicles off roads, some cities even reported peacocks on the road.

From North to South, East to West, India was united and determined in its fight against novel coronavirus. No one defied the self imposed curfew as police stood on empty roads. Delhi woke up to empty streets with people confining themselves to homes after the usual

paper reading session in the morning.

Several ditched morning walk though early risers managed to do that too. However, people were seen doing yoga in balconies. In view of the Janata curfew, the Delhi Metro had announced closing its services while Rail services were also halted across the country. However, a few buses were seen on roads in Delhi. Several states have already closed their malls, cinema halls, multiplexes, cafes, restaurants and bars.

Streets of Kolkata too wore an empty look and public places remained deserted. Mumbai, the city that never sleeps, too was completely deserted as people posted videos of empty Marine Drive. Mumbai's usually bustling western and eastern express highways and other arterial roads were silent as people stayed in their homes to support the curfew.

The bustling cities of Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, too, were deserted and the

streets were eerily quiet, with the silence interrupted every few hours by 'azaan' or prayer call from mosques.

● **AT 5 PM** the silence of Janata curfew was broken by the sound of clashing thalis, conches and bells.

● **THE APPLAUSE** was a gesture of appreciation for the efforts of the health care providers and all others involved in essential services in this time of crisis.

Bihar records 1st death; announces lockdown

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, MARCH 22

Bihar has been placed under complete lockdown from Sunday, March 22 to March 31. The announcement was made by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar after analysing the threat to the state emerging from the coronavirus pandemic.

In a statement which was released by his office on Sunday, Mr Kumar said that the lockdown is being enforced in all districts, sub-divisional and block headquarters and municipal towns till March 31. He also urged people to extend their support in

● **THE TEST** report of Saif Ali, with a travel history to Qatar, reached the hospital a day after he succumbed to the infection.

the fight against the deadly virus.

"Bihar is being placed under lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the state. During this period all private establishments, offices, and public transport will remain suspended," he said in the statement.

The government has, however, exempted all essential services which

include healthcare, medicine shops, general provision stores, banking sector and media.

Earlier on Sunday, the state administration held an emergency meeting after Bihar recorded its first death due to coronavirus. According to the Bihar health department, a person named Saif Ali with a travel history to Qatar died at AIIMS, Patna, where he was being treated for critical kidney ailments.

According to Bihar Chief Secretary Deepak Kumar, "The test report reached the hospital a day after he succumbed to the infection. The state govern-

ment is taking all necessary precautions to deal with the situation."

Doctors at Rajendra Memorial Research Institute (RMRI), Patna, where coronavirus tests are conducted, said that 114 samples were examined on Saturday, out of which two cases were found positive for Covid-19.

The other Covid-19 positive person has been admitted to a hospital in Patna. Meanwhile, screening at railway stations has also been stepped up and passengers coming from other states are being monitored.

To deal with the rising

coronavirus threat, isolation wards have been set up in all medical colleges and hospitals across the state.

As a precautionary measure, the state government had earlier cancelled all major events including the Bihar Divas Programme which was to be observed on March 22. Apart from this, all educational institutions, parks, zoos and cinema halls have also been shut down till March 31.

"Concerned officials have been asked to track all details about persons who have tested positive," principal health secretary Sanjay Kumar said.

17 jawans killed in Maoist attack

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 22

In one of the deadliest assaults on security personnel in Chhattisgarh in the past two years, Maoists late on Saturday evening ambushed a joint search party in Elmagunda in south Bastar district of Sukma, killing 17 jawans and injuring 15 others.

"Bodies of 17 jawans were recovered at the encounter site on Sunday afternoon," a senior police officer posted in Bastar told this newspaper.

Of the 17 slain jawans, 12 were from district reserve group (DRG), an anti-Naxal tribal force raised by Chhattisgarh police, and five were from Special Task Force (STF), counterinsurgency wing of Chhattisgarh police.

This was the biggest casualty faced by the DRG which comprised surrendered Naxals and local tribals, in counterinsurgency in Bastar so far.

At least 15 security personnel were also injured in the incident. They were airlifted to Raipur in Chhattisgarh for treatment. Conditions of two of them were stated to be critical.

Bastar range inspector general of police (IG) P. Sunderraj confirmed the incident.

group (DRG), special task force (STF) and 206 COBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) was dispatched to Kasalpad area, a Maoist-stronghold, following intelligence inputs on gathering a large number of ultras in the jungle. Maoists laid an ambush for the counterinsurgency forces at a strategic point at the foothill of Kasapad when the latter were returning to their respective base camps after conducting search operations.

"Maoists who had positioned them at hilltop opened fire on the security personnel when the latter reached the plain area, reducing them to sitting ducks. Reinforcement rushed from nearby Burkhapal evacuated 15 injured jawans who were later airlifted to Raipur for treatment. However, bodies of 17 jawans could be recovered only after 20 hours on Sunday afternoon", the police officer said requesting not to be quoted. Maoists also took away 16 weapons including 12 AK 47 assault rifles and one Under Barrel Launcher (UBGL) from the slain jawans, police said.

The encounter site is close to Chintalnar where 76 CRPF jawans were killed by Maoists on April 6, 2010.

The region, considered headquarters of Maoists' battalion number one, has been declared liberated zone by the ultras.

WB jail clash, toll rises to four

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 22

The death toll in the clash between the prisoners and police personnel in Dum Dum Central Jail, one of the largest prisons in West Bengal, over restrictions due to Covid-19 pandemic, has jumped to four from one as the prison witnessed fresh violence on Sunday. The three deceased were Arghya Chakraborty, Badal Mondal and Sheikh Noor Hossein, according to official sources.

All of them were under-trial prisoners and had suffered bullet injuries, sources claimed. They were brought to RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in north Kolkata with another deceased prisoner: Kamalesh Mahato on Saturday evening.

Except Mahato, the identities of the rest were established later. On Sunday, Chakraborty's mother identified his body at the morgue of the RGKMCH. Chakraborty, a resident of Lake Town, was an accused in a case

under the NDPS Act.

Like Mahato who was also accused in an NDPS Act case from Khardah in North 24 Parganas, the three other prisoners are also suspected to have been shot dead when the police allegedly opened fire after coming under attack by prisoners who went on rampage and torched wards of the prison on Saturday in protest of the prison authorities' decision to not to allow them to meet their family members to tackle the spread of Covid-19.

CORONA | TREMORS

Parties ask MPs to withdraw from Parliament duties

Budget session likely to end today

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 22

The Budget Session of Parliament is likely to be concluded on Monday after passage of the Finance Bill in both Houses, sources said on Sunday.

The session, which was earlier scheduled to conclude on April 3, is now likely to be adjourned sine die on March 23, sources said.

The session is likely to be concluded almost 12 days before its scheduled winding up due to the looming threat of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, in wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, the Nationalist Congress Party on Sunday asked its MPs not to go back to Delhi but assist government agencies in their local areas, helping citi-

zens to fight Covid-19. While the TMC on Sunday announced that it has given instructions to all its MPs to withdraw from parliament and return to their constituencies in view of the coronavirus scare.

TMC Rajya Sabha MP and leader of the party in the upper house, Derek O'Brien and Sudip Bandyopadhyay, Lok Sabha MP and leader of the party in the lower house, have written to presiding officers of both houses urging them to wind up proceedings on Monday March 23.

The TMC has 22 MPs in the Lok Sabha and 13 in the Rajya Sabha.

The letter said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has spoken about the urgent need for social distancing and the need to not assemble in large

groups and that those above the age of 65 should take abundant care. Around 44 per cent MPs in Rajya Sabha and 22 per cent MPs in Lok Sabha are 65 years of age and above. It is not only about MPs but the thousands who enter the Parliament complex every day. This conflicting messaging is downright dangerous."

The budget session of parliament is currently in progress and many MPs had returned to their respective constituencies during the weekend.

Last week, in the upper house, some members of the Trinamul Congress came with masks which was objected to by the presiding officer. Later, after intervention of other members, they were allowed to wear masks.

Masks: Govt calls for proposals

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, MARCH 22

The government has invited proposal applications from Indian companies and enterprises to address protection and home-based respiratory intervention for Covid-19 patients.

The proposal may include technologically innovative solutions like low-cost masks, cost-effective scanning devices, technologies for sanitisation of large areas as well as for contactless entry, rapid diagnostic kits, oxygenators and ventilators.

"In the last few decades, various viral diseases have spread across continents and caused massive fatalities. The latest in the list is the covid-19 pandemic, which has put the healthcare system of various countries out of gear. Protection of the general population needs efficient clinical masks and sanitisers, suitable devices for screening and detection, home-based ventilator systems to complement healthcare facilities and other products and technologies to monitor and control the spread of diseases," the technology development board (TDB), a statutory body under the department of science and technology, said.

The areas in which the

technologically innovative solutions are invited include low-cost masks which can capture viruses from the air and absorb respiratory droplets, cost-effective thermal scanning, large area sanitisation and sterilisation (including electrostatic spray and ultra violet treatment for various available surfaces like glass, ceramic, wood, textile, etc.), bioinformatics and surveillance, rapid and accurate diagnosis kits (paper-based and other point of care devices), AI and IoT-based solutions for contactless entry, oxygenators and ventilators (low cost and portable).

Meanwhile, Some inmates of Burali Model Jail here are making nearly 700-800 face masks daily due to a surge in their demand in the wake of Covid-19 outbreak, an official said on Sunday.

Under 'Making of Mask' project, two teams, with 15 inmates each, have been constituted, said Neena Chaudhary, Senior Medical Officer, Burali Model jail.

She said, each day 700-800 masks are being made for general preventive measures and they are fully sterilised.

Chaudhary said the masks are priced at ₹10 each and will initially be supplied to the government offices where there is public dealing.

WB on shutdown from 5 pm today

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 22

As the total number of Covid-19 patients rose to seven in West Bengal on Sunday, the Mamata Banerjee government has announced lockdown in most parts of the state including Kolkata and seven districts from 5 pm on Monday till March 27 midnight, adding the state to the list of many others which have swung into the mode to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. Only the essential and emergency services will remain operational.

The seven districts are North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda in North Bengal and Howrah, Nadia, Murshidabad and Burdwan West in South Bengal. Among the remaining 16 districts, the lockdown will be in force in all the towns and also in several sub divisional areas.

The decision was taken after the meeting between the Cabinet secretary and the chief secretaries of all the states including West Bengal which observed janata curfew. The lockdown bars movements of public vehicles, buses, taxis and autorickshaws.

The state government's

move also came as three more persons including a couple were found positive with the deadly virus. Admitted to the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Bellaghata, the three patients are the parents of the second confirmed case; a youth in the state and a woman domestic help of the family in Ballygunge of south Kolkata.

They were earlier kept in isolation as the 23-year-old tested positive of Covid-19 days after his return from London and visits to many places, ignoring precautions. The lockdown announcement also coincided the railways' cancellation of all trains including Kolkata Metro in the state.

The Eastern Railway stated, "...all originating long distance mail/express and intercity trains (including premium trains) and all originating passenger trains shall remain cancelled till 24.00 hours of 31.03.2020. Suburban trains, as notified earlier, are continued at bare minimum level until 24.00 hours of 22.03.2020." It added, "Thereafter all suburban trains will be totally cancelled from 24.00 hours of 22.03.2020 till 24.00 hours of 31.03.2020."

Cong raises doubt on Covid-19 figures

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 22

The Congress on Sunday questioned the government over the figures of Covid-19. Party communications chief Randeep Singh Surjewala alleged that figures of various government agencies are not matching. He tweeted, "Why are the Covid-19 outbreak cases of different government agencies not matching? Government of India Health Ministry says 324 as of 11.45 am while ICMR says 341 as of 10 am." He further added, "Similarly, the number of Covid-19 patients are

being shown far less on government of India health ministry website! government of Haryana had announced six Covid-19 cases on March 20th which rose to eight on March 21st. But, the government of India still refers to only three coronavirus positive cases in Haryana?"

Though the Congress is supporting all the moves by the government, it is still critical of the government for 'late response'. Earlier, Rahul Gandhi called for immediate steps to revive the country's economy amid Covid-19 pandemic.

Deafening silence to beat Covid-19

Millions of people across the country stayed indoors on Sunday in an unprecedented and overwhelming response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for a janata curfew to help check the spread of coronavirus, coming out briefly at 5 pm to show gratitude to health and other essential service providers with sounds of bells, conches and claps. Mr Modi thanked the people but said it was the start of a long battle, as he urged them to follow social distancing.



MUMBAI

The Bandra-Worli Sea Link which is chock-a-block with traffic wears a deserted look during the janata curfew called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the wake of coronavirus pandemic on Sunday. — PTI



BENGALURU

The fender-to-fender traffic on the Jalahalli flyover is missing as Bengaluru observed the janata curfew, on Sunday. — PTI



JAIPUR

Johari Bazaar in Jaipur sees no traffic during the janata curfew observed to fight the deadly coronavirus, on Sunday. — PTI



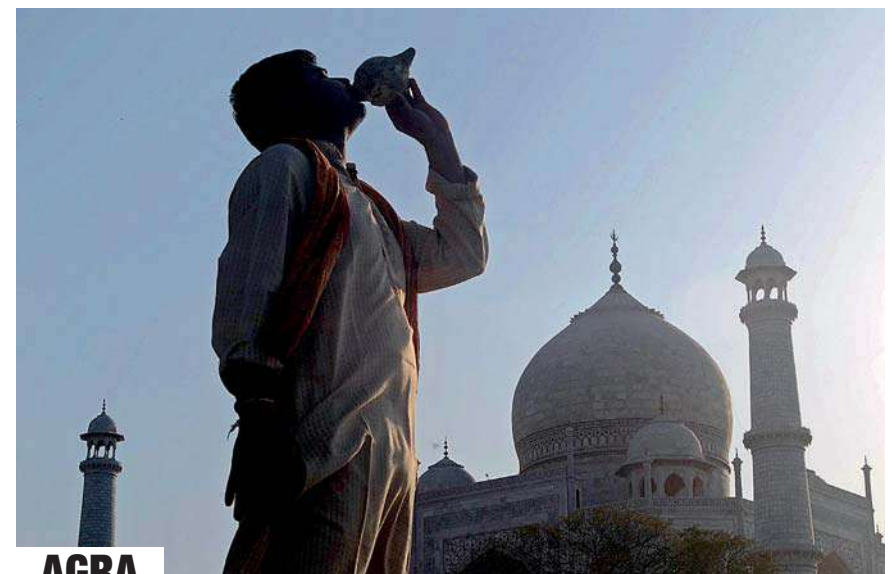
QUARANTINED

Quarantined passengers display the stamps on their hands after being detained by security personnel in Mumbai on Sunday. — PTI



CHENNAI

People clap and make noise to thank service providers fighting Covid-19 during a one-day janata curfew in Chennai on Sunday. — PTI



AGRA

A priest plays a conch shell at Taj Mahal in Agra, as part of the nationwide janata curfew in order to contain the spread of the dreaded virus, on Sunday. — India



DELHI

A man takes a selfie amid pigeons that take over traffic-less road during janata curfew at Connaught Palace, New Delhi, on Sunday. — PTI



KOCHI

A man plays flute in the backdrop of people clapping as a gesture to show gratitude to medical practitioners fighting Covid-19. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

23 MARCH 2020

If mandate doesn't count, are we still a democracy?

