

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | 27 MARCH 2020



## WEATHER

Max: 34.6°C  
Min: 22.9°C  
RH: 32%  
Rain: Nil  
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky.  
Max/Min temp. 36/23°C

## ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana  
Tithi: Chaitra Suddha Tadiya till 10.12 pm  
Star: Ashwini till 10.09 am  
Varjyam: 5.41 am to 7.28 am (early hours) and 8.51 pm to 10.37 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 8.35 am to 9.23 am and 12.37 noon to 1.25 pm  
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon  
HIJRI CALENDAR  
Shabaan 1,1441 AH  
PRAYERS  
Fajar: 5.15 am  
Zohar: 12.32 pm  
Asar: 4.43 pm  
Maghrib: 6.34 pm  
Isha: 7.41 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 6.28 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.13 AM  
MOONRISE TOMORROW 8.06 AM  
MOONSET TODAY 8.55 PM

## COUNTER POINT



Sorry... the hall is jam-packed!

## IN BRIEF

### China to cut flights big time

Beijing: China is set to drastically cut its international flight routes to blunt the number of imported cases of the new coronavirus, the civil aviation authority said on Thursday. Flights out of China will be capped at just one route a week to each country, with international airlines also permitted only one route.

### India bans global flights till Apr 14

New Delhi: All international commercial passenger flights will remain suspended till April 14, aviation regulator DGCA announced on Thursday, amid a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

### US offers \$15 m for Maduro arrest

Washington: The US will offer \$15 million for information leading to the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on drug-trafficking charges, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Thursday. The Justice Department said he was a common criminal.

### 1,000 Christian hospitals offered

New Delhi: The Christian Coalition for Health on Thursday said its over 1,000 hospitals across the country with more than 60,000 beds can be availed for medical services pertaining to the pandemic. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the organisation offered all facilities in Christian hospitals for coronavirus treatment. Fr Dr Mathew Abraham, C.S.S.R, said this in a letter on March 26.

## INSIDE

CITY.. PG3  
Mosques closed for Juma

NATION.. PG7  
1.2 lakh people under lens in Kerala

## NATION | 5

Odisha sets up 1,000-bed hospital

## WORLD | 8

WHO sided with China on Covid-19: Trump

## TABLOID

Kamal converts home into hospital

# TS, AP firm on borders being sealed

## Not to allow anyone entry from either state till lockdown ends on April 14

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

The state governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana on Thursday decided not to allow anyone into either of the states from across the borders till April 14, the last date of the currently underway 21-day national quarantine owing to the coronavirus emergency. Keeping in view the situation that arose at the state border between the two states after the issuance of 'No-Objection Certificates' by the Hyderabad and Cyberabad police to students and other people to return to their home towns in Andhra Pradesh, both Chief Ministers have jointly taken the decision not to allow anyone to move between the two states.

# Hyd evictees back 'home'

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 26

The Telangana government seems to have "desired to send as many people as possible out of the capital city of Hyderabad" to their native places, apparently to "reduce the burden of surveillance and effective implementation of lockdown". This is in contrast to claims of the

Hyderabad and Cyberabad city police wings that only students and working professionals evicted from hostels were allowed to return. Though the exercise of issuing one-time lockdown exemption passes started on Wednesday with students and inmates of paying guest hostels, it soon turned into a free-for-all within no time. Deccan Chronicle has documen-

tary evidence to show that Hyderabad police did not bother to check beyond a point if a person seeking a pass was a student or a tenant of any hostel. They issued several passes to a person and did not even insist on mode of transport nor noted down their whereabouts.

Page 4: Passes had no contact information

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday, while addressing a press conference said that he has spoken to Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao in the backdrop of

Wednesday's situation at the border. Appealing to the people from Andhra Pradesh staying in other states, particularly Hyderabad, to stay put till April 14, he said that the Mr Chandrashekar Rao has

"responded positively and sympathetically" to his "request to provide food, shelter and medical care to people of Andhra Pradesh living in Hyderabad".

Mr Reddy said that AP government would take care of people from

Telangana residing in AP and provide them shelter, food and medical.

He said that several people were allowed into Andhra Pradesh from Hyderabad on Wednesday and they would be allowed into their homes only after a medical examination and successful completion of the 14-day quarantine period.

Meanwhile, Telangana energy minister G Jagadish Reddy told Deccan Chronicle that scores of people were returning into the state from the state border at the Damaracherla check post in Nalgonda as the Andhra Pradesh police have denied permission to them to enter since Wednesday night.

Page 4: KCR spoke to Jagan about plight

## COVID CASES SEEN RISING AT SLOW PACE IN INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 26

On Day 2 of the 21-day nationwide lockdown, there was both good news and bad news. The bad news is that the number of Covid-19 cases are on the rise, but the good news is that the rise in positive cases is not at a high rate. As the total number of positive cases reached 694 on Thursday and the toll rose to 15, officials said that even though 88 fresh cases were reported, the growth graph of Covid-19 cases in India is "relatively stable".

"Though the cases of coronavirus are increasing in India, we are realising that the rate at which cases are increasing is slow. We are noticing a relatively stable trend or little bit reduction in rate of increase in cases," said Lav Aggarwal, joint secretary in Union health ministry. "This, however, does not establish a clear trend. We are hopeful that by following the social distancing, conducting a proper contact tracing and by ensuring all people at home quarantine are monitored, we will be able to combat the disease," he said.

While keeping its fingers crossed, the government has intensified contact tracing of people who have returned from different countries. The Union health ministry officials added that India is still at the second stage as there is no "hard evidence" of community transmission.

ICMR scientist Dr Raman Gangakhedkar, who heads the epidemiology and communicable diseases department, said that "sporadic cases" in some states where no foreign travel history was found can't be seen as community spread.

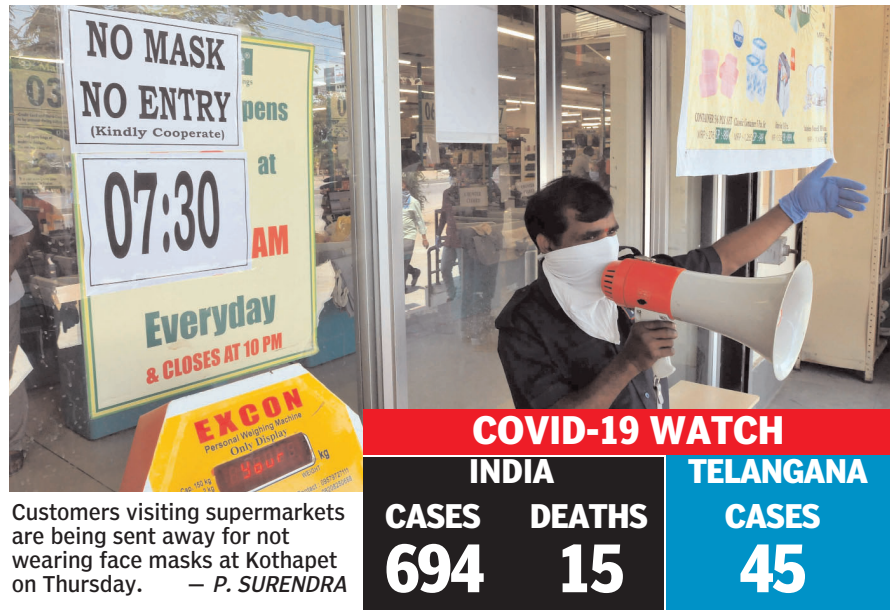
# TS admits Covid-19 scenario worse

BALU PULIPAKA | DC  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

The government of Telangana conceded on Thursday that the state was currently in grip of Stage II of Novel Coronavirus infections (secondary transmission), a worsening of the epidemic from the Stage I (primary transmission), and it is just being a matter time before the state enters the dreaded Stage III.

In Stage I, a person who is Covid-19 infected, after having returned from abroad where she or he caught it, transmits it to a local person, who does not any foreign travel history, after coming in contact. In Stage II, secondary transmission is witnessed, when some of those who have not travelled abroad but contacted the infection locally, further transmit to another locally. This community transmission is witnessed in this stage but at low numbers. The deadly Stage III is when rate of infection is expected to multiply as the disease is beginning to spread in the community rapidly from one person to another or more at a time. After conceding that Stage III is near, TS decided to convert Gandhi Hospital into a coronavirus care centre.

Page 2: Gandhi to stop treating other illnesses



Customers visiting supermarkets are being sent away for not wearing face masks at Kothapet on Thursday. — P. SURENDRA

## COVID-19 WATCH

| INDIA     | TELANGANA |
|-----------|-----------|
| CASES 694 | CASES 45  |
| DEATHS 15 |           |

## Doc couple among 4 new cases

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

A doctor couple from Domalguda in the city was among four more Coronavirus infected patients identified in the state on Thursday, taking the total number of Covid-19 positive cases in Telangana to 45, including the one Covid-19 positive patient who was cured and discharged earlier this month.

# Isolation facility for 500 in Vikarabad

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

As the screening programme is stepped up in the state, an estimated 500 cases of coronavirus will need to be isolated in facilities set up in Vikarabad district.

Suspected cases should be isolated as that will help curtail the spread of the virus. The lockdown currently in force has

stopped movement of people but not ensured the spread is curtailed

This is because asymptomatic carriers will develop symptoms when the number of cases peaks next, which is expected from

March 30 to April 10, and they will rush to hospitals.

This will make it difficult for the public health system to cope particularly as the second wave is expected to be strong and virulent. The first set of reported cases is recovering, as the virus is not very virulent. The condition of the second wave patients will give a picture of how strong Covid-19 is in India, said senior doctors at

Gandhi Hospital. To make it administratively effective, serious patients will be treated at Gandhi, Chest and Fever hospitals, Care Hospital in Banjara Hills, Continental Hospitals and Apollo Hospitals.

A senior doctor, on condition of anonymity, explained, "We are going to screen those with symptoms of cough, cold and fever in area hospitals. These will be patients who

will be easily managed due to mild symptoms. Doctors and personal protection equipment have been arranged for them."

The next level will be to observe those who have still not developed symptoms but were in contact with those who have, or in the area where there are a large number of cases.

Page 3: Those with large viral load need to be isolated

## CONFUSION | CONFOUNDED | Inter-state transport of essential goods being hampered in many states

# Home ministry to ease movement of goods

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 26

The home ministry is coordinating with all states and Union Territories to have a uniform set of guidelines and policy regarding movement and supply of essential commodities and services as different orders by various states on the exclusion of certain services were leading to confusion. The ministry has already constituted a team of offi-

HOME MINISTRY has already constituted a team of officials which is in constant touch with the states to ensure smooth movement of essential commodities

not just within in the state but inter-state as well. Officials said that since there is an absence of any uniform guidelines for the lockdown, inter-state movement of essential commodities goods is being hampered. "We are trying to bring all states and UTs on the same platform and have a set of uniform guidelines. Since today is the second day of the lockdown some minor issues were there but within the

next 25 hours all these problems will be resolved," a senior ministry official said. He claimed most of the states had already appointed nodal officers and set up round-the-clock control rooms with emergency numbers for smooth transportation of essential goods and services.

The ministry once again reiterated to the states to be extremely careful in ensuring that transportation of essential services

and people engaged in providing essential services do not face any trouble.

The core team of home ministry is in constant touch with the Chief Secretaries and Directors General of Police for this purpose. "On Thursday also we insisted that all States must ensure continuity of supply chain of essential commodities, several of which may be of perishable nature. The nodal officers of all States are

also in touch with and coordinating with the district administration and police in this matter," a Ministry official added.

All States were asked to adopt similar Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) for the unhindered operation of essential services and commodities. State DGPs were on Thursday again asked to ensure all adequate measures that any harassment to professionals.

## VENTILATORS TO BE MADE AT AUTO FIRMS

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, MARCH 26

To combat the fast-spreading coronavirus in the country, Mahindra & Mahindra, India's biggest utility vehicle maker, is all set to manufacture sophisticated ventilators at just ₹7,500 apiece, which otherwise costs up to ₹10 lakh. The Centre has also urged other automakers such as Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors and Hyundai to look at ways to manufacture ventilators and other medical gear expeditiously to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a communication to major automobile manufacturers, the ministry of heavy industries asked them to explore using their manufacturing facilities and manpower to produce ventilators. This communication was issued after a joint meeting of the top four companies — Maruti Suzuki, M&M, Tata Motors and Hyundai — on Wednesday, automobile sources said.

Full report on Page 9

Vol. 83 No. 85 Established 1938 | 18 PAGES | ₹6.00



## IN BRIEF

## No response on helpline number

**Hyderabad:** The state government's Covid-19 helpline number '104' is constantly engaged and the response is not as promised. People have been complaining that they are not able to reach them. They are not getting the right information of where must they go and which private hospital is allowed to test. The government administration claims that they are getting too many queries and it is taking time for them to handle it.

## GANDHI TO STOP TREATING OTHER ILLNESSES

From Page 1

Henceforth, Gandhi Hospital, which had been for some time the point for testing of Covid-19 cases and treatment, will no longer be offering services to patients facing or suffering from other health conditions.

Health minister Etala Rajendar, during a review with senior health department officials here today, said, "the disease has already reached Stage II in Telangana."

The minister discussed preparations required in the state for the department to be able to face up to community transmission phase of the disease. He instructed officials to get in place all required equipment, materials, and medicines. He also declared that under no circumstance should medical and health personnel be given any leave.

Mr Rajendar called for stricter monitoring of all people who have returned or came to the state from other countries. He said that surgeries scheduled in Gandhi have been shifted to the Osmania General Hospital, and that, by the end of the month, Gandhi must become a hospital fully dedicated to treating Covid-19 cases only.

The health minister said that the Telangana government was taking all possible steps to stop spread of Coronavirus to Stage III and urged people to observe lockdown fully to limit social contact.

## LOCKDOWN HITS DRUGS FOR MSPs

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

The lockdown has not just stopped the movement of people but it has also affected the movement of some vital medicines as well. Take for example the case of a few Multiple Sclerosis Patients (MSPs) who require a drug called Tecfidera, the 250 mg variant. "This drug is meant to be taken twice a day in the morning and in the night. Usually one strip lasts us a week. This drug is not available in any medical store, and has to be ordered from the manufacturer," said Farhan (name changed on request), an MSP.

Employees of drug manufacturers clarify that there is no shortage at their end. "Most of the drugs are transported on the highways. Since there has been a hold on the movement of vehicles on the highways, we fear that there might be a gap in the supply of drugs. We are only finding it difficult in delivering the drugs due to police stoppage," said a representative of Biogen, the company that manufactures the drug.

Even neurologists like Vemula Sreekanth say that these drugs are important for people with auto immune diseases like multiple sclerosis, myasthenia gravis, Chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy among others. For myasthenia gravis, pyridostigmine is also in short quantity, as they are unlike any regular over the counter drugs.

"While the government has kept medical stores open, the drugs for this disorder are not available in regular medical stores. They have to be ordered from the company," he said.

There are generic variants available in medical stores, but more often than not these haven't been fully tested out on patients, he said.

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● **EVEN NEUROLOGISTS** like Vemula Sreekanth say that these drugs are important for people with auto immune diseases like multiple sclerosis, myasthenia gravis, Chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy among others

## Hyd evictees protest at AP border

Squat on the main road at Pondugula, demand they be allowed to go home

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 26

Hundreds of angry returnees from Hyderabad on Thursday squatted on the main road at Pondugula of Dachepalli mandal in Guntur district airing slogans and demanded an immediate permission to go ahead to their native places in relaxation of all lockdown norms.

They were furious with the AP government for denial of permission to them to enter into Andhra Pradesh after having been evicted from and allowed by Hyderabad police to leave the city and Telangana.

The security measures at the Garikapadu check-post near Jagalahpeta in Krishna district was tightened, hence AP natives coming from Hyderabad shifted their journey to Pondugula in Guntur district. But alert police at the border foiled their attempts to enter through the check-post at Pondugula and refused permission for their entry.

Majority of those returning to AP were either students who were getting coaching for various exams and courses, or professionals doing jobs in various firms, most software industry. They complained that the managements of hostels they were staying at forcibly closed them down, and alleged that this was done owing to Telangana government orders.

"We were instructed to vacate their hostels immediately under duress," they claimed.

They said that they went to Hyderabad police, who asked them to arrange vehicles to go back to their native places in AP and issued permissions. They vented their anger that the AP police was denying permission to go to their native places at Pondugala check-post. "We are waiting for past five hours without food and water," several of them revealed angrily. They said that they came to Pondugala on the intervening night of Wednesday-Thursday and were forced to stay on the road due to denial of permission to enter.

Women faced troubles in having to respond to nature's calls, the said. They said that fortunately Krishna river water at Pondugula helped and they could freshen up using that water in nearby deserted areas, they revealed.

The people forced to return from Hyderabad alleged that the AP government was ill-treating its own people during a difficult time. They demanded that the CM permit them to go to their native places. They said that thermal screening could be done on them to reveal reflect their health conditions.



Unable to enter Andhra Pradesh, transit pass holders stage a protest against police at Pullur toll plaza near Kurnool on TS border on Thursday.

