

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | 28 MARCH 2020

## WEATHER

Max: 37°C  
Min: 22.9°C  
RH: 34%  
Rain: Nil  
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky  
Max/Min temp. 37/24°C

## ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana  
Tilthi: Chaitra Suddha Chaviti till 12.17 am (Sunday)  
Star: Bharani till 12.52 pm  
Varjyam: 2.05 am to 3.51 am (Sunday)  
Durmuhurtam: 6.09 am to 7.46 am  
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am  
HUIJI CALENDAR  
Shaaban 2, 1441 AH  
PRAYERS  
Fajr: 5.13 am  
Zohar: 12.31 pm  
Asar: 4.43 pm  
Maghrib: 6.34 pm  
Isha: 7.42 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 6:28 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:13 AM  
MOONRISE TOMORROW 6:06 AM  
MOONSET TODAY 8:55 PM

## COUNTER POINT



Bored? It's fun to chase violators!

## BRIEF

### IMD predicts rain over 48 hrs

Hyderabad: The state would witness light to moderate rainfall coupled with lightning and thunder over the next 48 hours, the IMD said on Friday. The rain is being caused by an upper-air trough originating in Karnataka passing over the TS. "This will most likely bring rain to the city," said IMD-H director K. Naga Ratna.

### No quarantine for Hyd evictees

Vijayawada: The AP High Court on Friday directed the state government to "permit healthy persons carrying a 'No Objection Certificate' issued by Telangana police not only to enter the state but go to their homes without quarantine."

### NEET postponed due to Covid-19

New Delhi: The Union HRD Ministry on Friday postponed the national medical entrance exam, NEET, in view of the countrywide lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak, officials said. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), was scheduled for May 3.

### Army ready for Op Namaste

New Delhi: Army Chief Gen. Manoj Mukund Naravane on Friday launched an initiative christened 'Operation Namaste' to extend all possible assistance to the government in containing the spread of coronavirus and insulate the 1.3 million strong force from the pandemic. He also asked all Army personnel to take prescribed precautions.

## INSIDE

- CITY - P62 MNREGA wage hike may not benefit TS
- NATION - P67 IAS officer suspended for violating quarantine

## NATION | 7

Renowned artist Satish Gujral dies in Delhi home



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## WORLD | 8

British PM Boris tests +ve for Covid-19



## TABLOID

Beauties may look beastly



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# 14 new cases in TS in 24 hours

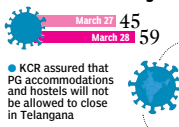
Telangana set for steep rise in positive cases as state enters dreaded Stage III

**State prepared for 60,000 cases: CM**

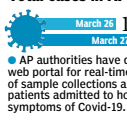
**BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

With an alarming increase in growth and speed of its spread, the novel coronavirus epidemic on Friday shook Telangana state with 14 more people testing positive for the Covid-19 disease. Overnight, the tally of coronavirus victims rose to 59 from 45 on Thursday. The number of active cases of Covid-19 on Friday stood at 58, including the 10 Indonesian preachers. It is learnt that the stage may be set for a steep rise in the number of coronavirus cases as the state enters the dreaded Stage III of the spread of disease, which is transmission of disease among people who have had no contact with a primary disease carrier. In Stage I, people contact it only when they come in touch with someone who brought the disease with them from another country. Nearly all cases that have tested positive since Thursday night are from people who have had no contact with primary patients. Tests were conducted on samples collected

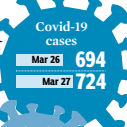
### Total cases in Telangana



### Total cases in AP



### Covid-19 cases



### Cured discharged cases



### CONFIRMED CASES

5,58,416

### DEATHS

25,262

### COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

199

from officials and staff who worked at the airport and were directly involved in screening of incoming passengers. Tests were also carried out on members of the state health department, who were closely involved in the containment exercise and other duties to control spread of Covid.

■ Page 2: TS fails to update figures

● Data as per Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

**S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

With a declaration that Telangana reported 10 more positive cases of Novel Coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the total positive cases to 59, Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan on Friday announced that the state has augmented its capability to handle Covid-19 positive cases by increasing Intensive Care Units (ICU) and quarantine facilities in Hyderabad. While addressing a press conference at Pragati Bhavan here, Mr Rao said that his government was "fully geared to meet any eventuality" arising out of the spread of coronavirus in the state. He declared that the State government has kept 1,400 beds prepared as part of an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Gachibowli stadium to tackle any eventuality after the state touched a single-day high

**THE CM said Telangana has augmented its capability to handle over 60,000 Covid positive cases at same time**

of 10 positive cases for the first time since the crisis began. The Chief Minister said that Telangana has now augmented its capability to handle over 60,000 Covid positive cases simultaneously, Mr Rao disclosed that he had discussed the steps taken for gearing up the official machinery to tackle any kind of eventuality, he said the State has prepared a pool of 11,000 healthcare professionals to be pressed into service.