The machinations that led to the fall of the 15-month-old Kamal Nath ministry in Madhya Pradesh have dealt a body blow to the basic political morality which citizens would expect the political parties to uphold. True, the Congress has been playing its cards poorly, but that doesn't absolve the BJP of the fraud it has been committing on our democratic system in one state after another with remarkable success. The Congress unseated the BJP, which was in power for three consecutive terms, in the 2018 Assembly polls in MP, winning 114 of 230 seats; two short of an absolute majority. The mandate was clear, and the party formed the government with the support of two BSP and one Samajwadi MLA. Two Independents also joined the bandwagon later, giving the Congress ministry a comfortable majority.

As many as 22 Congress MLAs loyal to the BJP's new poster boy Jyotiraditya Scindia, fled to a resort in BJP-ruled Karnataka and sent in their resignations from the Assembly to the Speaker. The MLAs were incommunicado for several days, while Mr Scindia resigned from the Congress and found the BJP the best platform for him to "take the state and nation". The MLAs stuck to their resignations, effectively reducing the Assembly's strength to 206 (two seats were vacant earlier). The Congress, with 94 MLAs against the BJP's 109, was outnumbered hopelessly in the race to touch the magic number of 104, forcing the resignation of Mr Nath ahead of a no-confidence vote ordered by the Supreme Court. The Congress' bid to seek legal help to get access to the rebel MLAs and its tactics to delay the vote fell flat as the courts refused to play ball.

Ever since it was voted to power in 2014, the BJP has been pursuing a violent idea of politics calling for a "Congress-mukt Bharat". Given that the Congress is the main Opposition party in Parliament, and is in power in many states, the call itself is outrageous. The grand old party shows signs of fatigue with no new leadership emerging, but people have different ideas about it, as they have shown in many elections, most recently in Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Maharashtra. True, its elected members defect to the other side for no reason other than power and pelf.

Individuals can be treacherous, ambitious, self-serving, plain greedy or morally wanting in a democracy, but when political parties with the avowed goal of service to the people betray a similar behavioural pattern, it signals a very dangerous trend. This makes a mockery of the representative form of democracy that kept our nation going over 70 years. A notorious comment attributed to a Soviet-era leader is that it's not the people who vote that count, but it's the people who count the votes. If a party can form a government irrespective of the popular will, and the ruling party at the Centre has developed it as a powerful tool to upset popular mandates, and is proud of it, we should stop calling ourselves a democracy. Madhya Pradesh offers no reason to think otherwise.

PK personified sporting spirit

In the death of Pradip Kumar Banerjee India has lost one of its greatest football players and its finest representative of the spirit of sport, which included passing on his skills and his sporting acumen to whole new generations. Titles like the "Indian footballer of the millennium" and the Fifa order of merit represented a thoroughly deserved honour for one who embodied sportsmanship.

A robust right-winger in the old 5-3-2 formation, his athletic runs and thundering drives towards goal were the stuff of legend. He played during India's golden soccer era when Asian titles were not out of each and Olympic ambitions were not outrageous pipedreams. There were many with him like Chuni Goswami and T. Balram who made teamwork possible with talent and bonding.

The scoring of the equaliser against France in the Rome Olympics was a precursor to his being the most dynamic player in the gold medal-winning team at the Asian Games in Jakarta in 1962. The years between the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne and the Merdeka tournament of 1965 were P.K.'s golden years during which he scored 15 goals for the national team. The burden of injuries was to force him into retirement from the maidans of Kolkata, but coaching was to prove as much his metier as much as soccer skills.

An amiable personality well grounded in fair play, P.K. became a legend as a coach, first in the maidan with East Bengal and then Mohun Bagan, which he managed while the club achieved its first-ever triple crown and Eastern Railway. He had a simple and forthright style of communicating that endeared him to a host of talented youngsters.

His presence at international events in Kolkata, including cricket at the Eden Gardens, was seen as his endorsement of sport in its more modern eras. "PKda" (83) lived to see a professional revolution come about in Indian soccer with the ISL as well as the rise of India in the rankings from the lowly 200+ it had once slipped to onto 108.



Subhani

The corona disruptions & their impact on India



Indranil Banerjee

By now it's plain the coronavirus pandemic will be a global disrupter. It will affect economies and nations worldwide, alter relative power equations and cut prosperity everywhere. In this turmoil, some nations and societies will fare better than others.

How is India likely to do? Will the changes prove advantageous or could they push the nation further into an economic and geopolitical back alley? The answer depends on how we ride out the crisis.

For now, India has been relatively unscathed, but the pointers aren't encouraging. The resilience our population has so far shown is entirely gratuitous and not the result of any great effort by the people or the government.

Some experts suspect the low number of coronavirus cases reported in India are due to low levels of testing and hence low detection. It has been noted that most countries showing high levels of infection have done more intensive testing of their populations: 1,000 and more per million, whereas in India the testing rate is an abysmal five per million so far.

Most quarantine facilities, including those for incoming travellers into New Delhi's showcase airport, are reportedly so bad — dirty, cramped and entirely lacking in facilities — that people including those infected are fleeing them.

Dipanjan Roy, an Indian epidemiologist, was quoted by *The New York Times* as saying the "challenge of a large country like India with overcrowding is that some people will always slip the net, wherever you put it".

Should the virus go out of control and become a mass outbreak, India is looking at a catastrophe. India's public health system — overcrowded, short-staffed and lacking

facilities, may be easily overwhelmed. Private hospitals and clinics aren't vastly better and cannot compensate for any breakdown in government-run health services.

It's disheartening to read about the tepid pace of transformation of our health system. While individual doctors, researchers and a handful of medical entrepreneurs have done a remarkable job in creating world-class medical facilities, their efforts cover only a minuscule portion of the population, and mostly the affluent. The vast majority of Indians have to rely on medieval conditions and healthcare systems.

During 1918-19, the Spanish flu, in its devastating sweep across the globe killed an estimated 50 million people. India was the worst-hit, losing an estimated 20 million citizens. The country's healthcare system, then run by a colonial government, proved completely incompetent.

A century later, independent India has done a much better job of building up its medical infrastructure, but grave doubts persist over its ability to cope with a coronavirus-like pandemic could unleash.

Indians thus can't be faulted on relying on divine or natural providence for hope. If faith does indeed triumph over the virus, then India could see some welcome changes.

The benefits that India could hope to derive would be fortuitous, arising not out of any proactivity but out of relative shifts in the Asian and global order. The main factor of change will arise out of China's relative decline.

While China has done a magnificent job in controlling the spread of the pandemic within its borders, it has done so at a huge cost. The severe restrictions imposed by its government have sent production processes and

supply chains completely haywire. The rest of the world, for the first time, realises the folly of overdependence on any one source for industrial and service supplies.

A process of diversification is inevitable and will impact China negatively in the long term, diminishing its centrality and hegemony in the global order. This cannot but benefit India, though to what extent and how significant it will be remains to be seen.

At the same time, the hope that India will be able to take up some of the slack arising out of China's problems is likely to be belied. The Indian economy continues to struggle with infrastructural issues, a broken financial system, large-scale corruption and a judiciary that cannot cope with rising litigation. Added to this are problems of order and security.

The case of bulk drug manufacturing paints a dismal picture of the country's systemic inadequacies. The Central government had in 2017 promised to offer several incentives for local manufacture of bulk drugs (key inputs for medicines) which are now sourced mainly from China.

However, when the coronavirus crisis choked bulk drug flows from China, it was found that nothing had changed domestically. Lack of clarity in Central policies, delayed permissions and a cumbersome system of clearances had held up the entire process for more than two years. When the pandemic hit, India still did not have a bulk drugs industry in place despite a much-touted Draft Pharmaceutical Policy and pious statements of intent.

Issues like these cannot be rectified overnight

Should the virus go out of control and become a mass outbreak, India is looking at a catastrophe. India's public health system is overcrowded, short-staffed and lacking facilities.

and the political will or the ability to address them continues to be low. Thus, the opportunity arising from diversification of supply chains away from China are likely to largely bypass India and benefit other more agile nations.

On the other hand, India's relative economic isolation, its low participation in the global supply chains and world trade in general will insulate it from short and medium-term shocks.

Other better-performing Asian economies like Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and so on will be hit much harder given their dependence on external demand factors, including tourism, and the export of goods and services which contribute significantly to their GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Thus, India's relative positioning could well improve in Asia, but this is unlikely to translate into any real benefit in absolute terms. India's net gains are most likely to be in geopolitical terms — it could well emerge relatively stronger in a weakened global order. This prognosis is, however, predicated on the assumption that there is no catastrophic spread of the coronavirus epidemic within India, unlike what happened in 1918-19.

The added uncertainty arises out of the possible effects of a sharp contraction in global economic growth, supply chain disruptions, plunging stock markets and a possible global recession on the Indian economy.

India is already in a hard place where the economy is concerned. Even higher rates of unemployment engendered by a pandemic could stoke political instability. On the other hand, Indians are an incredibly resilient people who have weathered centuries of recurring catastrophes, including natural disasters, famines and epidemics. No matter how deep the crater, Indians always crawl back. The question is whether they emerge into a better world or a more dismal one.

The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues

LETTERS

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Panic is not the cure for Covid-19 (1st secondary transmission in TS stokes fear of spread, DC, March 22). The onus of following guidelines set by WHO and government lies on oneself. There are some who are still ignoring the risks and freely roaming about for pleasure. Their actions can increase the spread of this deadly virus and lead to death of many innocents.

Nithya Sarvepalli
Hyderabad

We need to step up measures to contain the spread of coronavirus. Though Covid-19 cases have been increasing, people are not following protocols to contain the virus. Those who returned from affected countries must be strictly quarantined. The shutdown of schools and colleges must be extended. Public transport must function with minimum number of vehicles to restrict public movement. It must also be ensured that the suspected cases do not use public transport to reach hospital.

Thangella Shreya
Hyderabad

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a one-day irrational janata curfew. The government has its own goals. Why should we stand in front of windows, balcony, and bang plates or bells?

Syed Shamsuddin Maghrabi
Hyderabad

All Indians, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, listened to the PM's call. It has thus been proved that we are one nation of Hindustanis. It is time to evaluate if priority must be given to Hindustan instead of Hindutva. There is time to mend our ways and progress.

Shakir
Hyderabad

Witty sallies mark NDC proceedings

NEW DELHI, March 22 The deliberations of the National Development Council today as well as yesterday cut across political alignments and were throughout marked by good humoured sallies among the Chief Ministers.

For the first time, there were quotations from Sanskrit classics.

The broad division was between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. On one side were arranged the "better off" states — Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Gujarat — and on the other weaker States like Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

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- Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003. Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
- Vijayawada:** No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234
- Visakhapatnam:** Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.). Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
- Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry. Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208
- Anantapur:** Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004. Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904
- Karimnagar:** Survey No.1341, Vavilapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001. Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
- Nellore:** Survey No.527/2, Barrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
- Chennai:** SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032. Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325
- Bengaluru:** 5th Floor, BMT Commercial Complex, 80 Feet Road, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560 095 Ph: 080-43460500; Fax: 080-22960552
- Coimbatore:** 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009. Ph: 0422 2231255
- Kochi:** No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Emakulam. Ph: 0484-4039408
- Thiruvananthapuram:** St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycud (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014
- Kozhikode:** Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001. Fax: 0495 4019 018
- Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup

Responding promptly to the worldwide outbreak of the mysterious coronavirus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a series of proactive steps to deal with this serious public health issue. The Prime Minister followed it up by speaking to world leaders about how they can combat this disease together and then went on to address the nation to seek the cooperation of people during these challenging times. But curiously, in this flurry of activity, Mr Modi did not think it necessary to address Parliament on this issue even though it is currently in session. Nor was there any effort to reach out to the Opposition or chief ministers though it is the state governments that are directly responsible for handling the crisis. In fact, Mr Modi has not been seen in either of the two Houses ever since reports of coronavirus cases started pouring in, not even on his question days. There was a time when question hour in Parliament was considered sacrosanct and pre-

siding officers did not take kindly to such dalliance. As Rajya Sabha chairman, the late Shankar Dayal Sharma had even pulled up V.P. Singh when he was Prime Minister for coming late to the House on his question day.

Meanwhile, former Rajya Sabha MP, J.K. Jain has embarked on a special mission to combat coronavirus. He has been coming to Parliament House with a bagful of masks that Mr Jain has been distributing to MPs along with a handwritten note to each recipient in which he has made several suggestions to lawmakers. He has requested MPs that they use the MPLAD scheme money for the mass production of these wash-and-wear khadi masks in their respective constituencies. This, he said, will not only provide employment to people but also create awareness among them about the steps they can take to keep coronavirus at bay. Unfortunately, there are few takers for Mr Jain's proposal.

For Kamal Nath, the loss of his government will also mean the loss of a bungalow in Lutyns' Delhi. The senior Congress leader has been occupying number the 1, Tughlaq Road, bungalow for more than a decade now. It was allotted to Mr Nath when he was a minister but he managed to retain it even after he took over as Madhya Pradesh chief minister by getting the premises shifted to the state government quota. The urban development ministry is now waiting anxiously to cancel this allotment and move the bungalow back to the Central pool. While Kamal Nath will have to forgo his accommodation in the VIP zone, his bete noire, Jyotiraditya Scindia, who has joined the Bharatiya Janata Party and has been given a Rajya Sabha seat, will move back to Lutyns' Delhi as he is also tipped to get a ministerial berth in the Modi government. He could well be allotted the 27, Safdarjung Road, bungalow, which was originally occupied by his father, Madhavrao Scindia. After his death, it remained with the

family. Jyotiraditya Scindia had to vacate the place after he lost the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Nationalist Congress Party boss Sharad Pawar is known to exercise total control over his cadres but Kandhal Jadeja, his party MLA in Gujarat, has proved to be an "autonomous body". Though Mr Pawar has repeatedly assured the Congress of his party's support for their candidates in the March 26 Rajya Sabha election, Mr Jadeja is not expected to toe the party line and the NCP bosses can do nothing about it. Mr Jadeja happens to be the son of the famous "Godmother" Santokben, and has a long list of cases against him. Consequently, he can ill-afford to be on the wrong side of the BJP government in Gujarat. The NCP legislator has already met the BJP bosses and assured them that his vote will go to their candidate.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister Jagannohan Reddy appears to have impressed the BJP

leaders, especially law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. And there is a reason for it. In his interactions with them, Mr Reddy has assured the BJP bosses that his government has no intention of confronting the Centre and would instead extend all cooperation to it. He also sought Mr Prasad's guidance for his move to abolish the legislative council in his home state. Launching an attack against his chief political rival, Telugu Desam Party chief Chandrababu Naidu, Mr Reddy is said to have told the BJP that it had erred in having an alliance with Mr Naidu as the latter has no base in the state and that the TDP had done well in the 2014 Lok Sabha and assembly polls only because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity. Needless to say, this has led to speculation that Mr Reddy's party, the YSR Congress, may be joining the National Democratic Alliance at the Centre.