— D.S. REDDY

## Jagan remains firm on border closure

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 26

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday did not budge on the 14-day mandatory quarantine precondition for people entering the state from neighbouring Telangana, even as thousands of people, carrying curfew exemption passes issued by the Hyderabad city police were stranded on the highways at the intra-state border for more than 24 hours. Chief Minister Reddy got a shot in the arm with the Central government making it clear that students and migratory workers should stay put wherever they are.

Rajiv Gauba, Union Cabinet Secretary, in a video-conference held with all state chief secretaries on Thursday, made it clear that it was the responsibility of respective district administrations to take care of their needs. The Centre also made it clear to all states that no movement of people should be



Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

allowed during the lockdown.

In a televised address to people, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy said that it was so painful that people of the state living outside could not be welcomed into their homeland with a smile, as it would become extremely difficult to keep track of contacts they made earlier.

Appealing to people to stay put where they are, Mr Reddy said that his Telangana counterpart K.

● **CHIEF MINISTER** Jagan Mohan Reddy got a shot in the arm with the Central government making it clear that students and migratory workers should stay put wherever they are

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Chandrashekar Rao had assured to take care of Andhra people living in his state. "He (Mr Rao) was very warm when we spoke with each other," Mr Reddy said.

Official sources told Deccan Chronicle that Chief Minister Reddy conveyed his tough stand to his Telangana counterpart when both of them discussed the impasse on the borders on

Wednesday night.

Significantly, principal opposition party, the Telugu Desam, too came in support of the 14-day quarantine being implemented by AP health authorities as a precautionary safety measure, the absence of which may endanger lives of people residing in the state.

"We support the 14-day quarantine period," Telugu Desam national general secretary Nara Lokesh told DC. He, however, made a scathing attack against the two governments for their apparent "lack of coordination, which put thousands of people to severe hardships".

"Several states faced similar problems a few weeks back and ensured smooth passage for people to cross inter-state borders well before the Covid-19 started spreading and entering Stage II," Mr Lokesh said, adding that the two states failed to visualise and envision the situation arising out of a lockdown and take appropriate steps in time.

Some of them sat in protest against the decision, saying the Telangana police was refusing to allow them to go back to Hyderabad or any part of that state. The protesters demanded to be allowed to proceed further but after 12 hours of waiting at the toll plaza, they turned back.

Kurnool police said that they have arrested some people who sneaked into Kurnool by taking feeder roads instead of the highway.

Meanwhile, speaking in Vijayawada to media, Mr Goutam Sawang further said that persons coming from Hyderabad and other places should undergo quarantine treatment of two weeks before they would be allowed to return to their native places.

He further stated that the lockdown has been implemented to contain Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) spreading further, and the returning of people to AP would damage the situation of the lockdown in the state.

Some of them sat in

## No entry of people into AP, says DGP

MD ILYAS AND D. SIVA REDDY | DC VIJAYAWADA / KURNOOL, MARCH 26

No one would be allowed to violate the lockdown norms and migrants or returnees from other states crossing over the border would not be allowed to go their native places in Andhra Pradesh without first being quarantined for 14 days, said Director-General of Police Goutam Sawang on Thursday, even as AP police strictly stopped people at the various borders.

People trying to get into Rayalaseema were stopped at the Pullur toll plaza near Kurnool, the gateway to Rayalaseema, and were told to go back or be quarantined for 14 days.

People started arriving here from Wednesday evening and there were nearly 500 of them by Friday. They were told by the police to either return to Hyderabad or other places in Telangana.

Some of them sat in

protest against the decision, saying the Telangana police was refusing to allow them to go back to Hyderabad or any part of that state. The protesters demanded to be allowed to proceed further but after 12 hours of waiting at the toll plaza, they turned back.

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## LOCKDOWN | IMPACT

## Psychologists are flooded with phone calls, WhatsApp posts

## Severe cases need ventilator support

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Ventilator support is a must for severe and critical patients suffering from Covid-19. But are there enough or more ventilators available to treat serious cases of coronavirus?

According to data culled from various countries afflicted by Covid-19, about 15 percent of Covid-19 cases turn out to be critical. These are the patients who require extreme care as they carry a high load of virus.

While the critical patients require ventilator support, medical personnel treating them too need to wear personal protection equipment. They also have to exercise maximum personal care while administering treatment and monitoring patients.

Treatment of patients with unknown pneumonia and severe-to-acute respiratory distress is also turning out to be a challenge, as getting results of Covid-19 tests has been taking time. Patients will need to be isolated and taken care of till then.

"We are prepared to tackle severe cases. We have teams which will

● **ACCORDING TO** data culled from various countries afflicted by Covid-19, about 15 percent of Covid-19 cases turn out to be critical. These are the patients who require extreme care as they carry a high load of virus

assess the risk and accordingly commence treatment," said Shobana Kamini, executive vice chairperson of Apollo Hospitals Group, while addressing a virtual press conference.

The biggest worry is treating those who come at the end-stage, whether they can be provided the right care. Dr Hari Prasad, president, Apollo Group of Hospitals, explained, "We will assess the clinical symptoms and treat them accordingly."

To ensure a proper response plan, Apollo Hospitals has come with "Project Kavach" which will bring together all resources like artificial intelligence, telecommunications, diagnostic screening, and best medicines and treatment protocols to fight Covid-19.

All support will be available to critical patients in terms of care.

## 'Cabin fever' rises amidst lockdown

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Feeling restless, irritated or just crazy after being confined to the four walls of your home due to the unprecedented lockdown in the wake of the coronavirus scare?

You could well be suffering from cabin fever syndrome!

It might just be the beginning of the 21-day lockdown, but looks like people across Hyderabad, and also the country, are starting to get restless already. Doctors in the city, especially the psychologists, are already flooded with calls and WhatsApp posts from people seeking remedies or medications to deal with the syndrome.

All queries are from the educated class, most of whom are used to hectic work schedules, work related travel, meetings, presentations and most importantly, social gatherings.

"In these days of lockdown due to corona pandemic, cabin fever syndrome, also called 'stir crazy' is being reported frequently. It is especially seen in gregarious populations who are otherwise busy," informed Dr Seshi Kiran, senior general physician at Yashoda Hospital, Somajiguda.

Symptoms of cabin fever

## CABIN FEVER EFFECTS

- A person may experience sleepiness or sleeplessness
- Does not trust anyone they are with
- Has an urge to go outside even in adverse conditions
- Cabin fever is not itself a disease and there is no prognosis

## THREAT TO LIVES

Related symptoms can lead the sufferer to make irrational decisions that could potentially threaten their lives or the life of the group with whom they are confined. Some examples would be suicide or paranoia, or leaving the safety of a cabin.

## ADOPTED CONCEPTS

The concept of cabin fever was the theme of Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1866 novel *Crime and Punishment* and in Chaplin's 1925 film *The Gold Rush*. Among other movies, the concept was used in the 2019 psychological horror film *The Lighthouse*, a story of two lighthouse keepers who start to lose their sanity when a storm strands them on the remote island where they are stationed.

## IMPACT ON J&amp;K CITIZENS

When Article 370 was scrapped in Jammu & Kashmir and a strict and unprecedented lockdown enforced from August 5, 2019, people there suffered from hallucinations, went into depression and developed suicidal tendencies as the lockdown was enforced for several months.

## FEVER THERAPY

One therapy for cabin fever is as simple as getting out and interacting with nature directly. Research has demonstrated that even brief interactions with nature can promote improved cognitive functioning, support a positive mood, and overall well-being.

from simply boredom, depression, anxiety, loss of concentration, too much or lack of sleep, headache, feeling of suffocation or claustrophobia, distrust of family members, urge to go out even in adverse conditions.

"In extreme cases, it even leads to suicidal tendencies," said Dr K. Seshi Kiran, adding that various manifestations show that it's a psychosomatic disorder or more of a reaction of the individual to the confinement.

Senior consultant psychiatrist at Apollo Hosp-

itals, Dr Bharat Kumar, said that cabin fever in itself is not a disease.

"It's a feeling an individual goes through due to prolonged confinement with no contact with the outside world. It's a feeling of restlessness, irritability often shown by individuals after a certain period of isolation," he said.

He further explained that solitary confinement was one of the techniques used in prisons to discipline erratic prisoners and most people used to end up with cabin fever syndrome

"Often people mistake it

for boredom but this is more than that. They can have increased sleep or decreased sleep with variable moods. In extreme conditions they can develop paranoia and, very rarely, suicidal thoughts. Some professionals like submariners, people working in places like Alaska, Siberia are known to show these symptoms," Dr Bharat Kumar said.

Doctors say that the best way to avoid cabin fever is to change the routine when in long term confinement, such as do different things every day, try to

expose yourself to nature as much as possible, set up some goals like trying to lose weight, develop a new interest like drawing or music which helps to divert mood and minimise the chances of cabin fever.

"Once people go into a state of learned helplessness, they get used to it. Usually, no specific therapy or counselling is necessary to overcome it," added Dr Bharat Kumar.

However, Dr Seshi Kumar says that antidepressant drugs are used in extreme situations, but under supervision.



## SHORT TAKES

### BURGLARS HELD IN MIDDLE OF LOCKDOWN

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Two persons, returning after burgling a house at Boduppal, were held by the Medipally police on Thursday morning. The police seized ₹1.2 lakh in cash from the duo and placed them under arrest.

According to the Medipally police, on Thursday morning, when a team of police personnel was conducting checks in view of the lockdown near Ambedkar statue in Boduppal, two men — Maripally Yellareddy, 21, of Uppal and Mohd Imran, 20, of Saroornagar — were seen moving on a bike.

When the team questioned their purpose of moving in the area, they failed to give satisfactory answers and were subjected to a check, during which the money was found in their possession.

On further questioning, the duo confessed to returning to a burglary at Boduppal and that they also were involved in two more offences recently at Uppal, said the police.

The accused were placed under arrest and are being sent to judicial remand, the police added.

## ESSENTIALS AT A HIGHER PRICE, CASES BOOKED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

The Narsingi police arrested a person selling vegetables at exorbitant prices on Thursday.

The locals who went to purchase vegetables at Dilip Supermarket in Puppalaguda complained to the police about the exorbitant fares at which the man was selling vegetables, without pasting a price chart. The police conducted raids and seized a huge quantity of vegetables and detained the salesman at the store.

The police found that the owner of the store, Mohammed Muneer, had asked his salesman to sell the vegetables at higher prices and also promised him a commission. A case was registered against the store owner and the salesman by Narsingi police.

Elsewhere, the Hyderabad Task Force police arrested eight persons who were selling essential products, sanitisers, and alcohol at high prices in different places on Thursday. The South Zone Task Force arrested two persons at RR Industries, Kattedan, Hyderabad and seized about 150 litres of spurious instant hand sanitiser liquid and 5,000 empty bottles, worth ₹5 lakh.

The accused had manufactured more than 50,000 bottles of hand sanitiser. Each bottle of 100 ml was being sold at ₹110 in and around Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy districts.

The West Zone Task Force conducted raids on kirana and general stores and apprehended five persons who were selling commodities at high prices.

## HOME MINISTER REVIEWS LOCKDOWN

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Home minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali on Thursday reviewed measures taken by Cyberabad police for implementing the lockdown imposed to check the spread of Covid-19.

He went around the IT-hub area, including Hi-Tech city, and also visited Raidurgam police station, apart from the Cyberabad headquarters.

Speaking to media, the home minister said that though lockdown rules are being followed by public in certain areas, it needs to be more strictly adhered to by citizens for effectively dealing with Covid-19.

"Police will take stringent action against violators of the lockdown rules. We appeal to people not venture out on roads without a purpose. Children and elderly people must especially remain confined to their homes. Adequate measures are being taken to curb unnecessary movement of motorists," Mahmood Ali stated.

While reviewing the measures taken by police in efficiently implementing the lockdown, he also checked functioning of various CCTV cameras installed at different places.

The home minister appreciated the effective work being carried out by the police personnel.

# Mosques closed for Juma

For the first time in history, masjids will be closed to prevent spreading of Covid-19

ATHER MOIN | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

First time in recent history, the gates of the Macca Masjid will not be opened for the Juma congregation on Friday as a measure against Covid-19. In previous years, the Juma congregational prayer was offered in the Macca Masjid even when curfew was imposed.

Superintendent of the Macca Masjid Moulana Mohammed Abdul Quadeer said that due to Covid-19, people will not be allowed to perform the Juma prayers. He said staff of the mosque will attend the prayer for fulfillment of Sharia requirements.

He asked the people not to come Macca Masjid even from the adjacent localities as they will not be allowed into the mosque to prevent congregating which will violate social distancing norms. He hoped that the commu-

nity will understand the alarming situation, and social distancing is the only solution to break the chain.

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer, Wakf Board, Mohammed Khasim addressed a letter to the district collectors requesting that instructions be issued to managements of mosques not to allow more than five musallis (persons who offer prayer) for regular prayers as well as on Friday prayers, since the gatherings will result in large congregations.

It is learnt that the managing committees of many mosques in the city also received instructions from the assistant commissioner of police and station house officers concerned not to allow more than five people for Juma prayers. Announcements were made from the loudspeakers of the mosques appealing to people to pray at homes.

# Mass prayers in public should be avoided: Wakf

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAR 26

Chairman of the Wakf Board Mohammed Saleem requested the Muslim community to avoid performing crowded Juma prayers in mosques. He said only a few people should be allowed to fulfil the canonical obligation in the wake of Covid-19.

Speaking to the media along with Macca masjid sermoniser Moulana Rizwan Qureshi, and Moulana Mohammed Osman, he said the situation was very critical and there is no medicine invented as yet to cure the viral infection. In these circumstances, he said, "it is our duty to avoid congrega-

● HE SAID within two days, the Wakf Board will come out with a rescue plan for needy. Moulana Qureshi and Moulana Osman also requested the community to follow the anti-virus protocol and cooperate with the administration.

tions to break the chain of the virus. Our ulema and theologians had already clarified the Sharia rulings about abandoning congregational prayers."

He requested the Muslim community to say the Zuhr (midday prayer) at home instead of the regular Juma. He said recognised seminaries like

Jamia Azhar (Egypt), Jamia Nizamia, Jamiat Ahle Hadees and the famous theologian, Moulana Khalid Saifullah Rahmani, have issued fatwas in the light of Sharia that Muslims should refrain from going to mosques to perform Juma and hopefully their reward will not be reduced by the Almighty. He said within two days, the Wakf Board will come out with a rescue plan for needy. Moulana Qureshi and Moulana Osman also requested the community to follow the anti-virus protocol and cooperate with the administration. They also requested the community to pray for the cure and riddance of the pandemic.

# Those with large viral load need to be isolated

From Page 1

The third level will be those who have strong symptoms like cough and fever and are emitting a large viral load and need to be kept apart.

These patients will be shifted to isolation units developed in Vikarabad. An estimated 500 people will be in this condition. As Hyderabad and its surrounding districts have large numbers of people who have come in contact with travellers, more cases are expected to emerge.

There will be symptomatic treatment provided in Vikarabad. In case the patient develops complications and requires additional support, she or he will be shifted to government and private hospitals for care.

The biggest challenge is managing families as every patient will want an attendant and that is the biggest worry for government. The policy so far has been to treat patients only when there are attendants. To treat patients without attendants being around is going to be a huge challenge.

With lockdown rules being made strict and police in every nook and

corner, most of those who could be carrying the virus, even those with a history of recent travel abroad, could prefer to remain indoors.

Some are observing the rules of quarantine, not going out of their homes or mingling with anyone. But there are many others who are not following the rules at all.

These risk factors are making public health officials anxious. A recent case in point is affected patients arriving from Saudi Arabia, who had given details of contacts that were found to be inaccurate.

A couple who had returned from Saudi Arabia and was quarantined for 14 days developed symptoms afterwards. They hopped from one hospital to another to get themselves tested.

A public health official said, "This is very dangerous, but people do not know where to go. Government has to clearly tell people which government and private hospitals are taking samples. Self-reporting is very high but it is not respected. Instead, they are made to go all around the city which leads to spreading the virus further rather than containing it."

## Meals time



Poor and needy line up for ₹5 meals being provided by the government on Thursday in Hyderabad.

—DEEPAK DESHPANDE

# Hyd fire brigade sprays chemical

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD MARCH 26

For the first time, the Hyderabad fire brigade was used to spray disinfectants in the city as a measure against the spread of Covid-19. Fire tenders were filled with sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl) and used to spray the disinfectant.

It is a three-day action plan for the fire brigade which started on Thursday. On the first day, the fire brigade sprayed the disinfectant near important places like Charminar and Macca masjid and areas surrounding the High Court. Apart from that, the disinfectants were sprayed at Gandhi Hospital, Osmania General Hospital and Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, district fire officer M. Srinivas Reddy said, "Sodium hypochlorite is one of the best disinfectants that can be used to sanitise a particular area. We have identified some places where

there is high public movement to spray the chemical. It is highly diluted in the ratio of 1:100. This disinfectant kills viruses and its effects will last for six to eight hours."