■ Page 2: Retired docs, recent grads to help

# RBI defers EMIs on term loans for three months

Interest continues to accrue on outstanding loan amount

**FALAKNAAZ SYED | MUMBAI, MARCH 27**

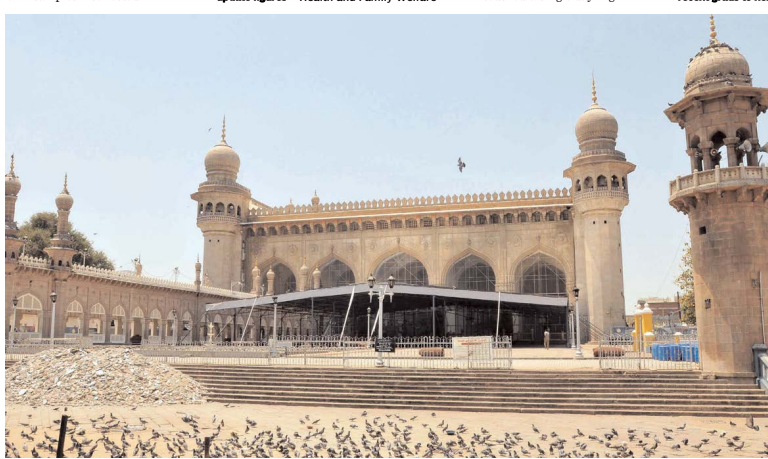
In a big relief to individuals and companies reeling under financial stress following the countrywide lockdown to combat the spread of Covid-19, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday allowed lenders to provide a three-month deferral on payments of equated monthly instalments (EMI) for all term loans that were outstanding as on March 1.

Term loans include retail loans such as home loans, automobile loans, personal loans, credit card dues and education loans and microfinance loans besides farm loans and crop loans that have a fixed tenure. The moratorium will apply for loan instalments falling between March 1 and May 31. The apex bank also announced deferral of interest payment on working capital loans for three months. The move would significantly ease pressure on both lenders and borrowers as availing such a moratorium would not lead to downgrade in an individual's credit rating/credit score and also not affect the classification of the loan on the banks books (and would not require any provision). The RBI said that availing moratorium does not entail any changes in the existing terms and conditions of the loan. So,



Shaktikanta Das

if you don't pay your EMIs in these three months, banks won't term your account a non-performing asset (NPA). However this is a temporary deferral and the interest amount shall continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loans even during the moratorium. The RBI asked lending institutions to frame board-approved policies for providing the relief to borrowers. In a video address, Mr Shaktikanta Das, Governor, RBI said, "In respect of all term loans, all commercial banks, co-operative banks, all-India financial Institutions, and NBFCs are permitted to grant a moratorium of three months on payment of all instalments falling in between March 1 and May 31. The repayment schedule for such loans as also the residual term will be shifted across the board by three months after the moratorium period. Interest shall continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loans during the moratorium period."



The Macca Masjid in Old City which is usually filled with devotees for Juma prayers, wears a deserted look on Friday after the Telangana Wakf Board issued restrictions at the mosque in city. — P.SURENDRA

# TS to feed poor, migrants in lockdown

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan on Friday said that while he will strive to ensure "no section of society in the state would be left to go hungry", emphasized that the lockdown and night time curfew will continue till April 15. Mr Rao declared that all arrangements will be made to ensure supply of essential commodities, including milk and vegetables, for the thousands of migrant labourers from several other states, including Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand working in various sectors, including construction, poultry, irrigation projects and rice mills. He assured students from

other states, particularly AP, residing in hostels and at paying guest accommodations not to panic as the government would ensure proper shelter, food and medical care for them. Directing district collectors to ensure that migrant workers and students have adequate food, proper shelter and required medicines, the Chief Minister said, "We must treat those

from other states as our brethren and ensure they have shelter and food." The State has already directed all employers to pay salaries to workers of unorganised sector during the lockdown, he said, adding, "employers should pay them salaries and provide food and shelter." Given that there are large number of migrants and students from other

states in Hyderabad, Mr Rao instructed that the GHMC commissioner, district collectors of Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy and Medchal, and commissioners of nine municipal corporations adjacent to GHMC, "to work in coordination with municipal administration minister and director of municipal administration in rescuing them."