No questions for the PM, please; Jyotiraditya may 'win' bungalow

Covid-19 crisis will be a test of trust



James Forsyth

We are in a make-or-break moment for trust, not just in this government but in the British state itself. The measures that were announced by Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak this week are extraordinary in economic, social and legal terms. When the Covid-19 crisis is finally over, the state will be judged against how effective they were.

None of us will have lived through anything like what we are about to experience. If this country gets it broadly right, then trust in our politicians

and the state will rise. But if it gets it wrong, then the nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state will be changed for at least a generation. People will be far more reluctant to follow official advice in future.

Johnson now talks about this being a 'wartime government'. The phrase dramatises the change that has taken place, one that no one could have anticipated when the Tories won their 80-seat majority on 12 December. It not only reveals the size of the challenge but also what is at stake: a state that cannot protect its own citizens quickly loses legitimacy.

But the government knows little about the enemy it is

fighting. For instance, no one can be sure what effect Covid-19 will have on a child whose mother contracts it early in pregnancy — because the virus has been in humans for only a few months. One of those who are trying to deal with the crisis likens it to driving in fog: you simply do not know what is ahead.

The challenge facing the government is much more dramatic — and serious — than the one it was supposed to face in the months following the end of the Brexit transition period. Voters, it was thought, would judge the government on whether the borders worked or not. It was going to be a competence test that could win or lose the government the next election.

Senior government figures are beginning to speculate in private that the date for the UK exiting the transition period will have to be pushed back. This week's trade negotiations have been called off and if the bars on travel last as long as expected, it is hard to see how

The crisis will also catalyse a shift in attitudes to China. Several ministers are furious that after SARS, another disease has emerged from China as a result of its live animal markets. There is a feeling that the CCP's refusal to deal with this problem endangers others.

It could all be done by 31 December. No. 10, though, still maintains that there is time to do a deal.

Johnson needs to become a truly national leader in the coming months. In a country that has been divided by the politics of the past few years, he must find a way to bring people together in a common endeavour. Given that this crisis is nothing to do with Brexit and that Johnson is not a political sectarian, this should be possible. Sunak's economic

package was not ideological but was a simple attempt to keep the economy going. Its size — £350 billion — was staggering. But the government's aim was to emphasise that it would do 'whatever it takes' to keep the economy going. Expect more on what measures the government will take to support workers in the coming days. One thing that would help immensely is if a test is developed to see who has had the virus and recovered. In Whitehall, there is growing confidence that this will soon be possible. It would, as the chief medical officer Chris Whitty has said, be 'transformational', by enabling two things. First, it would mean that those NHS workers who have already had the disease would be able to carry on working without fear of becoming infected. Second, citizens who have had it could take part in a massive volunteer effort. They could help in hospitals or deliver food and medicine to the doorsteps of the vulnerable. David Cameron's vision of a

'big society' never took off as a political idea, but if ever we needed it, it is now. A community effort could save lives and keep up the spirits of those who are suffering and those who are helping out.

This virus will change British society. If these economic and social measures are needed for as long as 18 months, it will do so profoundly. We will remember life under Covid-19 in the way earlier generations remembered rationing. Various issues will also be pushed up the agenda, such as the gig economy and the obligations that firms have to their contractors. The government is keen to avoid taking steps that will, in effect, be impossible to reverse. But the longer this situation goes on, the harder it will be to deliver piecemeal solutions.

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CCP's refusal to deal with this problem endangers others.

Coronavirus has also highlighted the extent to which UK supply chains, including medical ones, are dependent on China. Influential figures in government believe that this situation is not sensible and it must be addressed once the crisis is dealt with. Medical security will become a policy objective as much as food security is.

'Wartime governments' are judged by history on one thing: did they win? But Johnson will be aware that beating the virus is no guarantee of 'post-war' electoral success. Success in the fight against coronavirus would, however, significantly boost trust in the state and the political class. It would undo much of the damage done to public faith in politics by the past 12 years. By contrast, failure could damage the relationship between public and the state for ever.

By arrangement with the Spectator

China begins Information Warfare



Claude Arpi

As China seems to recover from the dreaded Covid-19, Beijing has started a new battle, an Information Warfare (IW) against the way the world perceives the Middle Kingdom today.

It is true that after the outbreak of the virus towards the end of December (the virus had probably been around since several weeks already, but the authoritarian regime in Beijing preferred to hide the truth from its own people and the world), the Communist regime discovered that it does not have many friends on the planet.

China has now decided to counterattack. Zhao Lijian, one of China's sharpshooters, was called upon to serve as spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Zhao, who served earlier as deputy chief of mission in Pakistan, is known for his vitriolic twitter attacks against China's critics.

Referring to a statement of the director of the US Centres for Disease Control (CDC), Zhao's latest tweet alleged that the Americans are at the origin of the virus: "CDC was caught on the spot. When did patient zero begin in US? How many people are infected? What are the names of the hospitals? It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owes us an explanation!"

But the artillery fire does not come from a single sniper. A full-fledged IW began around the time that President Xi Jinping, accompanied by Wang Huning, the propaganda boss in the Politburo's Standing Committee; Ding Xuexiang, director of the Party's General Office, and General Zhang Youxia, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, visited Wuhan.

One of the first shots came from the Chinese Embassy in

Australia, which emailed local journalists, accusing them of "politicizing the Covid-19" by saying it originated in China "without any supporting facts."

Financial Review journalist Michael Smith received an email from the Chinese embassy in Canberra, complaining that he had called the Covid-19, 'China virus'. Smith asserted that Beijing "has pivoted its propaganda narrative, now insinuating that the virus originated in other countries."

The symptoms of the Chinese aggressiveness was already seen on February 18, when Hou Yangqi, the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, issued a statement criticising an article published in the Nepali press: "The Kathmandu Post published an article which, with a picture of malicious intention, deliberately smeared the efforts of the Chinese government and people fighting against the new Covid-19 pneumonia and even viciously attacked the political system of China."

The lady ambassador went a step further. She accused the chief editor of The Kathmandu Post, Anup Kaphle, of being biased: "[he] has always been biased on China-related issues. ...[he is] becoming a parrot of some anti-China forces."

As a result, a group of 17 Nepali editors affiliated with various media houses in Kathmandu issued a statement criticising the embassy for threatening Kaphle: "We would also like to remind the embassy that it breached diplomatic decorum in doing so."

Hou's attack on the press was part of a well-orchestrated campaign against any foreign media refusing to follow Beijing's line.

The Communist mouthpiece The Global Time was not left behind. An Op-Ed stated: "Amid the raging Covid-19 epidemic, some Western countries have shown their true colors."

The writer elaborated: "Some Western media outlets have blamed China for the virus' going global and made a big deal out of China's 'delays' during the outbreak's initial stage. Now that the novel Covid-19 crisis continues to unfold across the world, it's obvious to see which country's handling has been more efficient and effective."

The media blitzkrieg brings a new narrative: "The origin is the virus is unknown. It could have come from anywhere in the world. China has been a model in handling the sensitive issue. Beijing can now advise the world how to go about it."

The strategy's objective is to force the world to forget how and where the virus started or to find out if the first case originated in a Chinese Lab or elsewhere.

Axios, the analysis website commented: "Beijing's Covid-19 propaganda blitz goes global," before elaborating: "As China begins to get its Covid-19 outbreak under control, authorities are going on the offensive to rewrite the narrative that the global epidemic is Beijing's fault."

Axios spoke of China's formidable propaganda apparatus which can obscure the truth and change narratives abroad,

What China does not seem to understand is that even if she wins a few IW battles, this will not help her to become a respected State.

just as it can at home.

Bill Bishop, author of the Sinocism newsletter added: "The CCP is masterful at rewriting history, and we're watching them do it in real time."

The Editor of Bitter Winter, an Italian website studying China's Human Rights, recounted: "Some days ago, I opened my email and found a message from a Chinese colleague asking whether I was safe from the 'Italian virus'. I had never heard the expression 'Italian virus' with respect to COVID-19, but then learned that others had received similar messages, and that Japanese were being asked by Chinese friends whether they had been affected by the 'Japanese virus'."

He quoted from a report in La Croix International citing confidential instructions sent by Beijing to Chinese embassies: "While the virus severely hit Wuhan, where it really origi-

nally came from is unknown. We are conducting new studies to locate the virus' true origin."

Embassies were asked to 'raise doubts' in the public opinion, suggesting that perhaps the virus originally came to China from abroad.

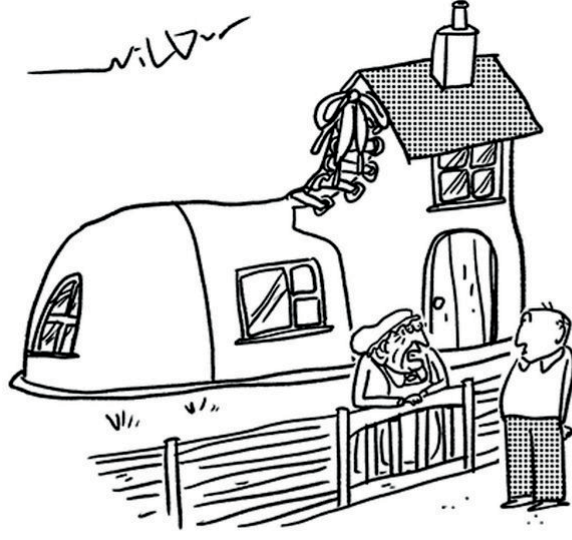
On February 26, Xinhua announced the release of a book, which detailed President Xi Jinping's "outstanding leadership as a great power leader" defeated the virus. The publication proved to the world the "significant advantages of the Chinese system of leadership and socialism with Chinese characteristics," and showed how "the centralized and unified leadership of the CCP Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core won the Great war against the virus." It was later withdrawn as the victory had been announced too early.

After reading La Croix International's report, London-based sinologist Steve Tsang stated: "The CCP always had a monopoly on truth and history in China, and now tries to deny that it originally hid the truth on the virus. CCP officers claim they are right even when it is obvious they are wrong."

Another Op-Ed in The Global Times argued that all this was a symptom of West's ideological crisis: "The Western media's ignorance and bias of China's system have never appeared more obvious. For decades, the Western media have been trying to persuade their readers that Chinese people have no freedom or democracy, simply because China doesn't adopt the Western-style electoral system," while Beijing is pursuing a more substantial and efficient set of freedom "designed to meet the needs of the people who most desire long-term peace, stability and development."

That would be fine, but why such aggressiveness and often blatant distortion of the facts.

What China does not seem to understand is that even if she wins a few IW battles, this will not help her to become a respected State.



'I'm dreading them closing the schools.'

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

Bored of the virus? It may be time to go into hibernation!



Irfan Husain

Every newspaper and TV headline carries nothing but reports about this plague; every conversation starts and ends with it.

IAM so sick and tired of corona-virus by now that all I want is to go into hibernation and not emerge until the damn virus has disappeared.

Every newspaper and TV headline carries nothing but reports about this plague; every conversation starts and ends with it; and my WhatsApp and email inbox are full of advice and news about the virus. There is simply no escape.

I know it's a deadly disease, especially at my age. But I would rather risk infection than spend the rest of my life following its progress. Of course, it's a disaster that has put the world economy at risk, but there comes a point when you need to think about other things than a virus.

Conspiracy theories about its origins are mutating faster than the virus itself, as are possible cures. One day we are told masks are useless; the next day, The New York Times informs us that they are better than nothing. And we are constantly urged to wash our hands repeatedly for at least 20 seconds, but nobody informs us how billions of poor people around the world will get soap and clean water. Then there are the unattractive images of people fighting over hand sanitiser and loo paper.

Supermarket shelves have been emptied. My best hoarding story is about two American brothers who are sitting atop a mountain of 17,700 bottles of hand sanitiser without any buyers. Serve the greedy young buggers right.

I suppose it's easy for me to dismiss the coronavirus and wish it would go away. Being retired has its benefits. But young people dependent on jobs that pay little and require daily attendance are at risk, as are businesses of all kinds. When people lose their jobs, they can no longer buy goods, thus reducing or ending demand across the economy. This ripple effect is now threatening us all.

Soon, I will be flying to England from Sri Lanka, and according to the media, the over-70s might have to self-isolate for four months. This seems a dream come true: there are many books that have been waiting patiently for my attention. In particular, I look forward to reading William Dalrymple's The Anarchy, an account of the loot and plunder carried out by the East India Company. I have not started it yet because the hardback copy weighs a ton, and I can't read it in bed.

Then there is a fascinating biography of Saladin Ayoubi and his role in defeating the Crusaders a thousand years ago. And most testing of all is a hefty

tome by Nikos Kazantzakis, author of Zorba the Greek, who wrote a sequel to The Odyssey. I picked it up in Berkeley for two dollars when I was visiting my son last year, and look forward to ploughing through it.

I suppose I'll cook quite a bit as all local pubs and restaurants will be shut, but that's no hardship. There are so many cookbooks to consult, although fresh ingredients will have to be ordered online. And there are a couple of exercise machines to keep me in some sort of physical shape.

These are all good intentions, but I don't know how many will actually be implemented. As we now have Netflix, it's always tempting to click on a movie and settle down. Thus far, I have been binge watching the magical anime films produced by Studio Ghibli, and have been blown away by the brilliance of the animation and the originality of the stories. I strongly recommend Princess Mononoke and Spirited Away as starters. One TV series I enjoyed at my son's recommendation was Ottoman. This is a well-observed retelling of the rise of the Ottoman dynasty.

The coronavirus has cancelled several social events. While obviously I am unhappy for those directly involved, I am not entirely disappointed at missing them. When I am in England, I am often forced to attend, but frankly, I would much rather stay at home. I am accused of being anti-social, and my wife is right, of course. But having to dress up and make polite conversation with strangers is a strain I can do without.

While the world struggles with the virus, we in Pakistan have a plan: the Senate chairman invoked God's help while the Punjab chief minister said that all the mosques in his province will remain open so the faithful can pray for divine intervention in close proximity.