Mr Reddy added that though the GHMC is also spraying the chemical, its equipment is very small and does not cover a large area. The spray from the fire tenders cover a larger area.

Nine fire tenders were put to use. Unlike fire fighting special arrangements were made for the fire vehicles to send minute droplets in a spray form. It will almost take an hour to empty one fire engine. Gowliguda station fire officer Raj Kumar said, "Using three fire engines, we sprayed the disinfectant at Osmania General Hospital premises. Our personnel sprayed the hospital wards also."

Fire officials plan to sanitise Koti Maternity Hospital, Sultan Bazaar, Malakpet, Central Armed Reserve headquarters and other areas on Friday.



Fire tenders spraying disinfectants in the city to overcome the outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus. — DC

# Medicines may dry up at small pharmacies

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC HYDERABAD MARCH 26

Small retail medical shops may run out of medicines soon if the broken supply chain caused by the lockdown isn't restored, says the president of the Indrabagh Medical Traders' Association and treasurer of Hyderabad Drugs Association, Ch. Anand Kumar Goud.

However, Hyderabad police says they don't have any restrictions on movement of vehicles transporting medicines.

Despite the assurance from government that all essential goods will be

allowed to be transported without restriction, the staff haven't been able to reach their workplaces. There are around 10,000 retail medical shops and 500 wholesale shops in the city alone. Most of the medicines coming from different states are dumped on the outskirts at carry and forward buildings (ware houses). They are then brought to city and distributed.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Mr Goud said, "Medicine are very essential for patients suffering from long-term diseases like diabetes, blood pressure and heart disease. If they cannot access medi-

cines, there are high chances of them suffering other complications. The rich are able to stock medicines. In this type of situation, it is poor patients who usually buy medicines every two days who will be affected the most."

Explaining how the supply chain has been affected he said, "I send the stocks to different retail medical shops till Kondapur. The employees distributed the stock but while coming back they were stopped and beaten up by the police. The staff is now scared to attend duty."

"During the meeting with Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Ku-

mar on Wednesday, we urged him to allow the drug licence along with a picture attached to it as a pass. The commissioner had responded to our request in a positive way. Further, city police have asked to mail the request so that accordingly they will issue passes. We have also approached Mr Mahmood Ali, home minister, and other leaders and submitted our representation," added Mr Goud.

When asked about the issue of passes, Mr Anjani Kumar, said, "We have exempted all medical employees. They can move around the city for supply of medicines without any

restrictions. Strict action will be taken if they misuse this."

However, the ground reality is totally different, Mr Goud said: "We have been making rounds from the commissioner's office to Sultan Bazaar ACP's office for passes. Our supply personnel who come from as far as Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar districts were stopped and beaten up by the police. Even on Thursday, after the meeting, we are continuing to face the same violence. All of them decided to not attend duty. It is going to adversely impact the supply chain of medicine distribution."

## COVID | BLUES

Hospital staffers claim senior official with Covid-19 symptoms was admitted without isolation

# Railway hospital faces shortage of masks, sanitisers

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Employees of the Railway Hospital at Lalaguda said the institution is facing a severe shortage of safety equipment. Several staffers told *Deccan Chronicle* that they have been asking the management to arrange for supplies for a month but they have been ignored so far.

A nurse, on the condition of anonymity, said the hospital was seeing a steady stream of patients who were suspected of having Covid-19.

"But the management is not taking any precautions. While dealing with such patients, attenders and nurses are not being given personal protective equipment (PPE) kits or

even masks. We are risking our lives here," he said. According to the hospital's log book, at least six railway employees have visited the hospital after tracing their contact to a Covid-19 positive patient. They have all been sent home for self-quarantine.

Another nurse, also on the condition of anonymity, said the hospital has no idea how to deal with such patients. "We are terrified for our lives while tending to these patients. Also, there is no screening at the main gates. Everyone is being allowed inside. There are rarely any RPF (Railway Protection Force) personnel to man the entrance," he said.

The nurse said that there is a severe shortage of masks. "A few days ago, we

● ACCORDING TO the hospital's log book, at least six railway employees have visited the hospital after tracing their contact to a Covid-19 positive patient. They have all been sent home for self-quarantine.

were using two-ply masks. We have run out of them. Then we were given single layered masks. They, too, are over. Now, the management is telling us they will procure masks stitched from cotton," he said.

The hospital reportedly also is short of sanitisers and sterilising solutions. The first nurse said, "We are simply washing our hands with soap. Otherwise, we have been asked to use 100 per cent alcohol spirit".

"We are simply washing our hands with soap. Otherwise, we have been asked to use 100 per cent alcohol spirit. However, it damages the skin so we stay away from it," he said. A housekeeping staff, working on contract at the hospital, said their condi-

tion was even worse. "We have been given a mask and have been asked to use it for a week. They told us to rewash after every shift and keep it with ourselves," he said.

The staffers are also spooked by the apparent VIP-culture around senior railway employees. Some of the suspect cases are trainees at the Indian Railway Institute of Signal Engineering and Telecommunications (IRISET). A nurse said, "At least three of them were asked to stay at their home in Hyderabad, but they didn't cooperate. They went back to their hometowns in north India."

Hospital director Dr Srikant Mahapatra, however, denied this allegation. He said the officers

were still in Hyderabad and had quarantined themselves. Then there is the puzzling case of a senior Secunderabad division employee who is housed in the hospital. The nurses said that this official's son had returned from overseas recently.

"After that, the official came here with fever symptoms. Instead of sending him to the Gandhi Hospital, he is being kept in the hospital. He is not even in the newly-created isolation ward but a special officers' ward. He might not be infected, but why is the management risking our lives on this assumption?" asked a nurse.

Interestingly, the log book entry of this officer notes that he was dis-

charged on Sunday evening, but both the nurses and Dr Mahapatra said he was still in the hospital. He was discharged only on Thursday morning.

Dr Mahapatra responded to the staffers' claims by saying that the hospital had secured medical supplies for the coming days. "Indeed, there was a shortage of masks and PPE kits, but we have taken care of it. We got one consignment on Monday and will get more over this week," he said. On the Secunderabad division official, he said, "He is only here as a precaution. He is not being considered a suspect case. We have not broken any protocol. He added that he was confident of the hospital's ability to cope with Covid-19.



SHORT TAKES

KCR SPOKE TO JAGAN ABOUT PLIGHT

From Page 1

Mr Jagadish Reddy said that when their plight was brought to the notice of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, he spoke to his AP counterpart, after which, the AP police allowed them to enter. Stating that this was last exception, he said no one would be allowed either to move between the two states from Thursday night, he appealed to people not to venture out to return to their native places as it would give scope for further spreading of the Covid-19 pandemic.

SANITISERS FOR ALL, MONEY FOR POOR: CONGRESS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president and Nalgonda MP N. Uttam Kumar Reddy has appealed to the state government to provide rice and financial assistance of ₹1,500 to poor people who do not have white ration cards.

He said autorickshaw drivers, labourers, workers in the unorganised sector and daily-wage earners should be extended the relief as they have lost their livelihood due to the lockdown.

Addressing Congress workers live on Facebook on Thursday evening, Mr Reddy appealed to all sections of society to support the initiatives being taken by the Centre and the state government to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

He said that the bank details of white ration card holders were yet to be gathered. Further, for those not having bank accounts, he advised that the government pay cash at the time of distribution of rice at ration shops.

To extend help for the people of the state in view of the coronavirus disease Covid-19, Congress leaders in the state have decided to distribute hand sanitisers to the public. He said food and financial assistance should be given to people without ration cards.

Congress Legislative Party leader Mally Bhatti Vikramarka on Thursday said, "we have decided to distribute sanitisers on behalf of the Congress." Mr Bhatti expressed worry over severe shortage of sanitisers in the rural areas and said that former MLA K. Laxma Reddy had been entrusted with the responsibility of delivering the sanitisers in all rural areas with coordination of senior leaders in the state.

The CLP leader requested pharma companies to come forward to produce sanitisers for the poor people. He also said there is non-availability of plastic bottles.

Mr Bhatti said he had taken the same issue to the attention of ministers K.T. Rama Rao and Etala Rajendar and requested to take measures for plastic bottles to be produced.

INDUSTRIALISTS DONATE TO CM RELIEF FUND

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Hailing the attempts made by the state government to curtail the spread of coronavirus, more prominent personalities announced donations to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund on Thursday. Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Company Limited (MEIL) announced a donation of ₹5 crore, Shanta Biotech, KNR Constructions, Hyderabad-based Meenakshi Group and Real Estate Developers Association of India (Credai) donated ₹1 crore each.

MEIL managing director P.V. Krishna Reddy, Shanta Biotech promoter K.E. Prasada Reddy, KNR Constructions owner Kamidi Narasimha Reddy, Meenakshi Group chairman K.S. Rao and managing director C. Sivaji met Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and handed over their cheques at Pragathi Bhavan on Thursday.

According to the Chief Minister's Office Laurus Labs CEO Dr Satyanarayana and executive director Chandrakanth Cheredy handed over a cheque for ₹50 Lakh to the CMRF and announced that they would give one lakh hydroxychloroquine tablets.

The Chief Minister thanked the donors and said the funds would support the programmes up taken by the government and inspire the official machinery.

Reining in violators



A policeman questions a youth for violating prohibitory orders at Auto Nagar on the city outskirts in Hyderabad on Thursday. —P.SURENDRA

Villagers block roads to stop Covid's spread

Sarpanches take lead in sealing village borders for outsiders

S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Compared to urban areas, rural areas of Telangana state are strictly following the lockdown and social distance to control the spreading of the deadly disease of coronavirus.

In several villages, the gram sarpanches and other people have blocked the borders of villages and are not allowing outsiders into the villages and also not allowing the village people to go outside.

Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's, announcements of a lockdown up to April 14, village heads have blocked the village borders. They

● In rural areas, the villagers are doing the police duty by not allowing to move in the villages.

● But in urban areas, people are violating the rules and coming onto the roads unnecessarily even they have no urgent work or emergency.

are not allowing outsiders to enter their villages in view of the spread of coronavirus. They also not allowing the villagers to go outside except in emergency cases. They are not even allowing the relatives of villagers to enter into their village.

But in urban areas, people are violating the rules

and coming onto the roads unnecessarily even they have no urgent work or emergency. The police are giving strict warnings to them not to come out from their homes and often have to resort to lathi charges.

In rural areas, the villagers are doing the police duty by not allowing to move in the villages. In Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Khammam and other districts, the people in the villages are following the rules of lockdown strictly. The coronavirus cases registered in Telangana state are mostly in urban areas.

In the maintaining of social distance also, rural areas are better than urban areas. In erstwhile Mahabubnagar district,

Amarachinta mandal, in several villages, gram sarpanches and local public representatives blocked the borders of their villages. The mandal chairperson, Mangamma, has directed to block all the routes entering into mandal headquarters.

In the villages of Pamireddypalle, Singampet, Nandimalla and Eerladenne, gram sarpanches have set up check posts to block new persons from entering their villages. In Nalgonda district, the youngest gram sarpanch in the state, Udutha Akhila Yadav, Madanapuram village, Chinthapalli mandal, blocked the village border and she herself stands at the border, not allowing any outsiders into the village.

Patient went to doctor at Quthbullapur

From Page 1

On March 18, when he returned, he travelled home in an autorickshaw with his son, and before going to Gandhi, he had visited a doctor in Quthbullapur complaining of cold and fever.

The fourth patient is a 45-year-old man, who lives in Buddhanagar, Secunderabad.

His condition is stable and he has a history of travel to Delhi.

With respect to the doctor couple, residents of Domalguda in the city, the department said that the husband is 41-years-old, who had flown to Tirupati on March 17 and met with a doctor there at the Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences and flew back to Hyderabad the same day.

He went back to work at Yashoda Hospital, Somajiguda, on March 20 for an hour but returned home as he was feeling unwell.

The doctor developed symptoms and took some medication. On March 24,

● WITH RESPECT TO the doctor couple, residents of Domalguda in the city, the department said that the husband is 41-years-old, who had flown to Tirupati on March 17 and met with a doctor there at the Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences and flew back to Hyderabad the same day.

he went to Gandhi Hospital, along with his 36-years-old doctor wife, where, after tests, they both were found to be infected by Coronavirus.

While the doctor's contacts include his wife, who too has tested positive, tests done on others in his family, his mother, father and two children showed that the mother's test returned negative. Results on tests done on other three family members are awaited.

Karimnagar puts off state minister

DC CORRESPONDENT KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 26

With Karimnagar entering the second stage of coronavirus, the district administration is undertaking day and night operations to combat the disease. But people are still being negligent in ensuring social distance or following the lockdown guidelines, observed Gangula Kamalakar, the minister for BC welfare, food, civil supplies and consumer affairs.

"If the situation continues like this for a few more days, Karimnagar will enter the third stage and it may become impossible to prevent spread of Covid-19," the minister warned.

In the morning, Mr Kamalakar inspected several vegetable markets and general stores in the city. He was surprised to see huge crowds thronging places and jostling with one another for purchasing vegetables and other items without being bothered of social distancing.



Gangula Kamalakar

The minister said that it is not good on part of people to violate lockdown orders issued for their own welfare. People are not listening to authorities despite being asked to maintain social distance. He ordered police to implement rules strictly from Friday at every store and all vegetable markets and take severe action against violators. Later, he launched distribution of free rice to white ration cardholders from Ramnagar in the city.

City mayor Y. Sunil Rao, municipal commissioner V. Kranthi, deputy mayor Challa Swarupa Rani were among those present.

Passes had no contact info

From Page 1

T. Rama Rao (name changed), a resident of Konaseema region of east Godavari district, approached the Hyderabad police on Wednesday claiming that he wanted to reach his native place along with his family. He was issued a pass without being asked a single question.

He obtained another pass stating that his cousin also wanted to leave city and police obliged and issued a second pass also.

The second pass did not contain number of the vehicle to be used by pass holders.

With the situation turning grim, the top police officials in Telangana told media that passes were originally issued to hostel residents to fetch food and other essential commodities but they were misused.

This claim is factually incorrect because the pass issued to people clearly mentions that its purpose was to allow the pass holder to move out of the city.

"He requested for permission to leave to his/her native place in view of Covid 2019 situation. Hence, there is no objection to leave to his/her native place," reads the certificate issued by the Hyderabad city police.

● With the situation turning grim, the top police officials in Telangana told media that passes were originally issued to hostel residents to fetch food and other essential commodities but they were misused.

Mr Rao's family had to undergo severe hardships during the last 24 hours. They started thinking about how they would quickly reach their native place and meet their beloved ones but were caught in a traffic jam for at least a 20 to 30 kms stretch before the Andhra Pradesh border.

Along with them were two small children below the age of 10 years. They waited on the road for the entire night. The next day also they could not make it up to the Andhra border.

Women passengers had a tough time attending to nature calls and had to sneak into the neighbouring bushes. With great difficulty, they managed to get a water can and some snacks.

They returned and tried out another border near the Guntur district, but there too, the roads were blocked. Finally, they returned to Hyderabad.

KTR TO PHARMA FIRMS: SUPPLY KEY DRUGS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Amidst the prevailing confusion over essential services during the 21-day lockdown, minister K.T. Rama Rao held a meeting with officers of pharma and bulk drug manufacturing units at Pragathi Bhavan here on Thursday.

The minister stated that the state government has recognised pharma industry as an essential service. He enquired about the production capacities of life-saving medicines required to fight the Covid-19 pandemic and urged the companies to ensure they continue to produce those at full capacity.

He urged that companies producing drugs and intermediaries which are not in immediate demand may explore the possibilities of either cutting down on their production, or help in producing drugs and other products required to fight the virus.

Mr Rao appreciated the key role pharma industry is playing in the fight against the pandemic saying, "Pharma industry in the state not only produces life-saving medicines for the state and rest of the country but also exports them to many countries." He urged the pharma industry to ensure protect their employees' health.

Contradictory pictures



Ration dealers sit in a group in a small room without maintaining a social distance in a meeting at Secunderabad on Thursday, while people stand in a queue maintaining a social distance for purchasing vegetables at a store in Hyderabad during the lockdown on Thursday. — S. Surender Reddy, R. Pavan

INFO | POWER The system is helping Andhra Pradesh to disseminate information in villages within hours

Jagan's village volunteer idea catches national attention

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's novel idea of a village volunteer system has attracted national attention in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The national media highlighted the village volunteer system and praised Reddy.

In controlling the coronavirus, village volunteers are playing a key role. Through this system, the state government is able to get any information across the state within hours. Due to this, only 10 coronavirus-positive cases have been registered so far in the state.

No other state in the country has this kind of facility and several states



are considering to follow the system. After coming to power, Mr Reddy established the village volunteers system, recruiting about 2.5 lakh unemployed youth at one volunteer for every 50 houses.

● Through the volunteer system, the AP government is able to get any information across the state within hours.

● Due to this, only 10 coronavirus-positive cases have been registered so far in the state.

volunteers must visit every house allotted to them. With the regular interaction, the volunteers build a good rapport with the family members of those 50 houses.