## GOING VIRAL | More cases next week as incubation for asymptomatic gets over

# India's transmission rate at 1:6

**KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

The transmission rate for Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) in India is one to six (1:6) according to a first curve which has been observed. "There will be many more cases in the next week as the incubation period gets over for asymptomatic carriers. They will come forward for testing, determining

have responded well to treatment of anti-HIV drugs, according to medical experts. The actual challenge will be the next wave as most swabs are being taken at private diagnostic centres and hospitals. Multi-speciality hospitals are drawing samples of 50 to 70 patients per day who are reporting with upper respiratory tract infections and severe respiratory distress.

A senior doctor explains, "There is an increase in severe respiratory distress which is not a disease typical of summer months and is noted only in winter. But this year, we are seeing them in large numbers in this hot month. It is an indication that Covid-19 has spread in the country. Cases are being reported in all States and age groups, but the maximum number of people affected are above the age

of 60 years. People are reporting with symptoms of heavy breathing, constant cough and congestion in upper respiratory tract. Clinical evaluations show that these are symptoms of the disease but to verify it, tests have to be carried out. It is a bacterial infection, the fever goes up to 102 degree C and to 104 degree C if it is a viral fever."

■ Page 2: Travel remains challenge for sick

## MHA wants States to care for stranded

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 27**

Concerned over the largescale movement of people, especially exodus of migrant and agricultural labourers, industrial workers and unorganised sector workers in view of the 61-day lockdown across the country, the Union home secretary has written to all States and Union Territories to immediately ensure that adequate steps are taken

to provide support, including food and shelter to them. Similarly, the home secretary directed the States to ensure that stranded migrant and agricultural labourers, industrial workers and unorganised sector workers from other States are also allowed to continue in their States for accommodation and are not harassed. The advisory suggests that all States and Union Territories to immediately ensure that adequate steps are taken

■ Page 7: 10-month-old baby tests Covid-19 +ve



IN BRIEF

### Water board to address issues

**Hyderabad:** Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) M. Dana Kishore with executive directors and other senior officials will be available at conference hall in the headquarters in Khairatabad on today from 3 pm to 4 pm under "D UR MD, HMWSSB" programme to address and redress long pending and unresolved complaints either in person or circle office level and head office level. For grievances customers can contact by quoting their "CAN" numbers, over phone numbers: 23442881 / 23442882 / 23442893.

### 2 TRUCKS SEIZED FOR CARRYING LABOURERS

**PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC ADILABAD, MARCH 27**

Desperate workers and daily wage labour stranded at various places due to lockdown and lack of transport facilities have chosen to travel locked in truck containers, as they found these vehicles the lone option left for them.

Adilabad police personnel were shocked to find a large number of people travelling in two containers that were passing through the state's borders towards Maharashtra around Thursday midnight.

On checking the containers at the check post, police found as many as 150 workers who had managed to reach the Telangana-Maharashtra border from different areas in the state.

Police said these people were working as labourers at companies in Visakhapatnam and other cities of Andhra Pradesh. It is learnt that the workers travelling in two lockers belonged to Nagaland, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Haryana.

State authorities are surprised that the containers carrying workers had reached the border after passing through many check posts en route. Adilabad DSP S. V. Venkateshwar Rao said the workers were coming in two lockers that were heading to Haryana. Higher officials were being consulted on the matter.

The information is that several other containers had successfully passed through the border check post and entered Maharashtra.

### CANTONMENT GEARS UP DURING LOCKDOWN

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

In view of the lockdown orders issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, a concerted effort is being made by the military establishment in Secunderabad to meet, implement and maintain the lockdown.

The Army in Secunderabad has set up fully equipped quarantine centres for its personnel, according to a release from the defence ministry. It notes that measures have been taken to depute specifically nominated personnel from respective resident welfare associations (RWAs) as 'procurement officers,' issued with special passes and assigned with the responsibility to procure and supply essential items and provisions, including vegetables, dairy products, cereals, pulses and prescribed medicines, as required by families.

Movement of residents to markets has been stopped. They are to stay at home and refrain from hoarding of provisions. Arrangements have been made for items available at the nearest unit, including ration (URCS), as per requirement of families of various colonies and clusters, to be delivered at their doorsteps by the nominated RWA personnel. Delivery of items to families separated (husbands and wives in field areas) are carried out twice a week and to regimental colonies once a week. Movement of Army personnel has been restricted to essential duties only and all vehicles are being sanitised twice daily. Movement of personnel has been restricted to the most essential only.