In Iran, when the authorities shut down some holy shrines in Mashad and Qom to prevent pilgrims from thronging there, devotees burst into the premises and insisted on carrying on with the rituals. In other Muslim countries, the authorities have acted with greater prudence, and worshippers have shown more discipline. Obviously, Pakistanis and Iranians think they are better Muslims than Jordanians and Saudis. At a time our Maker has His hands full, you'd think we would be a little more considerate.

By arrangement with Dawn

Hypnosis and the coronavirus epidemic



Amrit Sadhana

Looking at the present situation all around I am reminded of a Sufi story told by Osho. A Sufi mystic used to live on the outskirts of a town. He possessed some supernatural powers which enabled him to see things not visible to the human eye. One day he saw a dark shadow hastily passing by towards the town. He stopped it and asked, "Hey! Who are you and where are you going in such haste?" The shadow responded, "I am death and within the next six

months I have been asked to take a thousand lives in this town. A great pandemic is going to fall on the people."

The mystic knew that what was destined to happen was going to happen. He let the shadow pass. The next six months were a complete catastrophe in the town with people dying like flies. At the end of the disaster, the shadow was going back, the mystic was waiting for it, he stopped it and accused, "I didn't know that even the death lies! You said, one thousand people will

die and thirty thousand have died."

The death said, "I have only killed one thousand as per my promise, the rest of them have died of fear. It is not my fault."

This parable sheds light on the human tendency of hypnotising themselves and believing it accordingly. You can also hypnotise yourself that you are not going to catch the disease. Osho has worked a lot on self-hypnosis. He points out that when an epidemic spreads somewhere, people start getting infected and falling sick, but the doctors and the nurses who are taking care of them

day and night don't catch the infection? If the disease is infectious, they should be the first ones to catch it. But the doctor knows that he is the doctor, and this hypnosis prevents him from catching the infection. He is so engrossed in serving others that this hypnosis about the disease does not work on him. Others, of course, go on catching the infection. Psychologists say that the role of germs in this situation is secondary, the role of hypnosis is primary; that is what makes people sick or healthy.

For example, in a gathering where people are listening intently to a speaker, one per-

son coughs and suddenly, many others start coughing. You don't realise that this is just hypnosis. It is nothing but your own faculty for hypnotising yourself. Until now you were sitting quietly, there was no trace of any coughing, but one-man coughs and you are suddenly reminded of coughing. With that reminder, hypnosis catches hold of you and your throat begins to itch. Now you are bound to cough, you cannot avoid it. This was a suggestion, it functioned like a spell, and now you will follow it. Life is very mysterious. If you start implanting the idea in your unconscious mind, it will materialise.

Amrit Sadhana is editor of Osho Times International. She facilitates meditation workshops based on Osho insights around the country and abroad.



SHORT TAKES

FIRST HOSP DOC DIES OF VIRUS IN PARIS

Paris, March 22: The first French hospital doctor has died of coronavirus, authorities said Sunday.

The 67-year-old emergency room medic worked at Compiegne hospital, north of Paris, the town mayor said. Health Minister Olivier Veran said that as far as he knew the man — who died Saturday — was the “first hospital doctor to be hit”.

Mayor Philippe Marini said the victim “would soon have been 68” and had treated some of the first cases in the Oise department, the first area in France to be badly hit by Covid-19.

He was infected in early March, Marini said, and died in hospital in the northern city of Lille, where some of the most serious cases are being treated. Veran refused to give any more information about the victim, saying details were being withheld for medical reasons and to respect the wishes of the doctor's family.

The doctor is thought to be the first French medical professional to die in the epidemic, which has so far claimed 562 lives in France. — AFP

2 SL INMATES KILLED IN RIOT OVER VIRUS

Colombo, March 22: Inmates in a Sri Lanka prison scuffled with guards and some tried to escape during a protest against new strict measures to control the spread of the coronavirus, leaving two dead and six wounded, police said Sunday.

Tensions erupted on Saturday at the Anuradhapura prison when guards tried to control the riot. In the commotion, guards opened fire to prevent inmates from fleeing, police said.

Anuradhapura is about 200 km (120 miles) north of Colombo. Prisoners were complaining about the decision by the authorities not to allow visitors as a move to contain the virus. Sri Lanka has imposed a three-day country-wide curfew since Friday as the number of cases has risen to 77.

On Sunday, a police statement said two inmates died and six others were being treated at a hospital. Police said no inmates escaped and security at the prison has been strengthened with additional police teams, including commandos.

Senaka Perera, president of the Committee for Protecting Rights of Prisoners, said the inmates were protesting congested conditions and the poor quality of meals after the government banned visitors for two weeks to prevent the spread of the virus. Visitors often bring home-cooked food. Sri Lanka's prisons are overcrowded, sometimes housing 5,000 inmates in a facility capable of holding 800, according to the pressure group. — AP

GORILLAS ALSO AT RISK FROM CORONAVIRUS

Kampala, March 22: As the coronavirus infects more people around the world, conservationists are warning of the risk to another vulnerable species: Africa's endangered mountain gorilla. Congo's Virunga National Park, home to about a third of the world's mountain gorillas, is barring visitors until June 1, citing “advice from scientific experts indicating that primates, including mountain gorillas, are likely susceptible to complications arising from Covid-19.”

Neighbouring Rwanda also is temporarily shutting down tourism and research activities in three national parks that are home to primates such as gorillas and chimpanzees. Mountain gorillas are prone to some respiratory illnesses that afflict humans. A common cold can kill a gorilla, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature, one reason why tourists tracking gorillas are not normally permitted to get too close. Around 1,000 mountain gorillas live in protected areas in Congo, Uganda and Rwanda, for whom tourism is an important source of revenue.

But Covid-19 has led to restrictive measures. Virunga National Park's decision has been welcomed by conservationists in the region. Paula Kahumbu, chief executive of the Kenya-based conservation group WildlifeDirect, said that “every possible effort must be made” to protect mountain gorillas because so few are left in the wild. — AP



Italian soldiers patrol the square facing Duomo gothic cathedral in downtown Milan, Italy, Sunday. Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte has told the nation he is tightening the lockdown to fight the rampaging spread of coronavirus, shutting down all production facilities except those that are “necessary, crucial, indispensable to guarantee” the good of the country. — AP

Italy records 800 deaths in 24 hrs

Figures released showed deaths still largely contained to Italy's richer north

Rome, March 22: Italy on Saturday reported 793 new coronavirus deaths, a one-day record that saw the country's toll shoot up to 4,825 — 38.3 percent of the world's total.

The number of confirmed Covid-19 infections rose by 6,557 to 53,578. The total number of fatalities in the northern Lombardy regions around Milan surpassed 3,000.

Northern Italy has been the hardest hit by the coronavirus outbreak. It accounts for nearly two-thirds of Italy's fatalities. Italy has reported 1,420 deaths since Friday, a grim figure that suggests the pandemic may be breaking through the government's various containment and social distancing measures.

The Mediterranean nation of 60 million has been under an effective lockdown since March 12, when public gatherings were banned and most stores shuttered.

In a bid to combat the outbreak, approximately three million masks were scheduled to arrive in Italy on Saturday.

Police were out in force across the streets of Rome on Saturday, checking documents and fining those outside without a valid

reason, such as buying groceries.

Joggers were asked to run around the block of their houses, parks and beaches were closed, and the government in Rome prepared to extend school and other closures into the summer months.

But the outbreak keeps gathering pace in the new global epicentre of a virus that was first reported in December in China and has since transformed the world, straining health care systems, upending lives for millions and pummeling stock markets globally.

The figures released Saturday showed deaths still largely contained to Italy's richer north, whose world-class healthcare system is creaking under the pressure of coronavirus patients.

But it is better that what is available in the poorer south, where some regions have registered a few dozen deaths — and which the government in Rome is watching closely.

The Lazio region that includes Rome has recorded a total of 50 deaths and 1,190 infections.

The rising death toll comes despite widespread efforts to lockdown the entire country.

Russia sends experts, medics

Moscow, March 22: Russia on Sunday sent the first of nine military planes which are to take a total of 100 army virus experts and medics to Italy to help fight the coronavirus pandemic there.

The Russian defence ministry said the aid mission was agreed by President Vladimir Putin and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. They spoke on the phone Saturday evening, the Kremlin said.

The military transport planes arrived overnight at an aerodrome outside Moscow and eight medical teams were ready to fly out with mobile aerosol disinfecting units and medical equipment, the

defence ministry said. “The first plane took off Sunday and was due to land at the Pratica di Mare military airport outside Rome, the ministry said.

“The planes are set to fly out a group of around 100 people including specialists on viruses and epidemics from the defence ministry who have “significant international experience of fighting epidemics.”

Italy announced 627 new deaths on Friday, as its number of fatalities went past that of China, where the virus originated. Italy's government said on Friday it is considering even further restrictions on its already locked-down population as the country reels under the continued spread of the coronavirus. “In the next 24 to 48

hours, new restrictions are possible,” Italy's minister of regional affairs Francesco Boccia said Friday, citing the possibility of banning open-air activities.

The presidents of regions in the north — Italy's richest and the most devastated by the virus — have been pressing Prime Minister Giuseppe

Conte to clamp down even harder on the movement of people, calling for the deployment of the army to help enforce the measures. “Unfortunately, even today the statistics aren't going in the right direction, neither in terms of new infections or in terms of deaths,” Lombardy's president Attilio Fontana said. — Agencies

Spain reports 394 new deaths

Madrid, March 22: Spain on Sunday announced 394 new deaths caused by the novel coronavirus, raising to 1,720 the official death toll in Europe's worst-hit country after Italy, a 30 percent increase over the previous day.

The number of confirmed cases of the disease rose by 3,646, or 14.6 percent, to 28,572, according to health ministry figures, with officials warning infections will rise further in the coming days. With 1,785 being treated in intensive care units for the virus, there is mounting concern about overcrowding at hospitals.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned late on Saturday that Spain's outbreak, already among the harshest in the world, would continue to worsen. “We must prepare ourselves emotionally and psychologically for very hard days ahead,” he told the nation in a televised address late on Saturday.

“We have yet to receive the strongest, most damaging wave, which will test our material and moral capacities to the limit, as well as our spirit as a society,” he added. Spain has issued lockdown orders for its roughly 46 million residents who are only permitted to leave their homes for essential work, food shopping, medical reasons or to walk the dog. — AFP

“We must prepare ourselves emotionally and psychologically for very hard days ahead. We have yet to receive the impact of the strongest, most damaging wave, which will test our material and moral capacities to the limit, as well as our spirit as a society” — PEDRO SANCHEZ, Prime Minister

COLOMBIA ANNOUNCES 1ST VIRUS DEATH

Bogota, March 22: Colombia has reported its first coronavirus death, the country's health minister announced Saturday, with the central American nation recording 210 infections.

Fernando Ruiz said the patient was “a 58-year-old man, living in the town of Cartagena, working as a taxi driver, who transported two foreign citizens in his vehicle in the past few days.”

He died on March 16, but the cause was not established until several days later, the minister said. Colombians will go into obligatory self-isolation for almost three weeks from Tuesday evening in an attempt to prevent the spread of Covid-19. — AFP

Queen's aide tests positive

London, March 22: A royal aide at Buckingham Palace has reportedly tested positive for the coronavirus while Queen Elizabeth II was still at her London residence. The 93-year-old monarch shifted out of the palace to Windsor Castle indefinitely on Thursday as a “precaution” after all her engagements were cancelled and reports are that she is healthy.

“The worker tested positive before the Queen left for Windsor. But the Palace has 500 members of staff so, like any workplace, it's not inconceivable it would be affected in some stage,” “The Sun” quoted a royal source as saying.

The aide, who has not been named, is believed to have taken ill and tested positive for the deadly virus earlier last week. Buckingham Palace has declined to comment on the reports but said that it was taking all necessary steps in light of the advisory in place for the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been rapidly spreading in the UK as the death toll rose to 233 on Saturday.

“We wouldn't comment on individual members of staff. In line with the appropriate guidance and our own processes, we have taken the necessary actions to protect all employees and people involved,” a palace spokesperson said. “There are some reports that the monarch is preparing to deliver a live television broadcast in the coming days as a morale boost for the public during the ongoing crisis, which has put Britain into a near shutdown with all social venues closed indefinitely and people advised to stay indoors and follow strict social distancing rules. Earlier this week, the Queen had issued a statement of support and called on people to find new ways of staying in touch to get through the lockdown.” — PTI



A man and his son wear face masks in Beijing. — AFP

CHINA REPORTS 1ST LOCAL CASE AFTER 3 DAYS

Beijing, March 22: China will redirect all arriving international flights from its capital Beijing to 12 other cities from Monday to control the surge of imported coronavirus cases as the country reported its first domestically transmitted Covid-19 case after a gap of three days, officials said on Sunday.

The country's National Health Commission (NHC) said that 46 new confirmed cases were reported on the mainland on Saturday, including one domestic infection transmitted by imported cases in Guangzhou.

The NHC said Sunday six deaths were reported from China on Saturday, including five from Hubei province, taking the country's death toll to 3,261. Coronavirus epicentre Wuhan, however, has not reported any new case for the fourth consecutive day, the health officials said. — PTI

Oz bans travel within the country

Sydney, March 22: Australia's prime minister on Sunday told citizens to cancel any domestic travel plans to slow the spread of coronavirus, warning stronger measures were imminent to deal with localised outbreaks.

Scott Morrison said the government was “moving immediately” to recommend against non-essential travel, announcing the measure as Australia's coronavirus infections topped 1,000 cases.

“WORK-RELATED trips, the transport of essential supplies and travel on compassionate grounds could continue but people should cancel any other travel plans ahead of the upcoming Easter school holidays said Scott Morrison.

He said work-related trips, the transport of

essential supplies and travel on compassionate grounds could continue but people should cancel any other travel plans ahead of the upcoming Easter school holidays. “More stronger measures will be coming and they will be coming in more localised areas to deal with outbreaks,” Morrison said.

“What that means is, what may be necessary in a part of Sydney may not be necessary at all in... other parts of the country.”

Australia has already sealed off its borders, putting in place an unprecedented ban on entry for non-residents in the hope of stemming the rise of Covid-19 infections. Two Australian regions — the island state of Tasmania and the Northern Territory — have also implemented a 14-day quarantine period for all visitors. — AFP

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RISKY AFFAIR

For guerrilla fighters and extremist groups, it's a clear godsend: Specialist

Will coronavirus slow down world's conflicts?

United Nations, March 22: Syria, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, the Sahel... with the great powers focused intently on the Covid-19 virus, will armed conflicts across the world decrease in severity or intensity? Experts as well as diplomats at the United Nations say there is a serious risk of the latter.

For guerrilla fighters and extremist groups, “it's a clear godsend,” said Bertrand Badie, a specialist in international relations at France's Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po). When the “powerful become powerless,” he said, one can see “the revenge of the weak over the strong.”