This is helping the government get information on spreading the coronavirus across and to enable people take measures to control it. The volunteers are able to know if

any member of a family returns from a foreign country and send them to the government. The major problem faced by the state governments is about information of foreign returnees in their states. But the AP government gets such information within minutes. Health department officials are then able to conduct necessary tests and give them proper advice.

The 2.5 lakh volunteers have done surveys of about 1.43 crore households in the state on coronavirus. Through the information collected, officials have conducted screening tests for about 25000 foreign returnees to the state. This shows the importance of village volunteers and the benefit of this system.

AP to issue GO to access state's money till June

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

The AP government has decided to issue a special ordinance to enable operation of the annual Budget for three months of the new financial year.

The government has already sent a note to Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan informing him that holding the Assembly session is not possible in the present circumstances to pass the annual Budget for the financial year 2020-21.

Hence the state government will issue an ordinance for the utilisation of funds for three months. The AP Cabinet is meeting on March 27 at 11 am to accept the ordinance.

The state government earlier thought of holding a brief session to pass the vote on account despite the coronavirus pandemic. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nation-wide lockdown till April 14 and also called on everyone to follow social distancing. Keeping this in view, the

state government has decided to issue an ordinance in a day or two on the budget. The constitution rules that a state or central government has to pass the appropriation bill before 31st March of every year.

Otherwise the state or central governments cannot utilise funds from April 1 in the new financial year. In 2004, the then Chandrababu Naidu government issued an ordinance instead of passing the budget in the Assembly.



## SHORT TAKES

### BJP MPs DONATE FUNDS TO DIDP'S GOVERNMENT

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 26

At a time when West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been crying for a financial package from the Centre to tackle Covid-19 pandemic, 14 MPs among the 18 from the BJP along with a party MLA in the state have come forward with funds totalling ₹10.10 crore to help her government buy masks, sanitary kits and personal protective equipment as total number of confirmed cases rose to 10 including a death on Thursday.

They handed over the donations from their Local Area Development Funds to the district administration officials in their constituencies in the past few days since March 23.

Contributions by the Trinamul Congress parliamentarians and MLAs are yet to be known.

Among the 14 BJP MPs, S.S. Alhwalia of Burdwan-Durgapur Lok Sabha constituency tops the list with ₹1.6 crore followed by Locket Chatterjee of Hooghly, Subhas Sarkar of Bankura and Shantanu Thakur of Bongaon who donated ₹1 crore each.

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has appealed to her counterparts in 18 states to take care of a large number of migrant

### MIM MLA BARGES INTO HOSPITAL, ARRESTED

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 26

After the reports that an All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMM) MLA from Malegaon, Mufti Mohammad Ismail, and his supporters barged into a hospital in Malegaon and engaged in an altercation with doctors and hospital staff, the state government issued a statement saying that attacks on police and health workers will not be tolerated.

The MLA has been arrested by the police.

There were also reports of a policeman being seriously injured after a motorcyclist drove straight into him to avoid being stopped in Vasai, Palghar district and attacks on policemen in Beed.

Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar said the government won't tolerate attacks on the police and health workers, who were working hard to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Citing the example of the Army being roped in to implement the lockdown in the United States, he said, "Do not force the government to call the Army. It is our responsibility to ensure we don't reach that stage."

MLA Mufti Mohammed Ismail was arrested after a video surfaced on the social media showing he and his supporters creating ruckus inside a hospital and one of his supporters kicking a hospital staff.

### ARRESTED YOUTH ASSAULTS COP AGAIN

M K ASHOKA | DC BENGALURU, MARCH 25

As the cops are implementing lockdown to contain spreading Coronavirus, more cases of retaliation are coming to fore in the city. Tajoddin, who was arrested for assaulting cops, was shot in the leg as he again tried to assault policemen and escape while he was being taken to the spot to conduct spot mahajar in wee hours of Wednesday.

DCP North Shashikumar said that when Tajoddin was taken to spot for mahajar, he again tried to escape. He ran away for some distance. When police tried to arrest him again, he assaulted cops including a woman police officer with stones and bricks.

PSI Roopa, head constable Manjanna suffered injuries. Sanjaynagar police inspector Balaji later fired in the air and then on the left leg.

All three were shifted to Baptist Hospital. DCP Shashikumar said. The vehicle of miscreants have been seized. A case has been registered under IPC 353 and they will be tagged as rowdy sheeters, he added.

Earlier on Tuesday, Tajoddin and Kutbuddin had assaulted police constables Manjunatha and Basavaraju in full public view in Sanjaynagar police limits.

### ASSAM PLANS TO CONVERT STADIUMS INTO HOSPITAL

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MARCH 26

In a bid to intensify welfare measures and augment health facilities, Assam government on Thursday announced that 40 lakh students across the state won't go hungry and will be provided mid-day meals at home during the 21-day nationwide lockdown.

Health department too has started work on converting stadium into 2,000-bed field hospital dedicated for coronavirus patients.

Assam chief secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna said, "We have ensured that the students do not go to sleep hungry and for that, the state government has decided to provide mid-day meals to students at home."

All the students below 14 years of age will get the benefit of mid-day meals.

He, however, clarified that they had made arrangement for supplying the mid-day meals till March 31 but now it will be extended up to lockdown period.

"The schools have been provided with ration and we have ensured that students do not go to sleep hungry," he added. Meanwhile, the health department has embarked upon a massive plan to create isolation facilities for 2,000 people by converting stadiums into field hospital.

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters that two stadiums - Sarusajai and Tarun Ram Phookan Indoor stadiums would be used as quarantine block.

Fearing that Assam could get its first corona infected patient anytime as incubation period of the possible corona infected person was still on, the minister said that Assam has altogether 156 ventilators and 30 more are being added at Guwahati Medical College Hospital.

Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal who on Thursday directed the authorities to ensure that supply chain of essential food item is maintained.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee draws circles to create awareness about maintaining social distance in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic during her visit to various markets following nation-wide lockdown in Kolkata on Thursday. - PTI

## Oppn picks holes in relief package

Suggestions like helping tenant farmers, EMI deferment not implemented, says Congress

SREEPARNA CHAKRABARTY | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 26

Opposition parties on Thursday said the financial package offered by the government to tide over coronavirus outbreak was "too little too late" even as some members of Parliament urged that ₹20,000 crore earmarked for re-doing the Central Vista be diverted to fighting the pandemic.

Congress leader and party MP from Wayanad Rahul Gandhi said: "The government announcement of a financial assistance package is the first step in the right direction. India owes a debt to its farmers, daily wage earners, labourers, women and the elderly who are bearing the brunt of the ongoing lockdown."

Former finance minister P. Chidambaram said the plan does not put enough cash in the pockets of the poor. "Some sections have been left out altogether. Our estimate of (the additional money that will be transferred (including the value of the grain and pulses) is ₹1 lakh crore. Necessary but not sufficient at all."

— P. CHIDAMBARAM  
Former finance minister

Some sections have been left out altogether. Our estimate of (the additional money that will be transferred (including the value of the grain and pulses) is ₹1 lakh crore. Necessary but not sufficient at all.

He also asked the government to divert funds meant for building a new Central Vista to fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. "Unconscionable that the Central government finds it necessary to spend ₹20,000 crore at this precise moment for a new house for the PM and other beautification schemes. Central Vista plan must be scrapped, earmarked funds must be

at least give 3 kg of pulses," he said. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the financial package announced by the government was inadequate. "The ₹1.75 lakh crore package announced on Thursday missed out on a crucial issue of the migrant workers returning to their own states," he said.

He also asked the government to divert funds meant for building a new Central Vista to fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. "Unconscionable that the Central government finds it necessary to spend ₹20,000 crore at this precise moment for a new house for the PM and other beautification schemes. Central Vista plan must be scrapped, earmarked funds must be

transferred to tackle #COVID2019 and its impact on the poor," Mr Yechury said. Similar thoughts were echoed by Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram Shashi Tharoor. "As an MP, I appeal to Prime Minister to divert the ₹20,000-crore earmarked for new Parliament building and Central Vista to supplement the ₹15,000 crore allotted to fight Covid-19, which is merely ₹20 crore per district. Grand spending on buildings at this time of crisis is a postposable luxury," he tweeted.

Congress demanded that the Centre should intervene and ensure migrant workers who are stranded on roads are transported back to their native villages or cities. The Trinamul Congress

on the other hand claimed that the Centre had taken inspiration from state governments to roll out the plan. "The Centre takes cue from relief plans already rolled out by state governments like West Bengal a week ago-free six months ration for the poor, health insurance for champion frontliners fighting corona and ₹1,000 for daily wagers under new Prochesta Scheme".

Earlier, in a letter to PM Modi, Congress president Sonia Gandhi asked him to ensure that frontline health workers and doctors are provided with adequate supply of personal protective equipment like masks and Hazmat suits. She also sought a six-month "risk allowance" for the healthcare professionals from March 1.

## MNREGA wages to be hiked

From Page 1

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that wages under MNREGA would be increased by Rs 2,000 per worker on an average as additional income to help daily wage labourers.

"Three crore senior citizens, persons with disabilities (divyangs) and widows will get one-time additional amount of Rs 1,000 in two installments, to be given through DBT over a period of three months," she added.

Giving sops to a section of women, the finance minister said that over 20 crore Jan Dhan account holders would be covered under the relief package and will get compensation of Rs 500 per month for the next three months.

"The BPL families will get free cylinders for three months under the Ujjawala scheme as well," she said.

Collateral-free loans have been doubled to Rs 20 lakh for women self-help groups under the Deen Dayal National Livelihood Mission. "It will help seven crore women," Ms Sitharaman added.

For middleclass or salaried people, the finance minister announced a major relief in the ongoing lockdown period, saying that the government will bear 24 per cent cost of EPF contribution of both employer and employee (12 per cent each) for the next three months. "However, this is only for those establishments which have up to 100 employees and 90 per cent of them earn less than Rs 15,000. This is like to benefit around 4.8 crore employees," Ms Sitharaman said.

EPF subscribers can now withdraw 75 per cent of their PF balance or three months wages as a non-refundable advance, whichever is lower. This will benefit about 4.8 crore employees, the finance minister said.

Ms Sitharaman also announced that for the welfare of building and construction workers, the Central government has passed orders to states to use funds worth Rs 31,000 crore to provide relief. "This fund is likely to be used to augment medical testing, screening and providing better healthcare

facilities," Ms Sitharaman. Keeping in mind the severity of the spread of the deadly virus, it is learnt from doctors and global experts that there is a possibility of the lockdown getting extended beyond April 15.

This fear is causing worry to the middleclass, especially over their monthly EMIs for home or car loans as well as credit card payments during the lockdown period.

When asked about such payments, Ms Nirmala Sitharaman declined to comment, saying that the government is working on that and this package is only for the unprivileged classes.

However, a source said, "The government is in talks with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and in a due course of time the central bank may come out with a plan in this regard."

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— NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

### MP SEES FIRST DEATH DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 26

A 65-year-old woman in Ujjain succumbed to coronavirus infection late on Wednesday night. This was the first death due to Covid-19 in MP.

Another suspected coronavirus victim, a 47-year-old man, died in Ujjain early on Thursday morning. He was admitted in the local government hospital in Indore on Wednesday night and died a few hours later.

However, test reports of his sample was still awaited. Meanwhile, five new positive cases of Covid-19 were reported in Indore in the last 12 hours, taking the tally of confirmed cases in MP to 21.

## G20 leaders pledge US\$ 5 trn to take on Covid-19 crisis

Riyadh, March 26: G20 nations pledged a "united front" on Thursday in the fight against coronavirus, saying they were injecting US\$ 5 trillion into the global economy to counter the pandemic amid forecasts of a deep recession.

US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin joined the emergency videoconference chaired by Saudi Arabia's King Salman, who called for coordinated action while facing pressure to end an oil price war between Riyadh and Moscow that has roiled energy markets.

The talks come amid criticism that the G20 has been slow to address the Covid-19 pandemic, which has left more than 21,000 dead worldwide according to official data, and triggered financial shock waves as more than three billion people are locked down.

"We are strongly committed to presenting a united front against this common threat," the leaders said in a joint statement after the summit.

"We are injecting over US\$ 5 trillion into the global economy, as part of targeted fiscal policy, economic measures and guarantee schemes to counteract the social, economic and financial impacts of the pandemic." As concerns mount for poorer countries without access to capital markets or adequate health facilities, G20 leaders also pledged to work with bodies such as the International Monetary Fund to deploy a "robust"

### ODISHA SETS UP 1,000-BED HOSPITAL

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 26

In a major development, Odisha government on Thursday announced establishment of a 1,000-bed Covid-19 hospital in the state. The announcement came following signing of a tripartite agreement between two government agencies and two private medical colleges.

According to Subrato Bagchi, Odisha government's chief spokesperson on Covid-19, Odisha Mining Corporation and the Central public sector unit Mahanadi Coalfields Limited signed the agreement with Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital and KIIMS Hospital and Medical College - all in Bhubaneswar - for creating 500 beds each.

In another development, the Odisha government on Thursday decided to scale up the number of Covid-19 sample tests in the state. The decision was taken at the inter-ministerial meeting chaired by chief minister Naveen Patnaik.

financial package to support developing nations. "It is our responsibility to extend a helping hand to developing countries and (the) least developed countries," King Salman said. - PTI

## Man kills brother in fight over lockdown

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 26

A 28-year-old man killed his younger brother, who tried to stop him and his wife from going to a market during the lockdown imposed because of Coronavirus outbreak.

The deceased, Dugesh Thakur, worked in a private firm in Pune. He had returned home after the lockdown was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On Wednesday, his elder brother Rajesh Laxmi Thakur and his wife stepped out of the house despite repeated warnings about the lockdown, an official from Samta Nagar police station said. When

the couple got back home after their outing, Durgesh was still furious with them and that a heated argument ensued, following which the accused attacked him with a frying pan, the official said.

"The younger brother had objected to Rajesh and his wife going to market to buy vegetables despite of a lockdown. But the couple still went to the market and when they returned, Durgesh started quarrelling with them and hit his brother's wife. This angered Rajesh and he hit his brother with metal frying pan lying in the kitchen," senior inspector of police Raju Kasbe said.

According to another police officer Rajesh hit Durgesh in the head three times.

After hearing commotion neighbours gathered there and rushed Durgesh to hospital where doctors declared him brought dead.

Following the incident the Samta Nagar police registered a case under IPC section 302 (murder) on complaint of Durgesh's friend Ramprasad Mukhya (30).

Rajesh was produced in a local court on Thursday, which remanded him to police custody for a day. Meanwhile, the Navi Mumbai police arrested two persons for allegedly roaming about in public during Covid-19 lockdown

and that too without any protective masks. According to the police, this may be the first offence registered under Maharashtra Covid-19 Measures 2020, a directive, which was issued after the government imposed section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in the state.

The police arrested Mehboob Chand Shaikh (47) and Vikas Mishra (27). Shaikh, who owns a mutton shop, claimed that he was taking a post-lunch stroll, while Mishra said he had stepped out for an ice cream, senior inspector Satish Gaikwad of Kalamboli police said.

The duo has been booked under section 188 (dis-

obeying a government order) of the IPC and relevant provisions of the Disaster Management Act and Maharashtra Covid-19 Measures 2020, he said.

The accused were subsequently released on bail and will be called to remain present before court, he added.

Meanwhile, as people in Maharashtra continue to throng the shops despite state government's repeated appeals to exercise restraint during the lockdown period, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has provided them relief by announcing that the shops of essential commodities will be allowed to stay open 24x7 in the state.



# DECCAN Chronicle

27 MARCH 2020

## Shameless bid to sow instability in Afghanistan

The attack on a Sikh Gurudwara in Kabul on Wednesday – in which 25 members of the India-origin minority community were killed – is a shameless and cynical attempt to deepen the sense of instability and political chaos in war-torn Afghanistan. The targeting of the “dharamsal”, or home of religion, as gurdwaras are respectfully called in Afghanistan, comes just weeks after the Americans signed a peace agreement with the Taliban last month, although an accompanying process to get going the envisioned intra-Afghan dialogue to determine the future political coordinates of the country continues to lie in a state of uncertainty.

The Islamic State, which lost no time in claiming the attack and has no stakes in the country’s future, is evidently being destructive as it seeks nothing more than to deepen the sense of insecurity and disorder at a historical juncture which, regrettably, is characterised by an absence of effective authority in the country. The only source of solace in a grim situation is that the Taliban, which is straining every nerve to return to power after 19 years, has repudiated the dharamsal attack.

Islamic State is at odds with the Taliban, an armed group with local power ambitions that has been nurtured by Pakistan practically since its nebulous founding at the time of the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s. Ironically, the local IS too is thought by many experts as well as an array of Afghan politicians to owe its existence to Pakistan’s military intelligence, the ISI. That makes the Islamic State the second string to Pakistan’s bow in the Afghan theatre.

The gurudwara at Kabul’s Shor Bazar (Salt Market) in the old city is probably the oldest in Afghanistan and is a respected institution. The Sikhs in the country – along with the Hindus – are now probably no more than 10,000 strong. Though so few, they have representatives in Parliament. They are not victimised or discriminated against either by the government or by Muslim society.

However, the Sikhs and Hindus, who have been in Afghanistan for approximately 200 years, have complained of their lands in rural areas having been grabbed by unscrupulous elements in the wake of the Soviet invasion of December 1979, which led to the rise of warlords and strongmen all over the country. In fact, the grab of lands of ordinary folk is known to be the scourge of Afghanistan, and millions of refugees who returned from neighbouring countries after the collapse of Taliban rule in 2001 are still running from pillar to post to get back their properties.

Earlier this month, a few weeks before the Gurudwara attack, IS had attacked a memorial congregation of Afghanistan’s minority Shia community, who are seen as being outside the pale by ultra-conservative Sunni elements. None of this has any impact on the tortuous “peace process”. On Wednesday night, the government announced a delegation to negotiate the freeing and exchange of prisoners with the Taliban.

## Virus gets kings & commoners

Finally, Charles gets coronated,” was the most humorous message to come out in the social media on the plight of Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne. He is not the first royal or celebrity to become a victim of the runaway coronavirus holding the world at ransom. But, in this hour of personal crisis for the heir apparent, should we begrudge him a medical test as the people of the UK and its media sought to in raising the question whether he was tested out of turn?

As a man inured to awaiting his turn - after all, he has done so nearly since his birth 71 years ago as his mother Queen Elizabeth II has ruled on from 1952 - one more tragic turn may, hopefully, not be life threatening. He is, in a sense, the definition of a tragic royal as he messed up his marriage with one of the most beautiful women on earth but who must at least feel relieved now that his wife Camilla has not tested positive. But then social distancing and separate bedrooms are something of a tradition in the House of Windsor as The Crown portrayed to viewers. The Covid-19 organism has respected not the celebrity quotient of personalities. It has struck kings and commoners alike, perhaps triggering a bit of schadenfreude as members of the royalty, including the Prince of Monaco, Prime Minister’s wives and even a clergyman resident of the Vatican close to the Pope’s HQ, have come face to face with the invasive pathogen. Can we blame the brave warriors of the #MeToo movement if they felt even a fleeting moment of delight at Harvey Weinstein, that monster of a man, testing positive too? In sharp contrast to the humbling experience of so many at the hands of the virus came our Bollywood celebrity singer Kanika Kapoor, who didn’t mind being a possible super spreader as she waltzed around partying and then threw tantrums while brave doctors and paramedics were treating her. Like the novelty in the virus, there is something unique about Indian celebrity behaviour.

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Printer & Publisher

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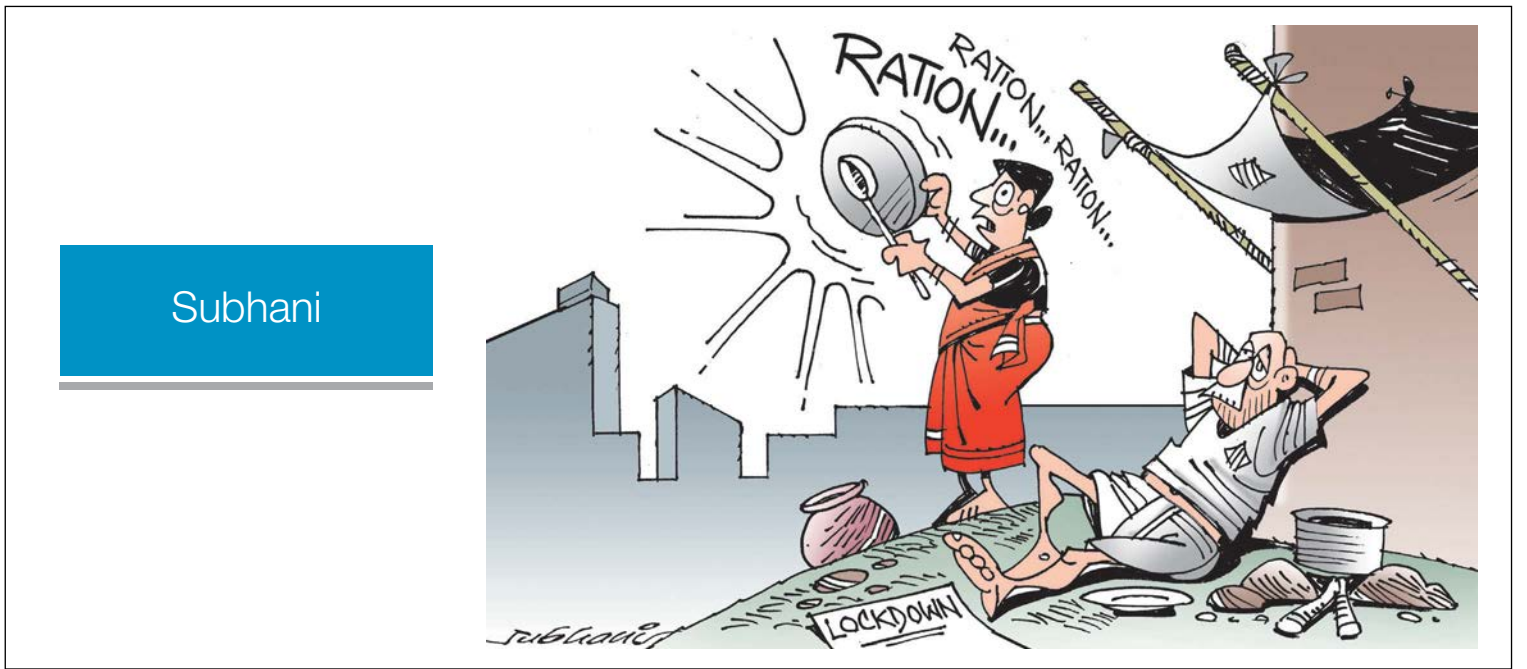
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 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: HSD-348/2006-08



Subhani

# Your argument for CAA is sophistry, Mr Salve



Abdul Khaliq

Dear Mr Harish Salve:

As a leading opinion-maker of this country, what you say and write have a significant influence on public opinion. This distinguished position obviously brings with it a huge responsibility, which means saying it like it is, unaffected by partisan considerations. Unfortunately, your recent piece “CAA is Necessary” in a national newspaper justifying the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 is an exercise in instrumental reasoning that, to say the least, is inaccurate and misleading. At this most critical juncture in our country’s history, when the idea of India envisaged by our founders lies in tatters, misinformation on a momentous issue like the CAA must be called out.

At the very outset, you state that “the law that requires Muslim migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh to be deported is the law of 1946 (the Foreigners Act) and 1955 (Citizenship Act)”. This gives the erroneous impression that these laws have slotted migrants according to religious affiliation and specifically name Pakistan and Bangladesh, whereas in their pristine form there is no mention or hint of identifying foreigners or migrants by their religion or targeting migrants from certain countries. And needless to say, Pakistan did not exist in 1946 and Bangladesh came into being decades later. The unembellished fact is that these laws originally applied equally to foreigners and migrants of all countries.

You have rightly point-

ed out that common principles govern grant of citizenship in democratic countries, and our Citizenship Act 1955 reflects this universal approach. The problem with the CAA 2019 is that, far from endorsing universal egalitarian principles, it has not only injected religion into the mix but has blatantly taken recourse to what the incomparable George Orwell described so incisively: “All are equal but some are more equal.” Even as you feign to express incomprehension at the outcry against the CAA, you certainly know why the dadas in Shaheen Bagh have been punishing themselves for the last three months. The CAA has quite simply denied Muslims the citizenship rights offered to the followers of other religions.

On the widespread criticism of the CAA discriminating against Muslims, you wonder how “a law which is designed to confer the benefit on an identified class of persons, and which identification is based on a rational criterion, can be condemned as being discriminatory”. Do you seriously believe that it is rational to confer benefits selectively among a common group of migrants on the basis of religion? Doing so amounts to religious apartheid.

You argue that “the principle of equality does not take away from the State the power of making classifications. If a law deals equally with members of a defined class, it is not open to the charge of denial of equal protection on the ground that it has no application to other persons”. This line of reasoning that champions the unfettered power of the State to pick and choose benefi-

ciaries is consonant with how authoritarian regimes justify discrimination. The crux of the problem is that the CAA pointedly excludes Muslims from among the defined class of persecuted migrants and hence is a blatant case of treating equals unequally, which runs foul not only of our Constitution but also the UN Charter on Human Rights. Is it any wonder then that the UN high commissioner for human rights has filed an application with our Supreme Court to join the plea challenging the CAA?

In justifying the exclusion of Muslims, you state that “classification on the basis of religion is not per se unconstitutional”. You then elaborate your point by invoking the special rights conferred upon members of minority religious communities. This is an inappropriate and fallacious analogy as it equates the issue of the fundamental right of equality among individuals enshrined in Articles 14 to 16 of the Constitution, which the CAA allegedly violates, with Articles 29 and 30 which bestow certain collective rights for linguistic and religious minority groups to help them preserve their language, religion and culture. This is false equivalence. As a legal luminary of international repute, perhaps your most astonishing contention is that the government must be free to “determine which of many possible schemes is the best” without interference from the Supreme Court even if the court thinks there are other methods better for the nation. Stated in the context of the constitutional challenge to the CAA, this assertion of

**You elaborate your point by invoking the rights conferred upon minority religious communities. This is an inappropriate and fallacious analogy.**

**You have shrugged away the apprehensions about the NRC/NPR and their implication for Muslims with a caveat that only a procedure that is more onerous for Muslims than for others would be unconstitutional**

yours affirms the supremacy of the executive government over the courts even in matters impinging on constitutional values. Your prescription is ideally suited to an oligarchy, not a democracy.

Without assigning any reasons, you have contemptuously dismissed the criticism that the CAA is inter alia discriminatory as it does not cover migrants from all countries who have suffered religious persecution. Similarly, you have shrugged away the widespread apprehensions about the NRC/NPR and their implication for Muslims with a general caveat that only a procedure that is more onerous for Muslims than for others would be unconstitutional. You conclude your defence of the CAA by taking a swipe at secular liberals and their effete ideology, accusing them of inciting the anti-CAA protests. But the ongoing conflict is not about the politics of the Left or the Right but about the fears of the women in Shaheen Bagh and other protest sites and their fight against a law which they perceive to be unjust and discriminatory. In making our judgment of this tumultuous time, we would do well to remember Albert Einstein’s sage advice: “Remember your humanity and forget the rest!”

Regards,  
Abdul Khaliq

The writer is a former civil servant and the secretary-general of the Lok Janshakti Party. The views expressed here are personal.

### LETTERS

#### CORONAVIRUS

People are roaming around Hyderabad as if nothing has happened and some picnic is in progress. They are defeating the purpose of lockdown. The Telangana government should immediately take stern action against them as this situation can turn into a calamity.

Manik Sathe  
Hyderabad

Why not innovate on use of TV network to control lockdown? Directing the population from stepping out is a massive task. Unless the authorities think of some creative out-of-the-box techniques, it will not work. We could make all paid TV channels to become free so that viewers are engaged. The government can coordinate with DTH companies to make it happen. There were many good initiatives by the Telangana government and I wish to contribute positively.

V. Meghana  
Hyderabad

The police action during lockdown is high-handed. People are being treated in an inhumane manner. Even the cops are not obeying safety precautions during lockdown or maintaining the one metre distance. While making people aware of coronavirus, they should not be made to starve. I request the PM to stop giving speeches and help states fight the virus and hunger.

Mohammad Sarwar Ahmed  
Hyderabad

Why can’t people act in a socially responsible manner for themselves and their elders if not for others? Why do cops have to beat them? I urge people to understand the gravity of the situation and not make India another Italy or China.

Dr Rithvik Golla  
Secunderabad

#### Basu for mid-term election

NEW DELHI, March 26

Former West Bengal Deputy Chief Minister Jyoti Basu pleaded with the Central leaders here today for immediate dissolution of the State Assembly and holding of a fresh poll in the State as early as possible.



Mr. Basu, who arrived here last night, met President V. V. Giri, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Home Minister Y. B. Chavan.

It is understood none of the Central leaders made any commitment to the Marxist leader.

By arrangement with Dawn



Mahir Ali

## Beyond the disease

Stop the world -- I want to get off” was a mildly amusing meme some decades ago. In recent weeks, the world has indeed steadily been grinding to a halt in many respects. But, naturally, no one can get off. We are all in it together.

It may sound contradictory, but in these unexpected times, isolation and solidarity go hand in hand. Isolation because, for the time being, it seems to be the best way to avoid contracting, or passing on, Covid-19. Solidarity because where would we be without it?

Sure, there has been no shortage of egregious displays of selfishness. A bunch of American senators, for instance, who were privy to intelligence about what lay ahead, sold off their stocks before the market tanked. On a far broader scale, across many countries, we have witnessed mass outbreaks of panic-buying — whereby shortages of basic foods and other essentials become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Most of them are merely hoarding, thereby leaving others — many of whom have little or no savings — to gaze in dismay at empty

supermarket shelves. The ulterior motives go further in some cases, though, where the primary intent is to stock up on goods that can subsequently be vendied at far higher rates than their previous market value.

Inevitably, this kind of profiteering is not restricted to individuals. An obvious counterpoint is public outbursts of gratitude for and solidarity with professions dedicated to mitigating the crisis and providing a path forward, from nurses, doctors and other health professionals to other employees in essential services, from transport to retail, all too often derided as “unskilled”, and, perhaps above all, the cleaners who crucially help to keep the deadly virus at bay in any number of environments.

It is somewhat heartening to see how many governments have been persuaded to suddenly turn their neo-liberal ideological inclinations on their head and reach out to some of the most vulnerable segments of society with stimulus and rescue packages.

At the same time, some of them are finding it hard to shed their devotion to big business. In what is

**There is more than one way of looking at the pre-eminence of the state when it comes to the crunch. Authoritarian tendencies can in some circumstances be lifesavers. Public obedience in the face of official restrictions will likely turn out to have limited the number of casualties.**

still the world’s largest economy, for example, a key bill was being held up at the time of writing because there was no bipartisan consensus in the US Senate over whether its large corporations or vulnerable families are more worthy of generous handouts.

It is nonetheless striking how government policies in many instances have pivoted to what was deemed unthinkable just a couple of months ago. In Britain, the Conservative government appears to have heeded the advice, as set out in a recent article in the right-wing Spectator magazine by ITV’s political editor Robert Peston, to

“borrow from [Jeremy] Corbyn’s playbook to prevent a coronavirus crash”. In the US, some of the official initiatives are broadly in line with what relatively radical Democrats such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren were until last month being ridiculed for proposing. They do not quite extend to universal healthcare, but the case for that measure has seldom been stronger.

Unfortunately, none of this necessarily guarantees that the post-Covid-19 world, whenever we get there, will differ substantially from the status quo ante. Right now, beyond the fringes of the far right, there are hardly any voices militating against “big government” and “nanny states”. But that is no reason to assume that largely unregulated corporate capitalism, unlike all too many of its victims, is on life support.

There is anyhow more than one way of looking at the pre-eminence of the state when it comes to the crunch. Authoritarian tendencies can in some circumstances be lifesavers. Public obedience in the face of official restrictions will likely turn out to have played a crucial

role in limiting the number of casualties in countries such as China, South Korea and Singapore. But once the current exigencies are a thing of the past, will the instruments of mass surveillance and public control stay in place? Will governments with authoritarian tendencies relax their controls once the threat has dissipated?

In Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu has effectively sought to suspend democracy and the rule of law. In Hungary, Viktor Orban is seeking sanction to rule by decree. On the other hand, though, the arguments against instituting public good at public expense — be it in respect of combating climate change or making sure everyone has adequate shelter and enough to eat — along the lines of “where will the money come from?” would appear to have been irrefutably challenged, if not comprehensively defeated.

There is no dearth of money. It can be created, if necessary, to facilitate the survival of human beings rather than stock markets. Who can tell, though, whether this message will seep through?



SHORT TAKES

UNDERTRIALS IN ODISHA TO BE RELEASED

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 26

The Odisha government has decided to release under-trial prisoners accused of bailable offences, to minimise crowd in jails. In this regard, Home ministry has written to Odisha High Court mentioning that there is a provision to release the prisoners under sections 436 and 436-A of CrPC during a period of crisis.

Referring to a writ petition heard by the Supreme Court of India in 2017, the department stated that the Supreme Court had directed to exercise these CrPC sections.

Under these two sections of CrPC, the prisoners accused of bailable offences, who have spent almost 50 per cent of total sentence pronounced by the courts, can be released during such emergency period.

Even the undertrial prisoners, who have failed to furnish bail bond, can walk out of jails on this ground.

In such case, a UTP can be released by producing personal bond before the court, the home department stated. The government has been laying emphasis on maintaining social distancing to combat Covid-19.

LOCKDOWN VIOLATIONS GALORE IN TN

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 26

About 1,434 cases have been booked by the police against those who violated Section 144 in the last two days (March 24 & 25) in the state.