In recent days, some 30 Malian soldiers were killed in an attack in

northern Mali blamed on jihadists, without drawing any sharp reaction from the Security Council. In Libya, and Syria's Idlib region — the object of intense diplomatic attention before the coronavirus stole the spotlight — fighting continues.

Evoking the “potentially devastating impact of #Covid-19 in #Idlib and elsewhere in Syria,” the UN undersecretary-general for political affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, called on Twitter for all parties to show restraint.

“If anyone — incredibly — still needed a reason to stop the fighting there,” she added, “this is it.” Martin Griffiths, the UN special envoy for Yemen, issued a similar plea: “At a time when the world is

struggling to fight a pandemic, the focus of the parties must shift away from fighting one another to ensuring that the population will not face even graver risks.”

Up to now, these countries have not been afflicted by Covid-19 on the scale seen in China, South Korea or Europe. But the virus carries the potential, once it reaches into poor and conflict-ridden countries, of having a devastating impact.

In the absence of concerted assistance from abroad, the UN fears “millions” could die. The pandemic will not necessarily favour any particular group of belligerents, one diplomat noted, because the ravaging disease has been “uncontrollable.” — AFP



French soldiers install beds at the military field hospital at The Emile Muller Hospital in Mulhouse, eastern France, on Sunday. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

GERMAN PREZ MERKEL IN QUARANTINE

Berlin, March 22: German Chancellor Angela Merkel will quarantine herself at home after being treated by a doctor who has since tested positive for the novel coronavirus, a government spokesman said Sunday.

"The Chancellor has decided to quarantine herself immediately at home. She will be tested regularly in the coming days... (and) fulfil her official business from home," Steffen Seibert said in a statement.

The doctor had visited Merkel Friday to vaccinate her against the pneumococcus bacteria. It could take some time to determine whether the chancellor is herself infected as "a test would not yet be fully conclusive," Seibert said.

During her 15-year term in office Merkel has largely enjoyed robust health, although she suffered repeated shaking spells in public appearances during a summer 2019 heatwave that were never fully explained. In response to the tremors, she chose to sit on a chair when receiving guests with military honours outside the chancellor's office in Berlin. Previously the veteran leader broke her pelvis in a cross-country skiing accident in 2014.

SULKING TS STUDENTS IN UK MOVED TO HOTEL

London, March 22: A group of 19 Indian students, who had sought refuge within the Indian High Commission premises in London demanding to be put on an India-bound flight despite travel restrictions back home in view of the coronavirus pandemic, were moved to a hotel on Sunday evening.

The students, mostly from Telangana, had initially refused offers of accommodation arranged with the help of Indian diaspora groups as India's ban on travellers from the UK and Europe remains in place until the end of this month.

"We have finally reasoned with them and organised for them to take taxis to a hotel in west London," said a community leader who has been working with the High Commission on arrangements for the stranded students. They had been placed within a quarantined space, which houses the visa and consular section within the Indian High Commission building in Aldwych, central London. Many of them had booked flight tickets back to India for later this month, in time for what is usually an Easter break period at universities in the UK.

However, India issued an updated travel advisory earlier this week, saying no travellers would be allowed entry into India after 1200 GMT on March 18 until March 31. It triggered a last-minute dash for flights as many students took to social media to seek assistance from the Indian High Commission as their travel plans went awry in the wake of the rapid spread of the pandemic.

8 INDIAN SAILORS STRANDED ON SHIP OFF UAE

Dubai, March 22: Eight Indian sailors stranded without full wages for nine months aboard a ship off the UAE have appealed for help as three of them have fallen sick, according to a media report.

The eight sailors are trapped on the ship, MV Hoot, off the coast of Khor Fakkan since June 2019 after unwittingly embroiling in a legal dispute, *The Gulf News* reported.

Recently, two of the seamen reportedly developed cold and fever while a third has contracted skin infection. With no access to healthcare or medicines, the remaining crew members fear it's only a matter of time when they will also fall sick, the paper reported.

"Our condition is deteriorating day by day. We are exhausted both mentally and physically. I don't know how long we could hold on like this," Suresh Kumar, the ship's chief officer, told the newspaper over phone.

He also claimed that the shipping company owed him several months of wages. Jaspal Singh, 32, who handles engine maintenance, said they are living on borrowed time. "Two of us are running fever and our cook has developed blisters all over his body. We have to ration drinking water as we have no access to fresh water. Many of us haven't taken a proper bath in months. We use sea water to bath ourselves," he said.



Medical staff use a trolley to move a patient towards a medical helicopter at The Emile Muller Hospital in Mulhouse, eastern France, on Sunday. — AFP

1.5m at risk due to virus: UK

People should stay at home, protect our NHS and save lives says secretary

London, March 22: Up to 1.5 million vulnerable people in Britain, identified as being most at risk from the coronavirus epidemic, should stay at home for at least 12 weeks, the government said Sunday.

Those with underlying health conditions such as bone or blood cancers, cystic fibrosis, or who have had an organ transplant have been advised by health officials to do all

they can to shield themselves from the virus, including confining themselves at home for a long period.

"People should stay at home, protect our NHS and save lives," Communities secretary Robert Jenrick said in a statement. He added that the government was asking "extremely vulnerable individuals" to take "extra steps to shield them-

● **THOSE WITH** underlying health conditions such as bone or blood cancers, or who have had an organ transplant have been advised by health officials to do all they can to shield themselves from the virus.

A statement from the communities department outlined the time frame

the government wanted the most vulnerable to follow. "People identified as belonging to one or more of the at-risk groups will be contacted by their GP practice, specialist or both strongly advising them to stay at home for a period of at least 12 weeks."

A dedicated phone line and arrangements to deliver groceries or medicines will also be announced. Paul

Johnstone, director of Public Health England, said those contacted should "not go out for shopping, for leisure or for travel".

Latest figures show 177 people have died in UK from the coronavirus. On Friday, the government announced stronger measures to try and combat the spread, including the closing of bars, pubs and restaurants. — AFP

NY airports, hospitals feel the pressure

New York, March 22: New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the state is scouring the globe for medical supplies and scouting temporary hospital locations as the coronavirus crisis grows.

Flights to New York City-area airports were briefly suspended after an air-traffic control worker tested positive. As the number of confirmed cases statewide soared above 11,000,

Columbia University's chief of surgery raised alarms about a torrent of patients soon overwhelming emergency rooms. Cuomo said the goal is to quickly boost the state's hospital capacity from around 50,000 beds to 75,000 beds.

About 1,600 people have been hospitalized so far. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has declared a major disaster in the state, freeing up access to billions of dollars in relief funding. As of late Saturday night, the disease has killed 60 people in New York City.

38 +ve for virus in NYC jails

New York, March 22: New York City was hit by the nation's largest coronavirus jail outbreak to date this week, with at least 38 people testing positive at the notorious Rikers Island complex and nearby facilities — more than half of them incarcerated men, the board that oversees the city's jail system said Saturday.

Another inmate, meanwhile, became the first in the country to test positive in a federal jail. In a letter to New York's criminal justice leaders, Board of Correction interim chairwoman Jacq-

ueline Sherman described a jail system in crisis.

She said in the last week, board members learned that 12 Department of Correction employees, five Correctional Health Services employees, and 21 people in custody at Rikers and city jails had tested positive for the coronavirus.

And at least another 58 were being monitored in the prison's contagious disease and quarantine units, she said.

"It is likely these people have been in hundreds of housing areas and common areas over recent

weeks and have been in close contact with many other people in custody and staff," said Sherman, warning that cases could skyrocket. "The best path forward to protecting the community of people housed and working in the jails is to rapidly decrease the number of people housed and working in them."

New York officials have consistently downplayed the number of infections in its prisons and jails, *The Associated Press* has found in conversations with current and former inmates. — Agencies

Cuomo said. Officials have identified 2 million masks that can be sent to hot spots, and apparel companies are pivoting to make masks, Cuomo said.

A million masks were being sent Saturday to New York City hospitals, and 500,000 to Long Island. Because of dwindling supplies, hospitals have been rationing supplies and asking staff to reuse masks until they become soiled.

Columbia University's chief surgeon, Dr. Craig Smith, said hospitals in the New York-Presbyterian system are burning through about 40,000 masks a day — about 10 times the normal amount.

The state is also rounding up critically needed ventilators, purchasing 6,000 to deploy to the most critical areas and investigating whether multiple patients can be served by a single ventilator, Cuomo said. "We are literally scouring the globe looking for medical supplies," he said. — AP

China was very secretive on virus says Trump

Washington, March 22: President Donald Trump has hit out at China for being "very secretive" in sharing information on its coronavirus outbreak that has claimed over 13,000 lives globally, asserting that the US and the world would have been better prepared if Beijing gave an "advance warning" about the impending crisis.

Speaking at a press briefing here on Saturday, Trump denied reports that the US intelligence reports in January and February had warned of a coming pandemic, saying America did not know about the outbreak until it started coming out publicly.

"Just so you understand, China is not a beneficiary here. China has thousands and thousands of people. China has gone through hell over this. They've gone through hell. I've had conversations with (Chinese) President Xi (Jinping). I just wish they could have told us earlier. They knew they had a problem earlier. I wish they could have said that," Trump said.

For more than a week now, Trump has been addressing the White House press on a daily basis, with each briefing running for more than an hour every day. "China was very secretive (on coronavirus). Very, very secretive. And that's unfortunate," he told reporters.

Trump reiterated that he greatly respects China and shares a very good relationship with his Chinese counterpart Xi

CHINA EMBARKS ON CLINICAL TRIAL FOR VIRUS VACCINE

Beijing, March 22: China has started the first phase of a clinical trial for a novel coronavirus vaccine, records show, as the world's scientists race to find a way to combat the deadly pathogen.

It comes after US health officials said last week they had started a trial to evaluate a possible vaccine in Seattle.

The Chinese effort began on March 16 — the same day as the US announcement — and is expected to continue until the end of the year, according to a filing in the country's Clinical Trial Registry, dated March 17.

"Volunteers of the Covid-19 phase one trial have already started receiving the vaccine," a staff member involved in the government-funded project said on Sunday.

The 108 participants, aged between 18 and 60, will be tested in three groups and given different dosages.

They are all residents of the central city of Wuhan — where the new coronavirus first emerged late last year.

Jinping, but expressed his disappointment that Beijing was dishonest and slow to alert the world about the seriousness of coronavirus. — AP

Sen. Rand Paul is tested positive

Washington, March 22: Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul says he has tested positive for Covid-19, the disease caused by coronavirus.

The Republican is the first member of the Senate to report testing positive.

He said in a tweet Sunday that he is feeling fine and is in quarantine.

Paul, a doctor, said he has not had symptoms and was tested out of an abundance of caution due to his extensive travel and events. Paul said he was not aware of any direct contact with any infected person.

Two House members, Reps. Mario Diaz Balart of Florida of Ben McAdams of Utah, have tested positive.

The Senate was in session Sunday seeking a bipartisan response to the pandemic. — AP

US VICE PREZ PENCE, WIFE TEST NEGATIVE

Washington, March 22: US Vice President Mike Pence and his wife Karen Pence have tested negative for the deadly novel coronavirus, a top White House official said on Saturday. Pence and the Second Lady took the test after a staff from his team tested positive for the deadly disease. However, the infected staff was never in direct contact with either Pence or US President Donald Trump.

"Pleased to report that the Covid-19 test results came back negative for both Vice President @Mike_Pence and Second Lady @KarenPence," Katie Miller, the Press Secretary for Pence, said in a tweet on Saturday. — AP

N. KOREA SAYS TRUMP SENT LETTER TO KIM

Seoul, March 22: President Donald Trump sent a personal letter to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, seeking to maintain good relations and offering cooperation in fighting the coronavirus, Kim's sister said Sunday.

The latest correspondence came as Kim observed the firing of tactical guided weapons over the weekend, drawing criticism from South Korea, as nuclear talks remain deadlocked.

In a statement carried by the North's official, Kim's sister and senior ruling party official, Kim Yo Jong, praised Trump for sending the letter at a time when "big difficulties and challenges lie ahead in the way of developing ties" between the countries.

In the letter, Trump explained his plan to "propel the relations between the two countries and expressed his intent to render cooperation in the anti-epidemic work," an apparent reference to the global coronavirus outbreak. — AP

ESCAPE FROM VIRUS Banner on website banner reads 'open throughout the year'

Boom time for S. Korea drive-in cinema

Seoul, March 22: A long queue of cars forms in front of a drive-in cinema in Seoul, as South Koreans look for safer spaces to enjoy a movie without the risk of contracting the coronavirus raging across the world.

Box office numbers in South Korea — which has 8,897 confirmed virus cases — have plummeted in recent weeks due to the epidemic, with authorities urging the public to avoid large crowds.

But at Park Dong-ju's drive-in cinema, moviegoers can enjoy a film from the comfort of their cars, parked in front of a large outdoor screen. "We've had a 10-20 per cent increase in sales for weekdays, and sell out on weekends," Park said, adding: "We're definitely getting many more calls and internet inquiries after the coronavirus outbreak."

A website for his drive-in cinema shows a large banner that reads, "Open throughout the year", a stark contrast to some theatres worldwide forced to suspend business over virus fears. Choi Jin-



An outdoor screen shows a movie at a drive-through cinema in Seoul. — AFP

young, a 22-year-old hospital worker, said she had to wait two hours for tickets and was worried that it might sell out for the weekend. "I wanted to enjoy culture life with my

boyfriend but since cinemas are dangerous and worrying to go, I looked for a special date and that's how we came here," she said. Park Ji-seung, 24, said he

refrained from going outside due to the coronavirus outbreak, but added he felt "safe" at the drive-in cinema. South Korean Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun urged

religious, indoor sports and entertainment facilities to suspend operations for 15 days, asking the public to work from home and refrain from going outside. — AFP



IRAN LEADER REFUSES US ASSISTANCE

Dubai, March 22: Iran's supreme leader refused US assistance Sunday to fight the new virus, citing an unfounded conspiracy theory that the virus could be man-made by America. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments as Iran faces crushing US sanctions blocking the country from selling its crude oil and accessing international financial markets.

But while Iranian civilian officials in recent days have increasingly criticized those sanctions, 80-year-old Khamenei instead chose to traffic in the same conspiracy theory increasingly used by Chinese officials about the new virus to deflect blame for the pandemic. — AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	29,915.96	5.75
Nifty 50	8,745.45	5.83
S&P 500*	2,405.92	-0.14
Dollar (₹)	75.20	-0.11
Pound Sterling (₹)	88.29	-1.97
Euro (₹)	80.53	0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	41,705s1,395	3.34
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	27.20	-4.46
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.259	-2.397
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.006	-10.895

* As of 9:30 pm IST, March 20

DLF allots 10,000 debentures to raise ₹1,000cr

Realty major DLF has raised ₹1,000 crore through the issue of non-convertible debentures on a private placement basis. The company has allotted 10,000 senior, secured, rated, listed, redeemable, non-convertible debentures of the face value of ₹10 lakh each at par, according to a regulatory filing. The tenure of the NCDs is three years with coupon rate of 9.25 per cent and 9.5 per cent annually.