About 12 cases have been registered against people for spreading fake news and rumours and eight people have been arrested in this regard. The police stopped games of cricket in Kancheepuram and Cuddalore districts and made 12 boys do Thoppukaranam (a repetitive yogic squats with specific hand position) and let them go with a warning.

Also, six people have been arrested for violating home quarantine including one in Chennai. A release from the city police said around 156 check points have been set up in the city and two-wheeler and patrol vehicles are patrolling round the clock.

During the last 12 hours (from 6 pm on Wednesday to 6 am on Thursday), 53 cases have been registered against people for violating Section 144. Eight men have been booked for drunken driving, 194 cases have been registered for not wearing helmets and 47 cases against people involved in other traffic violations. The police has requested the public to stay at home and in some places the police are seen handing out punishments to those found roaming on the streets.

WB HAM RJs HELP COPS ENSURE LOCKDOWN

Kolkata, March 26: The Ham radio operators in West Bengal are helping police in tracking down mass gatherings and sending vagabonds to the shelters during the nationwide lockdown imposed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, officials said on Thursday.

Police in various districts have received inputs from licenced amateur radio operators in identifying spots and places where social gatherings have been taking place, a senior officer said.

"This helps us take swift action against those who are defying the 21-day lockdown," the police officer said.

The Ham operators have licences to conduct such communications under specific radio frequencies by the Union Ministry of Communications.

West Bengal Amateur Radio Club secretary Ambarish Nag Biswas said around 280 Ham operators are working round the clock in tracking down spots of social gatherings and also helping people, who are in distress, during the lockdown.

"After discussion with police, we have opened a helpline number and are using our network to track areas of social gatherings and rescuing people in distress. There is a chain through which the network is working," Biswas said.

Elaborating about their activities through the network, Biswas said there are around 10-12 Ham radio operators in each district, barring Darjeeling.

The operators use their local network to get information about social gatherings in their locality, he said.

# Coping with the new normal

People across the country who are hit by the nation-wide quarantine are finding ways to manage their day-to-day activities. In several cities, volunteers were seen feeding the homeless, migrants were seen walking in the hope of finding a mode of transportation to reach their villages. The police ensured that the public follows lockdown rules and stays at home. Municipal workers were seen spraying disinfectants at various cities in a bid to maintain general cleanliness.



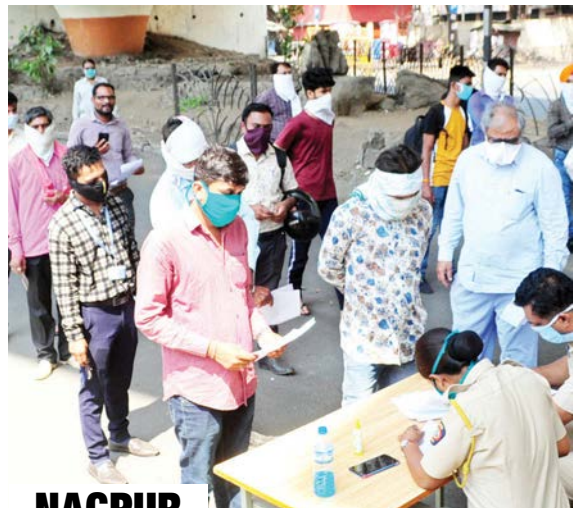
NEW DELHI

Delhi government workers serve food to homeless people and daily wage earners near Nigam Bodh Ghat in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI



SRINAGAR

Workers spray disinfectants in a lane during second day of a 21-day nationwide lockdown in Srinagar on Thursday. — PTI



NAGPUR

People maintain social distance as they stand in a queue to collect passes for essential services in Nagpur on Thursday. — PTI



PRAYAGRAJ

Police personnel ask commuters their reasons for coming out of their homes in Prayagraj on Thursday. — PTI



GHAZIABAD

A migrant worker walks to his village on the NH24 near Delhi-UP Border in Ghaziabad on Thursday. The migrants started their journey to their villages in UP on foot after the lockdown announcement. — PTI



KOLKATA

Labourers sit at an under-construction building in Kolkata on Thursday. — PTI

SCARE | CONTINUES

Govt to raise army of volunteers comprising 2.36 lakh youth

## 1.2 lakh people under lens in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 26

Nineteen cases of Covid-19 were confirmed in Kerala on Thursday taking the total number of patients currently under treatment for the infection in the state to 126.

Of the 19 cases, nine were reported from Kannur, three each from Kasargod and Malappuram, two from Thrissur and one each from Idukki and Wayand.

The total number of people infected in Kerala so far is 138 of which 12 have been completely cured and discharged.

As on Thursday, 1.20 lakh people are under surveillance of which 1.01 lakh

are under home quarantine and 601 in hospitals, 136 persons were admitted to hospitals on Thursday, 5,302 samples were sent for testing, 3,768 were found negative.

After the high level review meeting, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said there is still no indication of community spread in Kerala. However, the situation continues to remain grave and all precautionary measures are needed to check the spread of the infection further.

The government decided to raise an army of youth volunteers in the state in the age group of 22-40 for providing assistance to the people during Covid-19 crisis.

The volunteer army will

comprise 2.36 lakh volunteers drawn from 941 panchayats, 87 municipalities, six corporations. The registration will be done online on the web portal of volunteer army which has been created.

Volunteers will be engaged in providing food, provisions to households where people are not in a position to procure themselves or cook by own. The volunteers who will be given identity cards, will also provide help in hospitals and health care centres. Their travel and other expenses will be borne by respective local bodies.

The Chief Minister on Thursday held audio conference with wholesale traders and asked them to

stock up provisions and food materials for three to four months. They have been asked to ensure there is no overcharging and reasonable price should be taken from the consumers.

A high-level committee will be constituted to ensure uninterrupted supply from outside the state. Vehicles will be sent in a convoy to the neighbouring states to procure the essential commodities.

Vijayan said instances of migrant workers being asked to vacate their rented premise have come from some parts of the state. He warned against such actions.

The Chief Minister directed collectors to ensure on priority proper accommodation, food and

health facilities for migrant workers wherever they are staying. While enforcing the lockdown, the police has been directed to maintain restraint while dealing with workers in the essential service sector including health.

The government has decided to approach 1640 doctors who retired from service since 2012 to enlist their services in this hour of crisis.

The administration has also created a list of people above the age of 60 years in all districts to ensure proper medical and social care for this segment.

About 14,000 pain and palliative care workers are being deployed effectively in the state.

## ALL PLACES OF WORSHIP SHUT AS J&K RECORDS FIRST COVID DEATH

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, MARCH 26

Jammu and Kashmir authorities on Thursday decided to shut all places of worship in the Valley following the first death due to Covid-19. Also, the number of patients struck by the deadly virus rose to 12 after with two more cases tested positive earlier during the day. Thirteen more such patients are being treated in the Union Territory of Ladakh.

The latest victims of Covid-19 are two siblings aged 7 and 8 who came in contact with their grandfather after his return from Umrah pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia on March 16 and tested positive on March 24. The elderly man, a resident of

Srinagar's Natipora area, had shared the same flight in which the Valley's first Covid-19 patient, a 67-year-old woman from City's Khayam, Khanyar locality, flew back home.

The 65-year-old man who died in government-run Chest Disease Hospital in Srinagar had a medical history of illness with sugar, hypertension and obesity. The doctors said he suffered a massive cardiac arrest and their effort to revive him failed. "Despite our best efforts, the Covid-19 positive patient at CD Hospital passed away due to cardiac arrest. The patient had medical history of prolonged illness with sugar, hypertension and obesity," said an official.



IN BRIEF

**China cancels UNSC meeting**

**United Nations:** China has cancelled a UN Security Council meeting scheduled for Thursday in Covid-19-stricken New York as it seeks to encourage "votes by writing" while the pandemic rages on, diplomatic sources said Wednesday. The Security Council, currently chaired by China, has not met since March 12 due to the outbreak and is holding "virtual" meetings to vote on resolutions. Council votes are usually taken by a show of hands in the same room, allowing for last minute negotiations between members.

**Covid positive Weinstein 'fine'**

**New York:** Disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, who recently tested positive for Covid-19 while in prison, is reportedly "doing fine". Weinstein is serving his 23-year term at the Wende Correctional Facility after being convicted of raping a once-aspiring actress in a New York City hotel room in 2013 and forcibly performing oral sex on former TV and film production assistant Mimi Halesy at his apartment in 2006. A source from the prison told Deadline that the disgraced producer has not showed any signs of severe illness so far.

**Italian in Pope house has virus**

**Rome:** An Italian employee of the Holy See who lives in the same residence as Pope Francis was reported Thursday to have tested positive for Covid-19 and been hospitalised. The clergyman has lived for years in Saint Martha's guest house. Pope Francis has remained largely secluded at his residence since coming down with a cold last month. The pontiff has a small apartment in the building and takes his meals there. He also has private meetings there and occasionally moves to the Vatican library to record livestreamed messages to the world's 1.3 billion Catholics.

**N. Ireland man coughs on cops**

**Dublin:** A Northern Ireland man has been charged with attempting to commit grievous bodily harm after claiming to have Covid-19 and deliberately coughing on police officers. He was held for common assault after a domestic incident in north Belfast on Wednesday, according to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). It is alleged he then told two arresting officers he had Covid-19 before intentionally coughing over them. Ireland's health minister Simon Harris said he had been the victim of an apparent prank in Dublin where "a man and woman on the street" coughed at him and then "ran off laughing".

**STOP FRIDAY PRAYERS: ISLAMIC BODY**

**Islamabad, March 26:** A top global Islamic body has issued a fatwa (religious edict) on the request of Pakistan President Dr Arif Alvi, empowering the head of the state to suspend Friday prayers in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak that has claimed over 20,000 lives worldwide. The fatwa issued by the Grand Imam Shaikh of Egypt's Jamia Al Azhar, an authority on Islamic injunctions, and the Supreme Council in Egypt, said that public gatherings, including congregational prayers at mosques, could result in spread of Covid-19 and the governments of Muslim countries had full jurisdiction to cancel such events.

"I am thankful to Grand Imam Shaikh of Al-Azhar and Supreme Council for responding to my personal request to provide guidance to us with regard to Farz Jamaat & Juma prayers in mosques during Covid-19 attack," the president tweeted. Alvi asked clerics in Pakistan to act as per the principles of Islam from Quran and Sunnah, and said it is purely Islamic to cancel Friday prayers over Covid-19 concerns. According to the fatwa, the "government of a country can impose a ban on congregational prayers, including regular and Friday prayers, and halt gatherings across the country." The fatwa also quoted the 'hadith' (sayings of the Prophet), where it stated that during natural calamities, Muslims should pray in their homes.

**WHO 'very much' sided with China on Covid-19: Trump**

Prez says many unhappy with global health agency's 'praise' of Beijing

**Washington, March 26:** US President Donald Trump has said the WHO has "very much sided" with China on the Covid-19 crisis, asserting that many are unhappy with the "very unfair" praise by the global health agency on Beijing's handling of the Covid-19 outbreak in the country.

President Trump was responding to a question on allegations by Republican Senator Marco Rubio that the World Health Organisation (WHO) showed "favouritism" to China where the disease originated. Congressman Michael McCaul, ranking member on the House Foreign Relations Committee, has questioned the integrity of the WHO's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, saying "that there were several red flags in his past with respect to his relationship with China."

"It (WHO) has been very very much sided with China. A lot of people are not happy about it," Trump told reporters at a White House news conference on Wednesday. Trump was asked if he agreed that the WHO showed favouritism and the US should re-explore its relationship with the Geneva-based UN health agency once the dust settles. "I think there is certainly a lot of talk that it's been very unfair. I think that a lot of people feel that it's been very unfair," Trump replied.

In a tweet Congressman Greg Steube alleged that the WHO has been a mouthpiece for China during the Covid-19 pandemic. Both the WHO and China must face consequences once this pandemic is under control, he demanded. Senator Josh Hawley echoed Steube's view and demanded the same. "There need to be consequences here," he said in another tweet. —PTI



Garde républicaine mounted gendarme patrol a footpath close to La Ville-ès-Nonais in western France on Thursday, following a strict lockdown to stop the spread of Covid-19. —AFP

**China poses 'substantial threat' to Americans' health, says Pompeo**

**Washington, March 26:** China's ruling Communist Party poses a "substantial threat" to Americans' health and their way of life, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Thursday, blasting Beijing for engaging in the intentional "disinformation campaign" and trying to deflect from its handling of the Covid-19 crisis.

Pompeo, a known critic of China, said China's delay in sharing information about the virus had created risks to people worldwide. "The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) poses a substantial threat to our health and way of life, as the Wuhan virus outbreak clearly has demonstrated." He told reporters at a State Department news after video conference with his counterparts from G7 countries. —PTI

**THE CHINESE Communist Party poses a substantial threat to our health and way of life, as the Wuhan virus outbreak clearly has demonstrated.**

— MIKE POMPEO  
US Secretary of State

There was a discussion among the G7 countries about the intentional disinformation campaign that China has been and continues to be engaged in, he said. "You see it. You see it in the social media. You see it in remarks from senior people inside the CCP talking about whether this was a US brought to China. This is crazy talk," he said. "Every member of the G7 today saw this disinformation campaign. This isn't a time for blame; this is a time to solve this global problem. We are focused on that today," Pompeo said. —PTI

**MUSLIM TOWNS IN GREECE QUARANTINED**

**Athens, March 26:** Greek authorities have quarantined a cluster of Muslim towns in the country's northeast after several cases and a death from the new Covid-19 in the area. The area in Xanthi prefecture was placed in lockdown on Thursday evening as nine people in the region overall have tested positive for the virus over the past six days, civil protection deputy minister Nikos Hardalias told reporters. "All residents have been temporarily confined at home. No exceptions are allowed," Hardalias said.

The centre of the outbreak appears to be the small Pomak town of Ehinon. "Ehinon residents will be provided with food and medicine," he said. "It's better to take measures now than to cry later," said Huseyin, the mayor of the local administrative centre of Miki. The Pomaks are a Muslim group of Slavic origin who live mainly in neighbouring Bulgaria. They make up part of Greece's roughly 110,000-strong Muslim minority in the country's northeast. —AFP

**'Encouraging signs' in Europe**

**OVER 250,000 DECLARED CASES IN CONTINENT**

**Paris, March 26:** The number of declared Covid-19 cases in Europe topped 250,000, according to an AFP tally Thursday, more than half of which are in hard-hit Italy and Spain. Europe is the worst-affected region in the world with 258,068 cases, including 14,640 deaths, ahead of Asia's 100,937 infections and 3,636 fatalities, according to a tally compiled from national health data and World Health Organisation figures. Italy has 74,386 registered infections and Spain has 56,188. The global number of infections is 481,230 across 182 countries, with 21,867 deaths. —AFP

zens to be aware of the "new reality" created by the pandemic and prepare for the long term impact. "This is not going to be a sprint, this is going to be a marathon," Kluge said. —AFP

**Iran reports 157 fresh casualties**

**Tehran, March 26:** Iran on Thursday announced 157 new deaths from novel Covid-19, raising the official number of fatalities to 2,234, as it slapped a ban on intercity travel to try to curb the spread.

Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour also said that 2,389 new cases have been confirmed in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of declared infections in one of the world's worst-hit countries to 29,406.

"Fortunately, until today 10,457 of those infected have recovered and been discharged from hospitals," he told a news conference. Jahanpour said

of thousands of Iranians taking to the roads to visit family for the Persian New Year holidays. "Those who were planning to travel, cancel it right from this moment," said Hossein Zolfaghari, a senior official at Iran's anti-covid-19 committee. "Those who are out travelling should return home quickly," he added in a televised announcement while announcing details of the new measures.

Zolfaghari said non-residents will not be allowed into cities based on their car plates and drivers' IDs, and violators will be fined and their cars impounded. "All official and non-official gatherings... are also

banned," the official added, without elaborating further.

President Hassan Rouhani said in a cabinet meeting he hoped the "more strict measures" would help to curb the virus. He added the government was going to ask Iran's supreme leader for permission to draw \$1 billion from its national development fund to address "the coronavirus" — complexities and issues, especially the medical sector's needs. The country will also provide businesses which have not laid off workers during the outbreak with low-interest loans, Rouhani said. —AFP

**Embassy: Travel ban goes, Indian students can return**

**Manila, March 26:** Hundreds of Indian students, stranded in the Philippines, can fly back to India when the temporary travel ban is lifted, the Indian embassy here said on Thursday, assuring all possible help to the distressed citizens. On March 17, the Indian government banned the entry of passengers from Afghanistan, the Philippines and Malaysia to India with immediate effect amid stepped up efforts against the spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

"Embassy is in regular contact with students in Perpetual Help. Shops & essential stores in area open. Indian restaurants are ready to deliver. 16,000 Indian students in Philippines are advised — can travel to India when temporary ban is lifted. Emergency no. 09477836524," the embassy said in a tweet.

Amid rising cases of Covid-19, India last week banned the landing of all international commercial passenger flights from March 22 to 29 while asking the Civil Aviation ministry and Railways to suspend all concessional travel on flights and trains, except for students, patients and disabled people. Over

**NINE DOCTORS DIE IN PHILIPPINES, HEIGHTENS FEARS OF HEALTH CRISIS**

**Manila, March 26:** Nine doctors have died in the Philippines from the Covid-19, the country's top medical association said Thursday, as hospitals were overwhelmed and medics complained about a lack of protection on the front lines.

The announcement of the doctors' deaths heightened fears that the scale of the health crisis in the Philippines is much worse than is being officially reported, with the confirmed virus death toll at just 38. The main island of Luzon, home to 55 million people, is in the second week of a lockdown to contain the spread of the disease, however medics are warning there is a surge in cases.

The Philippine Medical Association said Thursday a ninth doctor had died of the virus, and that

**Maduro a drug trafficker, \$15m to nab him: US**

**Washington, March 26:** The US offered a series of rewards for information on five top officials in the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, including \$15 million for Maduro himself, based on charges of drug trafficking, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced in a press release on Thursday.

"The Department of Justice is announcing the unsealing of a superseding indictment filed in the Southern District of New York against four defendants, including Nicolas Maduro as well as the current head of Venezuela's constituent assembly, the former director of military intelligence and former high-ranking general for their involvement in narcoterrorism," Barr said. US Attorney for the Southern District of New York Geoffrey Berman added that Maduro faces a minimum of 50 years in prison and a maximum life sentence for the charges.

Besides bringing criminal charges, the US State Department offered a series of rewards for information on five top officials in the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, including \$15 million for Maduro himself.

"The Department is offering a reward of up to \$15 million for information related to Nicolas Maduro Moros. The Department is also offering rewards of up to \$10 million each for information related to four other Venezuelan officials," the release further added.

According to US officials, Maduro was the leader of a cocaine traf-



Nicolas Maduro

**US ATTORNEY for the Southern District of New York Geoffrey Berman added that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro faces a minimum of 50 years in prison and a maximum life sentence for the charges.**

ficking group called "The Cartel of the Suns" that involved senior politicians and Venezuelan military and judiciary members.

The announcement comes hot on the heels after US Senator Marco Rubio announced the move in his Twitter. Today, Nicolas Maduro will be indicted by the Justice Department and charged with narcoterrorism," Rubio said via Twitter.

At the same time, the first report of the upcoming charges was brought by CNN earlier on Thursday, saying that the United States was set to designate Venezuela as a state sponsor of terrorism and bring criminal charges against President Nicolas Maduro. The designation and the charges are expected to be made later on Thursday, while US Attorney General William Barr is expected to make the announcement at a news conference. —Agencies

Washington, March 26: Indian-American hoteliers have come forward to rescue the stranded Indian students in the US following implementation of lockdown measures in the country in response to the rapidly-spreading Covid-19 pandemic, offering free accommodation and meals. With the students scrambling for a roof over their heads after being asked to vacate their hostels and India banning international flights from March 22 due to the Covid-19, over 6,000 rooms in nearly 700 hotels were offered to them by Wednesday following a call from the Indian Embassy. The Indian Embassy have been running a round-the-clock helpline since last week for the students in the US, who number over 2,50,000.

**INDO-AMERICAN HOTELIERS HELP INDIAN STUDENTS**

Most of these hotels offered are in and around universities and colleges, but the hotel owners from across the country have come up in large numbers to the call given by community leaders, who have roped in Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AA-HOA) for the purpose. India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu said in a tweet, "It is heartening to see that Indian, Indian-American and other hotel owners are coming forward to help people with accommodation in these testing times. Together we can overcome the fight against Covid19!"

"The Indian community has come together to help students and many hotel owners have offered their rooms free of cost to them. Many are also offering free meals to the students," Chicago-based community leader Nirav Patel said. Indian-American hotelier couple K.K. Mehta and Chandra Mehta have offered over 100 rooms to students at their two prime properties near the Times Square and Barclays Center in New York City. —PTI

**Spain contagion deaths top 4,000**

**Madrid, March 26:** The covid-19 death toll in Spain surged to 4,089 after 655 people died within 24 hours, the health ministry said on Thursday. It was a 19 percent increase on figures released Wednesday by the authorities in Spain, which has the world's second highest toll from the disease after Italy. The number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 rose to 56,188, the ministry said. Despite a national lockdown imposed on March 14, which parliament on Thursday agreed to extend until April 11, both deaths and

infections have continued to mount, with officials warning this week would be particularly bad.

But the rise in the number of new deaths was smaller than that recorded on Wednesday when the figure rose by 738 or 27 per cent. Health authorities are hoping it will soon become clear whether the lockdown is having the desired effect. The Madrid region has suffered the brunt of the epidemic with 17,166 infections — just under a third of the total — and 2,090 deaths, or 51 percent of the national figure. —AFP





quick  
BITES

| INDICATORS             | %              |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Sensex                 | 29,946.77 4.94 |
| Nifty 50               | 8,641.45 3.89  |
| S&P 500*               | 2,591.95 4.70  |
| Dollar (₹)             | 75.16 1.23     |
| Pound Sterling (₹)     | 89.61 0.86     |
| Euro (₹)               | 82.45 0.07     |
| Gold (Oz)* (\$)        | 1,632.19 0.95  |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)*  | 27.14 -0.91    |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield    | 6.225 -1.285   |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.797 -6.893   |

\* As of 9:30 pm IST

Sebi extends  
time for AGM,  
newspaper ads

The Sebi has given a relaxation of one month, till September 30 instead of August 31, to top 100 listed companies by market capitalisation for holding their AGM for 2019-20. Sebi has also exempted companies from publication of advertisement in newspapers about their board meetings, financial results and other events till May 15. Sebi has noted that some newspapers are not bringing their print versions for a limited period.

Stunning  
jump in US  
jobless claims

About 3.3 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week—nearly five times the previous record set in 1982. Filings for unemployment aid generally reflect the pace of layoffs. Layoffs are sure to accelerate as the US economy sinks into a recession. As job losses mount, some economists say the nation's unemployment rate could approach 13% by May. By comparison, the highest jobless

Moody's sees  
recession for  
G20 countries

The world's 20 most industrialised countries will likely suffer a recession this year, Moody's said. It estimated that the G20's overall GDP would contract by 0.5 per cent, with the US economy shrinking by 2 per cent and the eurozone by 2.2 per cent. China, despite suffering an outbreak of the novel coronavirus before everyone else, could see economic activity expand by 3.3 per cent, a level that is below average for it.

Yes Bank board  
okays ₹5,000-cr  
fund raise

Yes Bank approved a proposal to raise Rs 5,000 crore by way of share-sale, including qualified institutions and rights issue. The board meeting held on Thursday cleared this proposal. With this the new board also came into force with Prashant Kumar formally becoming the MD and CEO of Yes Bank. This fund raising will be over and above Rs 10,000 crore cleared in February 7, 2020 board meeting.

Printed & Published by T Venkateswarlu on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Deccan Chronicle Press at Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd, #563/9/D&9/E, Behind Andhra Bank Pet Basheerbagh, Kompally, Ranga Reddy Dist. Editor: T Venkatram Reddy, RNI Reg No. AP/ENG/2008/24282. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle is prohibited.

## Lockdown: Banks may close most branches

NEHA DASGUPTA & NUPUR ANAND  
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI,  
MARCH 26

India's central bank and major lenders are working on a plan to close most branches during the country's lockdown, aiming to prevent tens of thousands of employees from becoming infected with the coronavirus, four sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The world's second most populous nation with 1.3 billion people is still very much a cash society and banks have been exempted from a 21-day lockdown that began this week as they are considered an essential service.

Under the plan, there would likely be only one bank branch open every five km in major cities, the sources said, declining to be identified as the discussions about the closures have not been publicly disclosed.

A finance ministry official, however, said 90 per cent of banks and ATMs were functioning normally and that he was not aware of any plan to shut them down. "The government is monitoring the



situation daily," the official said.

The official referred to an order issued by the home ministry exempting personnel involved in banking operations, including IT firms supporting banking operations and cash management agencies, from the lockdown orders.

One of the sources said that under the plan in rural areas, where 70 per cent people live and are often completely dependent on cash, banks will likely operate on alternate days with staff just focusing on the disbursement of welfare money to the poor.

"The general guideline is that branch operation should largely be for villages just to take care of those people who are not familiar with digital transactions," a senior banker with a state-run bank said.

"Informally, banks are talking to each other to cope up with a situation where there will be some rush for cash withdrawal because it is expected the government will provide cash for the poor directly into their accounts."

Some of banks have already begun testing the planned approach in certain regions although it

was not immediately clear when a full rollout would occur, two of the sources said.

The Reserve Bank of India and the Indian Banks' Association did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In a bid to discourage account holders from visiting branches, the banking association has advised its 255 member banks to suspend non-essential services until further notice.

Most lenders have already pared opening times to a few hours and are urging customers to use digital services.

The plans have been under consideration for about a week, one source said. Senior central bank officials were on Wednesday checking the digital banking preparedness of all banks, another of the sources said.

Banks are also considering allowing inter-operable services, which would mean that customers of one bank would be able to withdraw from any other bank and the transaction would be settled between the lenders, an official with a state-run bank said.

—Reuters

## Market covers up week's losses on short covering

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MARCH 26

The stock market recovered all the losses it suffered on Monday in the last three days of short covering, with the Sensex regaining the 30,000 levels, helped by the government's measured actions to contain the spread of coronavirus and provide relief to affected companies and people.

New Covid-19 cases in India came down to 43 and total cases stood at 649. However, the global situation remained grim, with over 4.68 lakh affected by the virus and over 21,000 people dead.

The Sensex gained another 1410 points, or 4.94 per cent, on Thursday to close at 29,946.77 while the Nifty-50 gains were much lower at 3.89 per cent, or 323.60 points, as it closed at 8,641.45 on the day of expiry of monthly futures and options contracts for March.

The Sensex briefly traded above 30,000 mark and touched a high of 30,099.91. The investor wealth rose for the third consecutive day, gaining over Rs 11.12 lakh crore in three days, as the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies shot up Rs 11,12,088.78 crore to Rs 1,12,99,025.06 crore in the three days.

## Re gains 78p against dollar

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, MARCH 26

Weakness in dollar overseas after the \$2-trillion US stimulus package boosted risk sentiment and helped the rupee gain 78 paise on Thursday against the dollar at 75.16, its biggest single session gain since December 20.

Globally risk sentiment improved as most governments announced stimulus measures to fight the impact of Covid19 pandemic on

their economies. Forex traders said the RBI was seen intervening in the market to support the rupee, besides the new welfare measures announced by the Centre helped both shares and the rupee.

India's 10-year bond yield ended lower by 8 basis points to 6.22 per cent. "Tomorrow (Friday) is weekly closing and this is month-end dollar selling by exporters. The near-term range is 74.50 to 76.30," said a trader.

Banks led the market recovery for the second consecutive session, with the Nifty Bank Index up by 6.13 per cent. The top gainers included IndusInd Bank, which recorded biggest single day gain ever of 46.03 per cent, as it rallied from an extremely oversold position. The other gainers in the banking space included Bandhan Bank (42.16 per cent), Kotak Bank (6.42 per cent), HDFC Bank (4.81 per cent), ICICI Bank (4.61 per cent), Axis Bank (5.88 per cent).

FMCG stocks rallied after the Centre announced the Rs 1.70-lakh crore relief package for the

poor. The top FMCG gainers included Marico (7.98 per cent), ITC (6.41 per cent), Godrej Consumer (6.35 per cent), Britannia (6.06 per cent), Dabur (5.87 per cent), Colgate (4.47 per cent), HUL (4.35 per cent).

However, the present short covering may not last as the institutional investors are still in a profit booking mode. As per provisional data, selling by foreign portfolio investors has come down over the last few sessions, but FPIs were still net sellers by Rs 484.78 crore on Thursday and the domestic institutions too were net sellers by Rs 769.93 crore.

## Covid-19 hits housing sales, supply in March quarter

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MARCH 26

Residential realty sector, which was on a recovery path, has taken a U-turn in the March quarter due to Covid-19. Both housing sales and launches were down on yearly as well as quarterly bases.

Sales of residential units saw a 42 per cent year-on-year drop in January-March 2020 against the same quarter last year, data by Anarock Property Consultants showed.

In Q1 of calendar 2020, residential sales in the top seven cities stood at 45,200 units against 78,510 units a year ago. On a quarterly basis, sales were down 24 per cent from 59,170 units in Q4 2019.

The virus scare hit new launches also which were down 42 per cent YoY to 41,200 from 70,480 units. Launches were down 21 per cent quarter-on-quarter from 51,850 units in the year-ago quarter.

Industry expects that the slump will continue in the next quarter also. "Residential real estate is likely to see a further slowdown in the coming months given that attendant activities are at a standstill," said Anurag Mathur, CEO, Savills India.

## Growth may dip to 2.6% in FY21: SBI

New Delhi, March 26: The country's economic growth is likely to fall sharply to 2.6 per cent in 2020-21 due to the lockdown, a report by SBI Research said on Thursday.

It said GDP growth for 2019-20 could also see a downward revision from 5 per cent to 4.5 per cent, with growth in the fourth quarter of the current fiscal at 2.5 per cent.

Rating agency Crisil has slashed India's GDP growth rate by 170 bps to 3.5 per cent for fiscal 2021, while former chief statistician Pronab Sen said growth in the next two quarters will not be more than 3 per cent due to the lockdown across the country. He said the 21-day lockdown could cause a reduction of about Rs 5 lakh crore in gross domestic product (GDP).

SBI Research said the total cost of lockdown is at least Rs 8.03 lakh crore in nominal terms, an income loss of Rs 1.77 lakh crore and a loss in capital income of Rs 1.69 lakh crore. It said the income loss will be the highest in agriculture, transport, hotels, trade and education.

Crisil said the pandemic and the consequent lockdown for 21 days pose a material risk to India's economic outlook. The adverse effects can dwarf the gains from the sharp drop in crude oil prices,

## PSBs offer emergency credit line for customers

New Delhi, March 26: As many as 15 public sector banks have announced emergency credit line to mitigate hardships faced by various segments.

Taking the lead, SBI last week announced an emergency credit line to meet any liquidity mismatch for its borrowers. SBI's Covid -19 Emergency Credit Line (CECL) will provide funds up to Rs 200 crore and will be available till June 30, the country's largest bank said in a circular issued on Friday.

Following suit, Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, Union Bank of India and Bank of India, besides Indian Bank, Bank of Maharashtra, Syndicate Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, UCO Bank, United Bank and Andhra Bank have also introduced relief schemes.

The PSBs have announced schemes for existing individual and MSME borrowers, with some banks extending schemes to other segments like agriculture, self-help groups and organised sector employees.

The quantum of loan is in the form of additional line of credit ranging from 10 per cent or higher of existing working capital limits, a bank official said. The loan schemes have a moratorium period of up to 6 months.

—PTI

## Trade unions demand ₹5-7-lakh crore relief

New Delhi, March 26: Central trade unions on Thursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to announce a financial package of Rs 5-7 lakh crore for the worst-affected segments of the working population, saying their survival is in jeopardy due to the nationwide lockdown.

"We demand that the government immediately announce not less than Rs 5 to 7 lakh crore package," ten trade unions said in a joint letter to the PM.

The unions are Intuc, Aituc, HMS, Citu, Aiutuc, Tucc, Sewa, Aiccutu, LPF and Utuc.

They also demanded announcement of concessions and debt moratorium for the MSMEs, small retail traders, street vendors and the self-employed.

The unions noted that daily wagers, casual labourers, migrant workers, agriculture workers and self-employed as hawkers, vendors, rickshaw pullers, e-rickshaw /auto/taxi drivers are facing livelihood crisis. Others like truck drivers and helpers, coolies/porters/loaders unloaders, construction and beedi workers, domestic workers and waste pickers are losing their livelihood in the current situation.

—PTI

and the anticipated monetary and fiscal stimuli.

"The slump in growth will be concentrated in the first half of next fiscal, while the second half should see a mild recovery," said Dharmakirti Joshi, chief economist,

Crisil.

In an interview, Pronab Sen said, "I don't expect economic growth in next two quarter (of 2020-21) to be more than 3 per cent, which makes achieving the \$5-trillion target by 2024-25 very, very diffi-

cult." He said at the moment, fiscal stimulus is not going to help growth because it is now a supply-side problem. "Production is not taking place. Fiscal stimulus works when problem is on the demand side."

—Agencies

## World's hospitals running out of gloves

K. OANH HA & ANURADHA RAGHU  
MARCH 26

An impending glove shortage is hitting the world, compounded by measures to contain the deadly coronavirus in a country that dominates production: Malaysia.

The country's glove-making association -- whose members make three out of every five gloves worldwide -- is warning of a global "chronic shortage" of the critical medical gear as the plants were forced to cut staffing due to Malaysia's expansive lockdown. Top Glove Corp. Bhd, the world's largest producer, said demand from the US, Europe and other nations outstrips its capacity while fulfillment of orders is running as late as four months behind.