Indian Oil begins supply of BS-VI fuel before Apr 1



Indian Oil Corp (IOC), the nation's biggest oil firm, has begun the supply of the world's cleanest petrol and diesel across the country with all its 28,000 petrol pumps dispensing ultra-low sulphur fuel a good two weeks before the April 1 deadline. "We have successfully rolled out the supply of BS-VI grade fuel across the country," Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) chairman Sanjiv Singh said.

Green certificate sales rise 64% to 21 lakh in Feb.

Sales of renewable energy certificates rose over 64 per cent to 21.42 lakh units in February compared to 13.02 lakh in the same month a year ago owing to high demand, according to official government data. Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) are a type of market-based instrument. One REC is created when one megawatt hour of electricity is generated from an eligible renewable energy resource.

JSL's CDR exit helps SBI to add ₹300cr to profit

A consortium of lenders led by State Bank of India (SBI) will add about ₹770 crore to their bottomlines during the fourth quarter following the exit of Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL) from the Corporate Debt Restructuring (CDR) framework. SBI will get ₹300 crore from the resolution of this account, sources said. PNB will write back about ₹100 crore from this, sources said, adding that other lenders too will be able to show cash recovery from this account.

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Spread of coronavirus in India forces closure of vehicle production lines Most auto factories shut down

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, MARCH 22

The deadly Coronavirus pandemic has virtually forced most automobile factories across the country to shut down operations till March 31 to contain the virus contagion.

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest car maker, Mahindra & Mahindra, India's biggest utility vehicle maker, Honda Cars, Hero MotoCorp, India's biggest motorcycle maker, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles on Sunday announced closure of their respective factories. Since the closure of factories was mandated by the government policy, other automakers could follow suit in a day or two. Maruti Suzuki said the government policy now requires the closure of production and accordingly the company has taken

a decision on production closure.

"The company will shut production and office operations at its facilities in Gurugram and Manesar, Haryana with immediate effect till further notice. The company's R&D centre at Rohtak will also remain closed," Maruti Suzuki said in a statement.

Honda Cars India also informed its associates and suppliers on Sunday that production operations at both its manufacturing plants in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh and Tapukara, Rajasthan will be temporarily suspended from March 23 to 31.

Mahindra & Mahindra, which has its biggest plant located at Chakan, near Pune, announced that it has shut down its operation till the pandemic recedes. Similarly, Hero MotoCorp, on Sunday said



it has decided to halt operations at all its global manufacturing facilities — including in India, Colombia and Bangladesh — and the Global Parts Centre (GPC) at Neemrana with immediate effect until March 31.

Employees at all other functions and locations including the Centre of Innovation and Technology (CIT) in Jaipur in Rajasthan will continue to

work from home, except for those whose physical presence is necessary to run the day-to-day essential services, Hero said in a statement.

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, together with Fiat India Automobiles, said that it will work with the government to temporarily close down operations and suspend production to protect the health and safety of employees.

Over a dozen auto firms in Pune and the neighbouring twin industrial belt of Pimpri-Chinchwad, which together accounted for 23 of the 63 coronavirus positive cases, with two deaths in Mumbai out of five till date in the country, have shut down their plants.

Tata Motors, with the biggest production base among automotive companies in Maharashtra, was the first company to announce a shutdown followed by Bajaj Auto, India's second biggest motorcycle maker.

German car makers Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen have also shut their factories in Pune.

Mini bus maker Force Motors, construction equipment giant JCB, and commercial vehicle maker Eicher Motors too decided to close their production operations.

Netflix, Amazon told to switch to SD video format

New Delhi, March 22: Anticipating a spike in online video streaming demand amid lockdown and quarantine measures to contain the spread of coronavirus, COAI has urged the government to issue immediate instructions to streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and others to initiate measures that will ease pressure on network infrastructure, which is needed for "critical" functions at this juncture.

The Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) has also approached streaming platforms cautioning them about surge in digital use straining network infrastructure of telecom operators, and urged companies to take urgent steps like temporarily switching to SD (standard definition) from HD (hi definition) streaming, removing high bandwidth-consuming advertisements and pop-ups, and replacing them with public announcements on awareness regarding the virus.

In a letter to telecom secretary Anshu Prakash, COAI has said, "Due to lockdown/ quarantine measures in various parts of the country, a sudden surge in demand for online video streaming is also expected to rise substantially."

COAI said that during this crucial time, it is absolutely essential for the streaming platforms to cooperate with telecom providers so as to manage the traffic distribution

● COAI has also asked streaming platforms to take urgent steps like temporarily switching to SD (standard definition) from HD (hi definition) streaming in the wake of more people shifting to work from home.

● Remove high bandwidth-consuming advertisements and pop-ups, and replacing them with public announcements on awareness regarding the virus.

patterns that are likely to strain the network infrastructure "at a time when it is needed for various critical requirements". Citing the "unprecedented situation" due to the outbreak of coronavirus, COAI noted that the governments are taking various measures to reduce social interactions, in order to contain the spread of the pandemic.

"In the past few days, in India too, advisories have been issued by various government agencies including social distancing, restrictions in terms of workplace, also encouraging Work From Home (WFH), digital education, digital payments/ transactions, online healthcare, wherever possible and other critical requirements to be met through digital means. This sudden surge in digital use is already putting pressure on the network infrastructure of the Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)," COAI said.

—PTI

Covid-19 may set off debt crisis, threaten global economy

S. UMAMAHESHWAR HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

The global economy may be starting at one of the biggest debt crises in the history as countries shut down production lines and lock down people at their homes to stop the spread of deadly Coronavirus.

According to the Institute of International Finance, the global debt in October 2019 stood at \$253 trillion, which is 3.2 times of the value of annual global productivity — the highest ever in the recent history.

A general shutdown to quarantine people has halted the operations of companies, affecting their revenue. An expectation to continue paying workers during the lockdown would further put stress on financials of companies. While governments have signalled that banks would go easy on repayments, the companies would accumulate further debt by the time Covid-19 is buried. Governments also would have to raise debt or easy restrictions to mint new money — despite fragile economic conditions — to deal with an unprecedented health and financial crisis.

According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development, sustained debts could pose a larger problem for the global economy and financial system.

"Today's financial fragility far predates the Covid-19 "black swan." Given the massive accumulation of debt in both developed and developing countries since the 2008 financial crisis, it has long been clear that even a minor event — some "known unknown" — could have far-reaching destabilising effects. Yet, until recently, rising asset prices — owing to a long

● According to the Institute of International Finance, the global debt in October 2019 stood at \$253 trillion, which is 3.2 times of the value of annual global productivity — the highest ever in the recent history.

● According to India Ratings and Research, about 25 per cent of ₹10.52 lakh crore of the low-rated corporate debt — ₹2.54 lakh crore — is vulnerable to default.

period of extraordinarily loose monetary policies in advanced economies — disguised mounting debt levels," economist Jayanti Ghosh wrote in *Project Syndicate*.

"Worse, more sovereign-debt repayments on short-maturity international bonds will soon be due. And foreign exchange reserves, which have declined in many emerging markets and developing economies as a result of recent capital outflows, will be less robust in the face of further outflows as bond markets become more fraught," she wrote.

With investors turning risk averse, the debt market may dry up for companies which don't have robust credit ratings.

Unless government takes steps to oil financial markets, the crisis triggered by Coronavirus could explode decades long debt bubble.

According to India Ratings and Research, about 25 per cent of ₹10.52 lakh crore of the low-rated corporate debt — ₹2.54 lakh crore — is vulnerable to default over the next three years. Delinquencies in corporate debt could add to an already piled-up bad loans of ₹11 lakh crore, affecting the health of the country's banking sector.

Stock markets likely to bleed further this week

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MARCH 22

More pain lies ahead for the domestic equity investors as Coronavirus is still at a threatening stage in India and globally infected people count has risen to more than three lakhs compared to two lakh just four days back. In India, the number of infected people have risen to 341, with seven people dying of the infection, so far. Several companies have shut down factories as a precautionary measure.

Hero MotoCorp has decided to halt operations at all its global manufacturing facilities — including in India, Colombia and Bangladesh — and the Global Parts Centre (GPC) at Neemrana with immediate effect until March 31, 2020, the company informed stock exchanges on Sunday.

Gains posted by the Sensex and the Nifty-50 under the Narendra Modi government since 2014 are at risk this week as the rupee value could further plummet due to the massive selling by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs). The Sensex rallied 5.75

● The market is now oversold. Short covering may lead to sharp volatility. Also, when liquidity is low, selling in cash market can lead to crash in prices.

— V.K. VIJAYKUMAR, Chief investment strategist, Geojit Financial Services

per cent or 1,627.73 points on Friday on short covering. But with the situation getting worsen globally, the Indian equity markets could face higher selling pressure on Monday.

A new circular issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on Friday to curb short-selling could have an impact on the equity markets on Monday as they would open amid huge negative sentiment in the wake of coronavirus spreading all over the world.

V.K. Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said, "Tightening of rules on short-selling can bring down excessive volatility during times of crisis like this. Therefore, it has to be welcomed. However, there can be unintended consequences in the time

of panic. The market is now oversold. Short covering may lead to sharp volatility. Also, when liquidity is low, selling in cash market can lead to crash in prices."

The rupee closed at a record low on Friday at 75.24 per US dollar amid persistent selling by foreign portfolio investors. Friday provisional data showed FPIs were net sellers of Indian equities worth ₹3,345.95 crore.

As per NSDL data, FPIs have sold shares worth ₹49,507 crore and bonds worth ₹49,228 crore and total outflows in March 2020 so far are ₹95,485 crore or \$12.5 billion, according to an estimate.

India's foreign exchange reserves fell by \$5.35 billion to \$481.9 billion in the week ended March 13, according to data published by the RBI. "The decline in the reserve indicates RBI intervention through dollar selling to control volatility and steep depreciation. The dollar hit record highs versus the rupee and may continue doing so as investors flock to US treasuries," said forex consultant IFA Global.

MF schemes lose 25% value

New Delhi, March 22: Equity-oriented mutual fund schemes delivered a negative return of about 25 per cent to investors over the last one month as the broader market witnessed significant downturn amid coronavirus-triggered recession fears.

The 44-player mutual fund industry is not immune to the economic blowback of Covid-19, and going ahead, small and mid-cap equity schemes will continue to remain under pressure in the short to medium

term on account of volatility in the markets, said Krishna Karwa, Senior Research Analyst, at iFAST Financial India.

According to data compiled by Morningstar India, all the equity scheme categories — ELSS, mid-cap, large & mid-cap, large-cap, small-cap, mid-cap and multi-cap have given negative return in the range of 25-26 per cent between February 19 and March 18, 2020.

Individually, large and mid-cap funds have given a negative return of 26.63 per cent followed by

large-cap (26.58 per cent), ELSS (26.47 per cent), multi-cap (26.45 per cent), small-cap (26.32 per cent) and mid-cap (24.84 per cent). Notably, all the funds fell less than their respective benchmark indices during the bear market.

"We have seen such falls in the market multiple times before. But as we have seen in the past over the long term markets will recover," Morningstar India director-manager research Kaustubh Belapurkar said. —PTI

Low oil prices set off decline of Gulf's oil empire

DAVID FICKLING SYDNEY, MARCH 22

For much of the world, oil wealth is a curse. Endowed with ample reserves of hydrocarbons, the likes of Nigeria, Angola, Kazakhstan, Mexico and Venezuela frittered the benefits away.

Only in the Persian Gulf has oil been a nation-building blessing. The discoveries of petroleum in the mid-20th century turned an anarchic, desperately poor region into one of the most affluent places on the planet. Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates are all richer than Switzerland, Bahrain, and Oman are on a par with Japan or the United Kingdom.

The transformation has been so complete that it's easy to believe the wealth derives from some eternal law of nature. That's not true, though. The current price war in oil markets will only hasten the moment when the unsustainable nature of Gulf economies faces a brutal reckoning.

Right now, all six monarchies are joining with Russia in opening the taps to flood the crude market and flush out higher-cost producers. While the planned 2.5 million barrels per day increase from Saudi Arabia is by far the biggest wave in this tsunami, its neighbors aren't holding back. The UAE will daily add about 200,000 barrels or more, according to consultancy

Rystad Energy, while Kuwait will lift output by 110,000 barrels. Russia will raise daily production by 200,000 barrels.

That spurge of supply isn't due to geopolitics. Instead, it's a mathematical result of the decline in the oil price. With fewer dollars coming in for each barrel of crude, Gulf monarchies need to pump much more to maintain current revenues.

In principle, there's ample firepower to fight this war. It costs about as much to pump a barrel of oil from a Gulf oilfield as it does to buy a bottle of fancy mineral water. Even in an extreme scenario where crude prices fall as low as \$10 a barrel and almost the entire global

oil industry loses money, Gulf producers would remain in the black. The problem comes for their economies, which need a far higher price to balance their budgets and support dollar-linked currencies.

The region's central banks and sovereign wealth funds have assembled vast sums to see them through such a crisis, as well as the longer-term risk of declining demand. Faced with lower prices, however, these buffers could disintegrate quickly.

Take the net financial assets held by Saudi Arabia's government. These declined to just 0.1 per cent of gross domestic product from 50 per cent over the four years through 2018 as crude plunged from levels of

around \$100 a barrel at the end of 2014. The kingdom is now likely to be a net debtor for the foreseeable future, even if prices rise back above \$60.

Over the same four years, net financial assets held by the six Gulf monarchies fell by around half a trillion dollars, to around \$2 trillion, according to a study last month by the International Monetary Fund. Even if peak oil demand doesn't hit until 2040, that remaining sum could be depleted by 2034, according to the Fund. Oil at \$20 a barrel would run it down even faster, emptying the coffers as soon as 2027.

With oil prices in the range of \$50 to \$55 a barrel, Saudi Arabia's international reserves would

fall to about five months of import coverage as soon as 2024, according to an IMF report last year. That should be a deeply alarming prospect, bringing the kingdom within months of an unthinkable balance-of-payments crisis and the abandonment of the dollar peg, which has underpinned the global oil trade for a generation. Yet the prices we're now seeing make this look almost like an optimistic scenario.

There's still time to avert this future, but it will involve major changes to our ideas about the Gulf and its role in the global economy.

The era when the Gulf nations and their sovereign wealth funds were magic cash machines prepared to pay top dollar for

assets on every continent may be coming to an end. They may even have to turn into net sellers. That will affect institutions from the US Treasury market, where Saudi Arabia holds about \$183 billion of securities; to Softbank Group Corp., which may find Riyadh a less generous partner for funding Masayoshi Son's expansive visions.

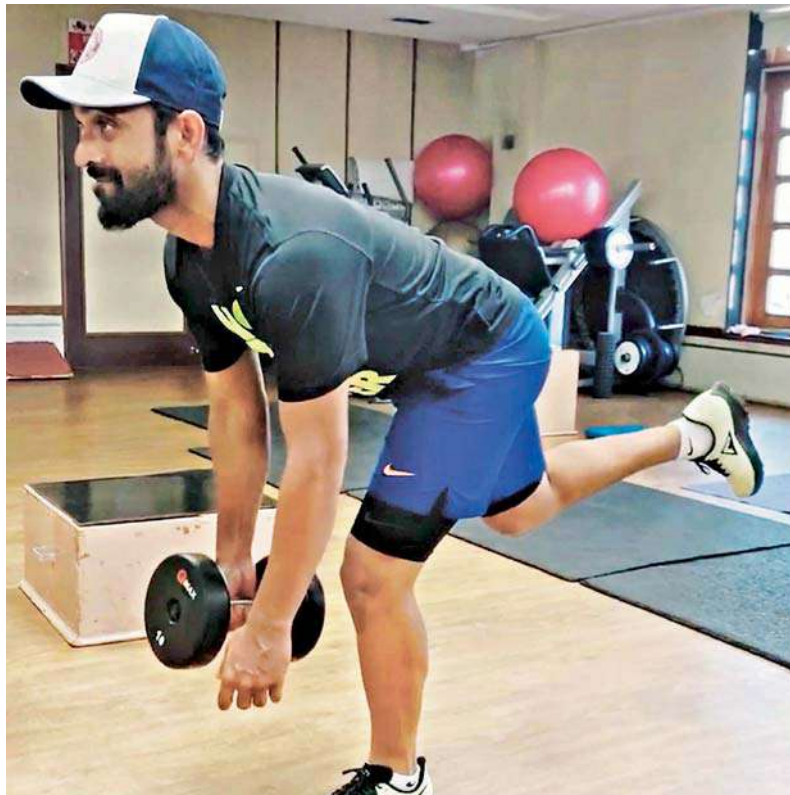
The monarchies have surfed a remarkable tide of wealth over the past half-century or so, but every wave eventually crashes. Future generations will never again see the wealth that current subjects enjoy. Perhaps the Gulf wasn't spared from oil's curse, after all. That moment was only deferred. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

'Ignored' Rohit takes a dig at ICC

New Delhi: India's swashbuckling opener Rohit Sharma on Sunday took a dig at the ICC after his name did not feature in a poll initiated by the apex body on who has got the best pull shot in international cricket. The International Cricket Council tweeted a collage of four batsmen playing the pull shot, asking fans whose is the best. It included pictures of West Indies legend Viv Richards, Australia great Ricky Ponting, former South African batsman Herschelle Gibbs and Indian skipper Virat Kohli. Unamused, Rohit, who is the only batsman to score three double hundreds in the ODIs, responded by tweeting, "Someone's missing here ?? Not easy to work from home I guess." The ICC had asked, "Which batsman, past or present, has the best pull shot, in your opinion?" In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rohit shared his take on the effects of climate change, and looked at the brighter side of the lockdown that has been put in place across the world. — PTI

Sweating it out



With all the coaching centres and gyms being closed as a precautionary measure against coronavirus, cricketers Mayank Agarwal (from left), Ajinkya Rahane and R. Ashwin work out at home. — TWITTER



Atul Bedade

More girls may come out: BCA

BIPIN DANI
MUMBAI, MARCH 22

Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) is awaiting the medical reports of the victim who accused coach Atul Bedade of "sexual harassment". BCA has indefinitely suspended Bedade pending an inquiry into allegations. "The victim is being treated in a hospital in Hyderabad. Her relatives are into medical profession and that's why she is taking treatment in Hyderabad," said Ajit Lele, the secretary of BCA. "There have been more than one complainant. But, so far, there is no complaint of 'sexual favour' against Bedade," Lele added. "After this suspension, more girls may come out in open," he added. Bedade played 13 ODIs for India. Bedade appeared before the internal committee but now BCA is set to form a neutral committee. Former first-class cricketer Shishir Hattagandi, CEO of BCA, was a member of the preliminary investigation team. Interestingly, Hattagandi had appeared as a witness for a woman when her allegations against the BCCI CEO (Rahul Johri) were heard. "The allegations against my brother are false. The justice is not given in this case and no show cause notice was served," Atul's brother, Amarish, said.

McCULLUM REGRETS SPAT WITH TAYLOR

Wellington: Describing his fallout with Ross Taylor a "bad stain for New Zealand cricket", former skipper Brendon McCullum attributed it to a race for captaincy between the two in 2011 and admitted that they still aren't the best of friends despite mutual respect. Taylor, who is still active in international cricket, took over the captaincy after Daniel Vettori stepped down from the position following the 2011 World Cup. "It put some pressure on my friendship and relationship with Ross. I have a lot of development and under-age cricket with Ross. I was the captain of the U-19 team and Taylor was my vice-captain. We've always got on really well," McCullum said in a 'Sky Sports Podcast'. However, after a 1-1 draw in a Test series in Sri Lanka in 2012, it emerged that Taylor had issues with then coach Mike Hesson. That followed series defeats in South Africa, the West Indies and India. "We had to go for an interview for the job. It was about presenting the map for the future of New Zealand cricket to a panel. I don't really know what we were doing. "If I had my time, I would've said 'No I'm not going to come and go through the process, you appoint Ross as captain and then we'll see what unfolds from there.' "It's a bad stain for New Zealand cricket and put pressure on Ross and me. Then it led me to eventually take over the captaincy from Ross," said McCullum. — PTI

Cricketers workout from home

New Delhi, March 22: With gyms closed and the Indian cricket team players sweated it out inside their homes in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. Fielding coach R. Sridhar gave them fitness tips from home.

In a video shared on Instagram by the Indian cricket team, the official handle, Sridhar is seen doing exercises. "Stay indoors and stay fit. Our fielding coach @coach_rsrldhar giving us major fitness goals from home," the post said. Test opener Mayank Agarwal made the most of his time at home with workout sessions. Agarwal posted a series of pictures of him working out in the lawn and at home, doing strength-training exercises.

ASHWIN LAUDS JANTA CURFEW

As PM Narendra Modi urged people to self isolate on Sunday, India spinner R. Ashwin said that it is an unbelievable start of the 'Janta curfew' and hoped that "social distancing can be adhered to in the days to come". "Unbelievable start to the #JantaCurfew, pin drop silence as they used to say in school. Hope this



Sanju Samsom holds a placard to show his support for the 'Janta Curfew'. — TWITTER

is extended beyond this day and social distancing can be adhered to in the days to come. @narendramodi @AmitShah," the senior off spinner tweeted.

SEHWAG, LAXMAN HAIL 'WARRIORS'

Former cricketers Virender Sehwag and VVS Laxman hailed the efforts of 'warriors'. Sehwag took to Twitter to write: "A big Salute to all the warriors who are working tirelessly.

May this pass soon and may there be peace, peace and peace. Om Shanti." On the other hand, Laxman wrote: "Really proud of each and everyone who are working to combat this. We are all extremely proud of you. I pray that these difficult times pass soon and everyone remain healthy and happy."

HESSON IMPRESSED

IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore's

director of cricket, Mike Hesson, is pleased to see 'Janta Curfew' being followed in India. Taking to Twitter, Hesson shared a video of Bandra-Worli Sea Link without any vehicular traffic. In general days, the particular stretch sees heavy traffic. "Have seen this view many times from my hotel room over the years but not with less than 1000 cars on it.....#India is having a curfew today for 14 hours to fight #covid19 it's looks like it's being followed. #jantacurfew #modi #stayathome #corona #covid19 #seagate," Hesson wrote.

WARNE'S ADVICE TO FANS

Former Australian spin legend Shane Warne urged fans across the world to adhere to the government guidelines. Taking to Twitter, he wrote, "Just got sent this!!!!!! Wow, please, please, please can we all stick together and listen to the Govt and adhere to the advice." "We have surpassed 3,00,000 coronavirus cases worldwide. Some perspective: the first 1,00,000 took 3 months the second 1,00,000 took 12 days the third 1,00,000 took 3 days," read a picture

shared by the leg-spinner.

SACHIN PRAISES INDIANS FOR EFFORT

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar on Sunday praised all Indians for coming together as a nation even while staying at home and showing support to those in the essential services working overtime to fight Covid-19. "Today India came together even while staying in our homes. While we are at home there are many who are selflessly performing their duties. Thank you to each one of you for putting us before yourself. The discipline and commitment we showed today needs to continue," Tendulkar said in a tweet.

GOOD TIME TO INTROSPECT: POLLARD

West Indies' limited-overs skipper Kieron Pollard believes the break brought upon them by the Covid-19 pandemic is a good time to "introspect". "It is a good time for introspection, a good time for reflection, a good time to look at where you are as an individual in your career and what you want to achieve going forward," he was quoted by *Jamaica Gleaner*. — Agencies

Infected Kanika was in same hotel as SA team

Lucknow, March 22: Bollywood singer Kanika Kapoor, who tested positive for coronavirus a few days ago, stayed in the same five-star hotel here as the South African cricket team, who were in India for the ODI series against Virat Kohli and Co. which later got postponed.

"There are reports that she dined in the hotel's buffet and also attended several guests in the lobby," an official was quoted as saying on Sunday.

"She was living there at a time when the South African team was staying in the hotel for the ODI match, which eventually was called off. There is information that Kanika was seen briefly attending a news channel's annual conclave held at the hotel. Therefore, it is important to scan the CCTV footage and list those who came in contact with her."

The Quinton de Kock-led South African cricket team were slated to play

three ODIs in India but the series had to be postponed amid the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic. They came to Kolkata and travelled via Dubai to their respective destinations and have seen been on mandatory quarantine. Kanika has been criticised a lot by netizens for her irresponsible behaviour for not self-quarantining herself upon her return from London and then attending several parties in Lucknow. Her family members are now questioning the medical report which declared her positive. — Agencies

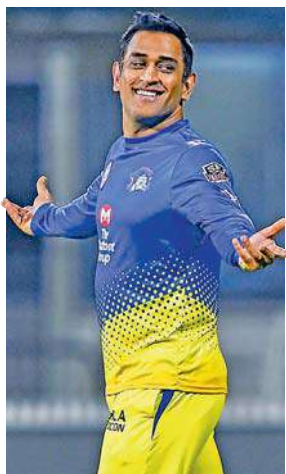
End of a glorious era?



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

The impact of the 'China man' (COVID-19), has seen grounds and play areas bereft of participants. While the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) continues to wait and watch the situation before taking a decision on to play or not to, the Indian Premier League (IPL), the die hards continue their self quarantine imbibing a stale fare on offer. The IPL's future, till the deadly virus is got under control, is speculative at this point in time. Not just the IPL but the possibility of the Men's International Cricket Council's (ICC) Twenty20 World Cup 2020 (T20WC) which is slanted to be played in Australia end October is also in jeopardy. That tournament would have probably been the last opportunity for the effervescent Mahendra Singh Dhoni, a.k.a. MSD to wear the India colours at an international scene. MSD is everyone's favourite, especially when it comes to the shorter formats of the game. Not too many individuals can boast of being part of two ICC World Cup victories, forget leading the team. Indian cricket has had its heroes and the expectations from them, at times, go beyond reality. A few individual performances — with the

bat and the ball — have made supermen out of players. While there have been many, from the time an Indian team stepped out at Lord's to play their first Test match against England in June 1932, individual performances have got the players attain legendary status. Vinoo Mankad's heroics at Lord's in 1952, when he was got back into the team (having been dropped), of spending 18 hours and 45 minutes in the middle in a losing cause can never be forgotten. Nor can Sunil Gavaskar's 221 at the Oval in 1979, when he made a total of 438 runs to chase batting last, is also an unforgettable epic. Not to forget the unrecorded (sadly), unbeaten innings of 175 that skipper Kapil Dev played in 1983 against Zimbabwe, when India were tottering at 5 wickets for 17 runs, is part of an all-time folklore. The grit shown by VVS Laxman while putting the monkey (no pun intended) back on Australian shoulders, with 281 runs scored at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, has many believing that it was the greatest innings played by an Indian at home. Bhagwat Chandrasekar's magical spell of 6 wickets for 38 runs that gave India its first Test



M. S. Dhoni

victory in and against England in 1971 made the country believe that they could achieve the impossible. MSDs heroics were different, he will always be known as the 'captain' rather than the player who inspired his teams — at the T20WC 2007 in South Africa and the ICC World Cup (50 overs) — to victory. Let's take a look at his statistics as a batsman, wicketkeeper. In eight matches of the 2007 T20 WC, he scored 163 runs with 45 runs being his highest against hosts South Africa, with one catch behind the wicket. The 2011 ICCWC 50 overs his run tally was 92 in seven matches till the final against Sri Lanka which he finished with a 'helicopter shot' sixer scoring a memorable 91 unbeaten runs at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. If he will be remembered for that iconic six hit off Nuwan Kulasekara in the penultimate over of the match,

his wily decision to give the last over to Joginder Sharma turned the game India's way in the T20WC 2007. To give a relatively unknown player the ball to bowl to Misbah-ul-Haq, turned out to be a masterstroke. Not to forget, the same call could have turned the other way had Misbah pulled the ball to the boundary instead of looping it to the safe hands of S. Sreesanth stationed at short fine-leg. MSD has not made any announcements about his cricketing future. It was expected that the former skipper, who has quarantined himself from any part of the game after the ICC World Cup last year, would use the IPL as a platform. His performances in the blue riband league would have made him a contender for the ICCT20 WC in Australia. Cancellation of the IPL would broadly mean the end of the glorious career of one of the coolest (literally) cricketers of the shorter, modern era. The legend, Sunil Gavaskar believes that the team has moved on and that MSD is not someone to make big announcements. Just the way he quietly retired from Test match cricket after the third, drawn match at Melbourne in 2014 and the way he stayed in the background while the Indian team celebrated their victory and hoisted the little master Sachin Tendulkar on their shoulders, it does look like MSDs long journey will end quietly; barring a miracle.

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SHORT TAKES

Neeraj urges India to act responsibly

New Delhi: Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra says he is keeping himself busy with workouts at gym and some movie-watching during self-isolation at NIS Patiala, urging the country to behave responsibly in its fight to contain the Covid-19 pandemic for the sake of its poor. Chopra, who has qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, has been ordered by Sports Authority of India (SAI) to remain self-isolated for 14 days after returning from a training stint in Turkey.