Malaysia has restricted movement across the country and ordered

many businesses to shut while requiring others to keep as many workers home as possible to curb the spread of the pathogen. Most glove-makers have received an exemption to staff their factories at just 50 per cent, with some of the companies planning to meet with a top trade ministry official on Thursday to seek approval to operate with a full workforce, according to the Malaysian Rubber Glove Manufacturers Association.

Governments across the world are desperately trying to acquire and stockpile critical medical supplies such as masks, ventilators and gowns as frontline doctors and nurses face shortages. That's forcing many of the biggest makers to run factories around the clock to meet demand. Malaysia's glove-makers, however, are having to curb output as the



country fights a second wave of coronavirus infections.

"Today's demand is abnormal. Hospitals are running out of gloves," said Denis Low, president of the glove-makers' association in a phone interview Thursday. "We are not able to supply the quantity that we want. It's not our choice."

Low said association members will meet with Azmin Ali, the senior minister for trade and indus-

try, on Thursday to request the additional exemption. Malaysia's industry supplies about 67% of the global demand for as much as 345 billion units annually, he said. It's also being asked to meet local need for gloves first, before the rest of the world.

Even at full capacity, Malaysia's producers won't be able to meet the current need. Top Glove said it's seeing orders for as many as 2.6 billion gloves weekly -- double its full capacity. The company which supplies a little more than a quarter of the world's gloves, recently received an exemption to fully staff its production lines.

"We are running 24 hours, two shifts on the production floor," said Lim Wee Chai, Top Glove's executive chairman. "There's a definite shortage already."

—Bloomberg

## Citigroup says EMs a step closer to capital controls

KARL LESTER M YAP  
MARCH 26

As the number of countries going into lockdowns to fight the coronavirus pandemic increases, emerging markets may institute capital controls, according to Citigroup Inc.

"There's a decent case to make that we might be approaching a world in which policy makers start to restrict the movement of capital in just the same way that they are restricting the movement of people and goods," David Lubin, London-based head of EM economics, said in a note on Wednesday. "Experiments with capital controls, in other words, are probably a step closer to us."

Argentina implemented capital controls last year to halt a slump in reserves and the peso, though it is scarcely alone among emerging markets in using them to stop money flying out in times of stress. Malaysia had adopted restrictions on capital during the 1997 crisis that were panned at first, but later acknowl-

edged by IMF officials as being ahead of the curve.

While most large emerging economies look well positioned to weather a normal crisis, with current-account deficits in check and plentiful forex reserves, there is nothing standard about this virus crisis and existing tools may not be enough, Citigroup said in a note.

Textbook economics suggest protecting domestic economies require lower interest rates, but higher rates are needed to prevent large capital outflows, posing a conundrum to policy makers.

"The only way to resolve this contradiction, in principle, is to close the capital account," Lubin wrote.

—Bloomberg



SHORT TAKES



J. Jairaj Yadav

## Former PD Jairaj passes away

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 26

J. Jairaj Yadav, former Physical Director of Nizam College and Principal of University College of Physical Education, Osmania University, passed away in Hyderabad on Thursday. He was 74 and is survived by wife, two sons (one of whom is Shivaji, former Ranji Trophy player and selector of the Hyderabad Cricket Association) and a daughter. Jairaj worked as lecturer in Physical Education, Nizam College, from 1977 to 1995; at PG College of Science, Saifabad, from 1995 to 1997; was Secretary, BOC, IUT, OU from 1997 to 2001; director of Physical Education, Osmania University from 2001 to 2003 and principal, University College of Physical Education from 2003 to 2006. He was also former general secretary of the Andhra Pradesh as well as Telangana Korf Ball Associations and vice-president of the Hyderabad District Olympic Association. Sports Authority of Telangana State chairman Allipuram Venkateswar Reddy, the Hyderabad Cricket Association, Prof. L. B. Lakshminath Rathod, Principal of Nizam College and Prof. Rajesh Kumar, Principal of the University College of Physical Education, Osmania University, were among those who condoled Jairaj's demise and offered their condolences to the bereaved family members.

## Stuck O'Brien seeks finances

**Christchurch:** Desperate to reunite with his family in the UK, stranded former New Zealand pacer Iain O'Brien has resorted to crowd-funding to arrange for his tickets after his flights were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The 43-year-old from is seeking donations through social networking site Twitter to fund his way back home. "Ok, so trying to raise some money to pay for this flight back to the UK, O'Brien wrote on his handle. "I have an idea. If anyone would love a 20 min Skype/vid call, one-on-one, talk about all things cricket, politics, sausages, mental health, Sachin, etc. If you'd like that & can spare a couple of \$, DM me." O'Brien lives with his wife Rosie and two kids in the UK. O'Brien, who was in New Zealand to deal with some mental health issues, had earlier said that he is worried about his wife's health as she has a lung condition, which puts her at great risk in the virus. — PTI

## ICC will discuss contingency plan

**New Delhi:** The members of the ICC Board will meet via video conference on Friday to discuss contingency plans for its multiple tournaments in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic which has brought global sporting activities to a grinding halt. While a couple of ICC Board members confirmed that no concrete decisions are expected during the conference call, it became imperative that a meeting was necessary to discuss contingency plans. The most high-profile ICC flagship event in 2020 is the Men's T20 World Cup in October-November besides the various bilateral series which are part of the World Test Championship. The points system in case of cancelled series will be a topic of discussion. One such series, England's away tour of Sri Lanka, has already been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak. The ICC also postponed all the qualifying events, which were scheduled to be held before June 30, due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. — PTI

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20  
Printed and Published by T. Venkateswarlu on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Plot No. 9 Alwal Village, Vallabh Nagar Taluk, Medchal Malkajgiri Dist. Telangana and Published at 36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3. RNI Registration No. 3081/1957. Editor: Aditya Sinha

# Wrong on the money

## Delaying Olympics to involve 'massive' costs: Organisers

**Tokyo, March 26:** In 2016, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe broke with his staid public image to pop up in Rio dressed as Super Mario for the official handover of the Olympic Games to Tokyo.

The stunt reflected his commitment to an event that was supposed to be the crowning glory of his tenure. But analysts say the historic delay of the Games over the coronavirus may not be all bad news for Abe.

If the country's longest-serving premier can see off the twin threats of a larger-scale outbreak of the virus in Japan and a major economic crisis caused by the pandemic, he could even end up extending his tenure, due to expire in September 2021, experts say.

Abe has bet heavily on Japan hosting the Games, casting them as a chance to showcase recovery after the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima nuclear disaster, and delaying them would once have been seen as an "unthinkable political defeat," said Tobias Harris, senior vice president at consultancy Teneo.

But the rapidly expanding coronavirus epidemic has changed the political calculus, making holding the Games a greater risk than putting it off for now, he said.

The delay "removes a significant source of uncertainty for the administration and could give a bump to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's approval ratings, since large majorities support delaying the games," Harris said.

Japan has so far been something of an outlier in the pandemic, recording around 1,300 cases and 45 deaths, far fewer than in many countries around the world. If the outbreak can be contained, Abe may find himself with enough support to continue his tenure past September 2021, said Tetsuro Kato, professor emeritus of Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo.

"It's possible that members of his Liberal Democratic Party argue for a further extension of his term," Kato said. Abe's government enjoys stable public support, hovering around 50 per cent in approval rating polls, and the prime minister has benefitted from a dearth of viable alternatives both within his ruling party and the fragmented opposition. — AFP



Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori (left) takes off his face mask as he arrives to take part in a meeting to establish an Olympic Games planning task force in Tokyo on Thursday, two days after the historic decision to postpone the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. — AFP

# Gatlin, Asafa on borrowed time

**Washington, March 26:** Highlights of their very best moments are still available on compact discs, maybe even actual video tape. When teammates shout out, "Hey, old man" well, they know that's directed at them.

At first glance, America's Justin Gatlin and Jamaica's Asafa Powell might seem like relics from a bygone age of sprinting. In reality, they're still in the mix and not even a year-long postponement of the Tokyo Olympics is going to shut them down.

"I'm ready for this year," Powell said in the wake of the IOC's announcement that the games would be delayed due to the coronavirus. "I definitely have to be ready for next year," he added.

Make no mistake, they are running out of time. Gatlin will be 39 when the Olympics finally roll around and Powell, who turns 38 in November, will be steaming toward the same number. Both men were beginning to make a name for themselves in track before a young phenom named Usain Bolt had raced his first Olympics. Bolt, by the way, is 33 and happily retired.

## BINDRA BACKS MOVE TO PUSH OLYMPICS

**New Delhi, March 26:** Indian shooting ace Abhinav Bindra feels the International Olympic Committee was "prompt" in postponing the Tokyo Games, even as some other top athletes and national associations slammed the IOC for "delaying" the announcement.

In an unprecedented move, the 2020 Tokyo Games was on Tuesday pushed to next year due to the Covid-19 pandemic that has wreaked havoc on the world. The decision was arrived at not before some decorated athletes and British and Canadian Olympic bodies expressed unhappiness at the IOC for delaying a call on the fate of the Games.

However Bindra, India's lone individual gold medalist in the Olympics, begged to differ and said, "It is nice to see that the decision was taken quite promptly because there was a lot of uncertainty surrounding whether the Games would happen or not. I think the decision was taken timely."

"It is a very complicated decision which had to be taken. The athletes can now calm down a little bit and firstly make sure that they stay healthy and people around them stay healthy. That is the most important thing," Bindra was quoted as saying by 'Olympic Channel'. — PTI

Both Gatlin and Powell are "Jeopardy" questions just waiting to be asked. The last man to win an Olympic gold medal in the men's 100 before Bolt? That would be Gatlin.

The last man to hold the 100-metre world record before Bolt? That would

be Powell. Gatlin won the Olympics in 2004. "Feels like five years ago," he insists.

Powell set a world record in 2007, when he ran 9.74 seconds. Bolt topped it less than a year later and eventually lowered the mark to its current stand-

ing of 9.58 seconds. Gatlin and Powell think they could make a different kind of history in 2021.

The oldest Olympic champion in the men's 100 metres remains Linford Christie, who was 32 when he won at the 1992 Barcelona Games, according to research by Olympic historian Bill Mallon. As for the oldest Olympic medalist in the event, that distinction belongs to Gatlin, courtesy of his silver at the 2016 Rio Games.

"It's pretty cool to know we can hang with these younger guys and still be competitive," Powell said. And be ones to reckon with for the gold medal.

That's nothing to laugh at. Gatlin won a silver medal at the world championships last year. Powell, who's healthy after dealing with nagging groin strains and hamstring tightness, said he's still doing the same reps at the same tempo as when he was younger.

This won't be easy for the 30-somethings. American Christian Coleman won the 100 last season at the world championships in Doha and his teammate, Noah Lyles, took the 200. — AP

CORONA COLLECTION

# Sindhu promises ₹5L for TS, AP

**New Delhi, March 26:** World champion shuttler P. V. Sindhu on Thursday donated ₹5 lakh each to the Chief Minister's Relief Funds of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to fight the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic, which has claimed over 21,000 lives globally.

The number of positive cases in India has surpassed the 600-mark, while 13 deaths have been reported so far, prompting the government to put the country under lockdown till April 14 to halt the spread of the virus.

"I hereby donate an amount of ₹5,00,000/-each towards the Chief Ministers Relief Fund for the States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to fight against Covid-19," the Hyderabad-born shuttler wrote on her Twitter handle.

## MUMBAI CRICKET BODY CONTRIBUTES ₹50 LAKH

The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) on Thursday decided to donate ₹50 lakh to the Maharashtra government in its fight against the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

MCA Secretary Sanjay Naik said that the city's cricket body conducted its Apex Council meeting on Thursday in which it authorised the President and Secretary to decide the donation amount. "Accordingly we decided to donate ₹50 lakh," said Naik.

An MCA Apex Council member said that the amount will be donated to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. — PTI

## PAK CRICKET DONATES 5m FOR FIGHT

**Karachi, March 26:** Pakistan's centrally-contracted cricketers will contribute Rs.5 million to the national government's emergency fund to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Ehsan Mani on Wednesday said apart from centrally-contracted players contributing Rs.5 million, the employees in the board, up to the senior manager level, will contribute their one day's salary.

Those employed as general managers or on higher posts will give two days' salary to the fund. "The PCB will collect all these funds and deposit it to the government's coronavirus fund," he said.

"It is the history of the cricket board that we always stand by the government in difficult times," Mani said.

The PCB has already given its high performance centre in Karachi at the national stadium to be used by paramedical staff working at the special coronavirus hospital set up at the expo centre in the in the city.

Mani said though it was more important for the nation to stand by the government. — PTI

# Madrid stadium to store supplies

**Madrid, March 26:** Real Madrid and Spanish sports authorities say the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium will be used to store donations of medical supplies to help combat the coronavirus outbreak.

The football club says it will use the stadium to store private donations. They will then be distributed by government authorities to hospitals. Spain has 56,188 infections and more than 4,000 fatalities from the Covid-19 virus. Civic groups, businesses and individuals are donating much-needed masks and any material that can be used to make protective gear for doctors and nurses.

Italy opens up training centre for patients

Italian football bosses confirmed on Thursday the national team's training centre at Coverciano in Tuscany will be made available to local authorities for the treatment of coronavirus patients.

Italy is now the global epicentre for the disease which now killed 7,503 in the country and infected almost 75,000.

"Health is of the utmost importance and needs to be protected, which is why the FIGC (Italian Football Federation) is opening the centre in Coverciano to Italians in difficulty," FIGC president Gabriele Gravina said.

All sport in Italy has been suspended until April 3, and the FIGC chief said he had told the Mayor of Florence Dario Nardella that local authorities could use the facility just outside the city.

"We're not playing football now, to get back to it

we need to win the most important match against coronavirus together," added Gravina.

## GERMAN FOOTBALL CLUBS PLEDGE \$22M

Four German football clubs have pledged 20 million euros (\$21.9 million) to support other teams struggling to stay afloat after games in the country were suspended because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund, Leipzig and Bayer Leverkusen will forgo 12.5 million euros (\$13.7 million) in as-yet undistributed TV money and add another 7.5 million euros (\$8.2 million) from their own funds. All four clubs played in the Champions League this season, giving them extra income.

## UNION BERLIN PLAYERS GIVE UP ON SALARIES

Union Berlin players said they will forego their wages in an effort to help the German League club ride out the coronavirus storm. Six days after fellow top-flight side Borussia Moenchenglandbach waived their salaries, Union followed suit. Club management and other employees have agreed to short-time working arrangements, which will also result in salary cuts, said a statement.

"These are exceptional circumstances we have to deal with. Our club's purpose is football. If it ceases to exist, then it will touch the core of our existence. Now they are giving up money to get through this crisis together," said club president Dirk Zingler. — Agencies

## Olympic row



In this file photo, Britain's Polly Swann trains on a rowing machine ergo during a Great Britain Rowing Team pre-Olympic 2020 training camp in Avis, central Portugal. — AFP

# Drunk Payne flouts quarantine

**Wellington, March 26:** Wellington Phoenix midfielder Tim Payne tearfully apologised on Thursday for breaking Covid-19 quarantine in Australia when he drunkenly drove a golf buggy along a Sydney street.

Payne and his passenger in the buggy, teammate Oliver Sail, face the prospect of a heavy fine or suspension over the escapade in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

"I'm incredibly sorry and incredibly embarrassed," Payne told New Zealand's Radio Sport. "I take full responsibility for my actions and what unfolded on that night... I 100 per cent fully expect



Tim Payne in this file photo.

there to be repercussions," Payne added. The New Zealand-based Phoenix were in isolation

behind closed doors.

But the plan proved fruitless when the season was cancelled and the team returned home on Tuesday.

New Zealand international Payne, 26, said his teammates were drinking at their remote accommodation in northern Sydney on Monday night when he and Sail decided to take a golf buggy for a ride.

He said the pair were stopped by police, although he denied reports they were arrested and members of the public intervened to stop them.

The reports said the buggy was stopped about five kilometres (3.1 miles)

from the players' accommodation and Payne blew positive on a roadside breath test.

"Definitely a mistake on my behalf, it's just one of those things you wish you could take back," he Payne further added.

Football Federation Australia said it was investigating and taking the matter very seriously. "If any misconduct is found to have occurred, FFA will be swift in taking action under the FFA national code of conduct," it said.

Wellington Phoenix confirmed an incident involving Payne and Sail had taken place, saying it too was investigating. — AFP

## PADDLER TAKEME IS STRANDED IN SPAIN

**Kolkata, March 26:** Indian paddler Takeme Sarkar left for Malaga hoping to play in the Spanish League and gain some experience, but now finds herself quarantined in an apartment there after suspension of airline operations owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

She had gone to compete in the Spanish League in Malaga, about 12 kilometres from capital Madrid. "I'm safe and doing fine in my area, my club members are very supportive, they are providing food everything. I'm also happy to receive support from back home in India, my coach and association officials are in constant touch. I've got another ticket for May 11, and hopefully, the situation will become normal by then," she said in an audio message. — PTI