"I am not training at all. The gates of this hostel meant for those who have come back from foreign training have been locked. Not allowed to go anywhere but we are given an old gym to do some workout to keep ourselves fit," Chopra said.

"I am enjoying my spare time listening to music, speaking on phone with family and friends, and reading a bit also. Sometimes, I watch movies on my laptop," Neeraj further added. — PTI

SAI to provide quarantine facilities

New Delhi: The Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres, which have been shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will be used as quarantine facilities for patients of the deadly disease, the Sports Ministry said on Sunday.

The decision to allow all SAI regional centres, stadiums and hostels to be used as quarantine facilities was taken following a request from the Health Ministry.

"Yes, we have decided to allow all our centres to be used as quarantine facilities after the Health Ministry asked for it. It is a pandemic and all the SAI centres are public properties. This is a crisis situation and whatever support the government needs, we are ready to provide that," Sports Secretary Radhey Shyam Julaniya said.

Julaniya, however, did not specify exactly when these centres will be put to use by the health ministry. — PTI

Sportsworld salutes services providers

New Delhi: India's sports fraternity joined the nation on Sunday to salute the essential services providers engaged in fight against Covid-19, by clapping for them or sharing messages and videos of gratitude on social media.

PM Narendra Modi had urged the Indians to observe 'Janta Curfew' and express gratitude towards the health-care workers and other basic service providers, and his appeal received an overwhelming response from the citizens.

Indian men's hockey team coach Sjoerd Marjine posted a video of all the players clapping at their training centre in Bengaluru. Wearing the team's jersey, the players positioned themselves on different floors of the building and clapped in tandem. "A big Salute to all the warriors who are working tirelessly. May this pass soon," Virendra Sehwal tweeted. — PTI

DOPE TEST HURDLES FOR TOKYO GAMES

Paris: Restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic have reduced the number of doping tests to a minimum, creating another hurdle for the Tokyo Olympics to clear to go ahead on time.

The Games are scheduled for Tokyo from July 24 to August 9, but, since Friday, a chorus of sports bodies and athletes federations has begun to urge their postponement. The International Testing Agency (ITA) had planned an exhaustive programme ahead of the Games, but anti-doping organisations in United States, France, Great Britain and Germany have announced that they are reducing testing of top-level athletes.

The Chinese anti-doping agency stopped its activities at the beginning of February. The principal reason is the travel restrictions affecting 1 billion people worldwide to halt the spread of Covid-19. — AFP

O-limping Games

US track & field latest to mount postponement pressure

Paris, March 22: Pressure mounted on Olympic organisers to postpone the 2020 Tokyo Games after the powerful US track and field federation urged this summer's showpiece be pushed back due to the coronavirus pandemic.

USA Track and Field became the latest influential sports body to ask for the Games to be called off after its head Max Siegel "respectfully requested" in a letter that the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) "advocate... for the postponement of the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo".

USOPC had said it was too soon to axe the July 24-August 9 Games, much like International Olympic Committee (IOC) head Thomas Bach, who said that it would be "premature" to make such a big decision.

"The right and responsible thing to do is to prioritise everyone's health and safety and appropriately recognise the toll this difficult situation has, and continues to take, on our athletes and their Olympic Games preparations," wrote Siegel.

USATF joined a growing chorus of calls from sports organisations to push back the Olympics, a day after the country's swimming federation asked USOPC to back a postponement until 2021.

"We urge the USOPC, as a leader within the Olympic Movement, to use its voice and speak up for the athletes," USA Swimming CEO Tim Hinches said in a letter.

Spain's athletics federation then added its voice to the growing resentment.

"The circumstances do not guarantee an adequate preparation or a fair competition with the rest of the athletes in the world, without endangering the health (of Spanish athletes)," Spain athletics federation said.

World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said that the sporting world was in "uncharted territory".

The Norwegian Olympic Committee (NOC) said it had sent a letter to the IOC on Friday, motivated in part by a Norwegian government ban on organised sports activities which had created "a very challenging time for the sports movement in Norway".

"Our clear recommendation is that the Olympic Games in Tokyo shall not take place before the COVID-19 situation is under firm control on a global scale," the NOC said.

Meanwhile, the new chairman of the United Kingdom's athletics governing body also questioned the need to hold the Olympics this summer given the uncertainty surrounding the spread of Covid-19.

"To leave it where it is creating so much pressure in the system. It now has to be addressed," head of UK Athletics Nic Coward told the BBC. — AFP



People wearing face masks take pictures in front of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic flame displayed outside the Miyako railway station in Iwate prefecture on Sunday, after its arrival from Greece. — AFP

Tokyo torch lights up Japan

Sendai (Japan), March 22: Tens of thousands of people flocked to a cauldron with the Olympic flame in northeastern Japan over the weekend despite concerns about the coronavirus pandemic. The flame arrived in Japan to a scaled-down welcoming ceremony on Friday as doubts grew over whether the 2020 Tokyo Olympics will go ahead on schedule as the deadly virus causes chaos around the world.

The pandemic has already shredded the global sports calendar, with top sports leagues suspended and major tournaments postponed.

More than 50,000 people on Saturday queued to watch the flame displayed at Sendai station in Miyagi, chosen as part of the "Recovery Olympics" to showcase the region's revival after the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown.

Some had to stay in a 500-metre (1,650-foot) queue for several hours, local media said.

Many of them wore masks as they took pictures with the cherry blossom-shaped cauldron.

"I queued for three hours but watching the Olympic flame was greatly encouraging," a 70-year-old woman told public broadcaster NHK.

But organisers, concerned about the bigger-than-expected gathering, have warned the viewing event could be suspended if a crowd becomes "extremely dense", local media reported.

The nationwide torch relay begins on March 26, starting from the J-Village sports complex in Fukushima that was used as a base for workers during the 2011 nuclear disaster. — AFP



A young fan clicks a selfie in front of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic flame displayed outside Miyako railway station in Iwate prefecture on Sunday, after its arrival from Greece. — AFP

IOC ASKS MEMBER COUNTRIES ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Paris, March 22: The International Olympic Committee (IOC), under pressure to postpone this summer's Tokyo Games, is asking National Olympic Committees (NOCs) about the impact of the coronavirus crisis on athlete preparation.

In a questionnaire entitled "Covid-19 and preparation for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games" the IOC asks the Olympic committees of its member countries "how do the emergency regulations relating to Covid-19 limit the training and preparation of your athletes?"

In its questionnaire, the IOC asks about possible forced alterations or even relocation of training camps, without indicating what it intends to learn from the answers.

On Friday, USA Swimming warned that its swimmers could no longer train normally without the risk of catching the virus. The head of USA Track and Field Max Siegel "respectfully requested" that the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee "advocate... for the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics". — AFP

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BHAKER READY FOR TOKYO DESPITE CRISIS

New Delhi, March 22: Postponement of tournaments, cancellation of trials and camps hardly matter at this point to one of India's biggest young achievers in sport, Manu Bhaker, who is hoping to see the world win the battle against the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Trials, events should be postponed in current situation as there are other very important things for the world to deal with," Bhaker said.

"I am relaxed at home. The current situation doesn't affect my preparation and mindset. I am continuing with my yoga sessions, meditation and things that help me stay calm and composed.

"The Olympics, whenever it happens, is huge, so we need to be prepared," Manu said. — PTI

SPAIN ATHLETIC BODY WANTS POSTPONEMENT

Madrid, March 22: The Spanish athletics federation (RFEA) joined the calls for the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics because of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The Board of Directors of the Royal Spanish Athletics Federation, on behalf of the majority of Spanish athletes, is advocating the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games," the RFEA said in a statement.

"Circumstances do not guarantee adequate preparation or fair competition with the rest of the athletes in the world, without endangering the health (of Spanish athletes)," said the RFEA.

Spain had recorded more than 1,320 deaths from Covid-19 by Saturday and is enforcing confinement to try to stop the spread of the virus. — AFP

PAULO DYBALA CONTRACT COVID-19

Rome, March 22: Argentina striker Paulo Dybala said that he has become the third Juventus player to test positive for coronavirus while former AC Milan defender Paolo Maldini revealed that he and his son have also been infected.

"Hi everyone. I just wanted to let you know that we have received the Covid-19 test results and that Oriana (Sabatini, his girlfriend) and I are positive," the 26-year-old Dybala tweeted on Saturday.

"Fortunately, we are perfectly fine. Thank you for your messages," he added.

Italian champions Juventus said that Dybala had been self-isolating since Wednesday.

Later Saturday, the club said Maldini, now the technical director at Milan, and his 18-year-old son Daniel, a youth team player, were also battling the disease.

"Paolo and Daniel are both well and have already completed two weeks at home without contact with others," said a statement from AC Milan.

"They will now remain in quarantine until clinically recovered, as per the medical protocols outlined by the health authorities," the statement added.

He won five Champions Leagues with Milan and appeared in 647 matches.

Virus-hit Madrid ex-president dies

Madrid, March 22: Former Real Madrid president Lorenzo Sanz, who was hospitalised with coronavirus, died at the age of 76, his son announced.

Sanz was in charge of the Spanish giants from 1995-2000, overseeing two Champions League titles.

"My father has just passed away. He did not deserve this ending and in this way," tweeted his son, Lorenzo Sanz junior.

"One of the best, bravest and hardest-working people I have ever seen. His family and Real Madrid were his passions," he added.

Three days ago, Sanz Jr., a former professional basketball player, said that his father had been admitted to a Madrid hospital after suffering the symptoms of the coronavirus which has killed more than 1,320 people in Spain.

Sanz claimed a place on the Real Madrid board in the mid-1980s, when the president was Ramon Mendoza.

He replaced Mendoza as president in 1995.

With Jupp Heynckes as coach and star players such as Davor Suker, Roberto Carlos, Clarence Seedorf, Fernando Hierro and Raul, Real won the Champions League in 1998 by beating Juventus in the final.

It was their seventh European Cup but first in 32 years.

Two years later, in Paris, Real claimed an eighth by beating Valencia in the



Lorenzo Sanz

final. However, that same year, Sanz was ousted as president by Florentino Perez, who opened a new era at the club, adding five more Champions Leagues in two decades.

Current club captain and Spanish international Sergio Ramos, who with teammates is in quarantine after one of the club's basketball players tested positive for the virus, hailed Sanz.

"Very sad day for Real Madrid. Lorenzo Sanz connected yesterday and today with two numbers for history — 7 and 8," tweeted Ramos in reference to the key Champions League titles.

"His death saddens us even more in these difficult days in which we find ourselves. My deep condolences to his family and friends. Rest in peace," the tweet added. — AFP



Paolo Maldini, Daniel Maldini, Paulo Dybala

Dybala, Maldinis contract Covid-19

Rome, March 22: Juventus striker Paulo Dybala said that he has become the third Juventus player to test positive for coronavirus while former AC Milan defender Paolo Maldini revealed that he and his son have also been infected.

"Hi everyone. I just wanted to let you know that we have received the Covid-19 test results and that Oriana (Sabatini, his girlfriend) and I are positive," the 26-year-old Dybala tweeted on Saturday.

"Fortunately, we are perfectly fine. Thank you for your messages," he added.

Italian champions Juventus said that Dybala had been self-isolating since Wednesday.

Later Saturday, the club said Maldini, now the technical director at Milan, and his 18-year-old son Daniel, a youth team player, were also battling the disease.

"Paolo and Daniel are both well and have already completed two weeks at home without contact with others," said a statement from AC Milan.

"They will now remain in quarantine until clinically recovered, as per the medical protocols outlined by the health authorities," the statement added.

He won five Champions Leagues with Milan and appeared in 647 matches.

Hi everyone. I just wanted to let you know that we have received the Covid-19 test results and that Oriana (Sabatini, his girlfriend) and I are positive. Fortunately, we are perfectly fine. Thank you for your messages. — PAULO DYBALA, Argentine footballer

Juventus teammates Daniele Rugani and Blaise Matuidi have also tested positive for the disease which claimed almost 800 more lives on Saturday, bringing the total in Italy to 4,825.

Wells Bayou wins eerie Louisiana Derby at empty track

As Wells Bayou completed a wire-to-wire victory in the \$1 million Louisiana Derby, there was hardly a cheer to be heard — other than the isolated triumphant shouts of trainer Brad Cox and his stable crew.

In the 107th running of the qualifying points race for the Kentucky Derby, the clubhouse and grandstand at Fair Grounds Race Course were empty and eerily quiet because of crowd restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Upset Rao resigns from SAI

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 22

Expressing his displeasure at the Special Area Games (SAG) scheme's merger with Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres, B.V. PRao, IAS (ret'd) has resigned as the member of Governing Body of SAI.

Rao, who wrote to Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju, expressed his concerns about the merger and said, "I am deeply saddened that the Governing Body of Sports Authority of India (SAI) has decided that Special Area Games Scheme (SAG) will be merged with SAI Training Centers (STC) in its last meeting chaired by you on March 13."

"I am given to understand that you have discussed my suggestion not to merge SAG with STC scheme during the last

Governing Body meeting of SAI. I am told that you seem to have commented that the SAG Scheme was working well years ago but it is not the same today. I agree with you to some extent. Over the years several bureaucrats who succeeded me and several Sports Ministers who preceded you, have watered down the SAG scheme for various reasons. If the SAG is not effective as it was originally intended, it is its merger with an already proven non-working scheme like STC a solution?" Rao questioned.

In a challenging statement Rao quipped, "What is astonishing is that someone like you, who hails from remote tribal state of Arunachal Pradesh, is not able to see the importance of the SAG scheme which essentially focuses on the North East India. I dare

challenge you to explain to the Sports World what schemes of SAI or any state government scheme can serve or fulfill or replace the purpose of SAG? Or Under your leadership Sports Ministry is able to tap the natural talent of remote and tribal areas of the Country? You need to answer these questions. Let me remind you, senior bureaucracy in the Ministry of Sports and Sports Authority of India that everyone is accountable on policy of national interest."

"I vividly remember Indian sports legend Sunil Gavaskar calling on Director General Sports Authority of India with a request to make a film on SAG by his own sports management firm. SAG programme is well recorded and telecasted through a six part television serial titled "Quest for Gold". It is, perhaps,

the only government scheme in India on which a television serial has been shot with private money! I am quite sure that in a modicum of space SAG may find in the recent history of Indian Sports, the then Sports Minister Mrs Margaret Alva, will be given the credit of nourishing SAG and you will be credited with killing the scheme," a livid Rao added in his letter.

"My only umbilical cord with Sports Authority of India has been the SAG scheme, which I conceived, planned and implemented for the first five years of its launch. As that connection is permanently destroyed, I don't have any reason to be associated with SAI. Hence, I do here by resign as the member of Governing Body of Sports Authority of India," Rao concluded.

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Editor: Aditya Sinha