Military hospitals in Secunderabad and Golconda have geared up and enhanced their infrastructure and stock of medical stores and supplies to swiftly and efficiently manage covid-19 cases in the eventuality of a surge.

# Sanitise offices, TS tells cos

### Employees being crammed into cars, social distancing not maintained

**ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

The state government is yet to come up with a plan to help companies struggling due to the ongoing lockdown.

However, one seems to be on the way. IT and Industries Secretary Jaysh Ranjan on Friday announced that the government has received suggestions from trade bodies and companies regarding the kind of assistance they require.

"We are collating information on what other states and the Centre are doing to help the companies. We will take this data along with the suggestions we have received and review them soon," he said.

Mr Ranjan was speaking in a "webinar" alongside Cyberabad Police Commissioner V.C. Sajjanar and state Director of Public Health G. Srinivasa Rao on the Covid-19 lockdown.

The senior bureaucrat said that the government was keen on helping companies in terms of not just concessions or waivers, but also to smoothen their logistics and supply chains. "For instance, a few manufacturing companies in our state manufacturing sanitizers are not able to source raw material from Gujarat. So we have spoken to the Gujarat government for the same," he said.

Mr Ranjan also commented on the work-from-home option being given to IT employees.

He reiterated that companies could decide for themselves on the matter. "However, the employees themselves are asking for it. As per latest reports I have seen, 95 per cent of IT employees in the city, who number over five lakh, are working from home," he said.

Mr Ranjan added that the remaining five per cent needed to be given sanitary transport and workplace facilities.

"We saw that some of these employees had to

# Lockdown results in binge watching

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

Locked down in their homes, urban Indians seem to be spending the free time bingeing on web series.

According to a survey on over-the-top (OTT) content conducted by media consultancy group Ormax Media, 61 per cent of those surveyed (aged above 15 years) preferred web series. Only 21 per cent preferred watching movies, 13 per cent preferred news and the remaining five per cent watched "comedy clips".

The survey also shone light on how the people are spending time at home in the past week. Around 60 per cent felt they were spending more time

**THE SURVEY** found that people were spending 65 per cent more time watching news, indicating that they are glued to their TV screens watching news on the Covid-19

bonding with family. Around 57 per cent said they were spending more time on OTT content, 46 per cent on social media, 44 per cent on television and only 13 per cent on reading. As to TV watching habits, the survey found that people were spending 63 per cent more time watching news, indicating that they are glued to their TV screens watching news on the Covid-19 pandemic. Around 58 per cent were watching more movies on TV.

working from home," he said. However, Mr Ranjan added that the remaining five per cent needed to be given sanitary transport and workplace facilities.

"We saw that some of these employees had to

### BOUGHT GROCERIES? TAKE A BATH PRONTO

**Hyderabad:** Director of Public Health G. Srinivasa Rao appealed to the public to clean their phones regularly as they could be carriers of microbes. He also asked the people to take precautions after going out to buy groceries.

### SAJJANAR: PURCHASE WHAT YOU NEED FOR NEXT 2-3 DAYS, NO PANIC BUYING

**Hyderabad:** Cyberabad Police Commissioner V.C. Sajjanar said the government had taken all measures to keep essential services and grocery stores open for the people's convenience. "Hence, I request all to stop resorting to panic buying. For instance, during an inspection, I found someone buying 10 litres of oil. This isn't right. Buy what you need for the next two-three days. Also, I saw many people buying junk food. This is not healthy, especially during a lockdown," he said.

Mr Ranjan added that the remaining five per cent needed to be given sanitary transport and workplace facilities.

"We saw that some of these employees had to

# Names of 19 abroad returnees leaked

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

A list of 19 persons from Chandanagar who were ordered into self-quarantine after they returned from abroad in the past few days was leaked on social media. In a major breach of privacy this list has the persons' names, phone numbers, passport numbers and complete home addresses.

The list was widely shared on Twitter, with many falsely claiming that Chandanagar 'had been declared a "red zone". A few users pointed out that such a privacy breach could lead to vigilantism against those named in the list.

Mr Sudhamsh said it was up to the police to investigate how the list was leaked. Chandanagar police station house officer B. Ravinder, when contacted, said he had no idea how it came about. He said the list has been supplied to them by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC). "I do not know about it. We did not leak it," he said. He insisted that the leak would not cause any security incidents either.

# 4 held for trying to flee in ambulance

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

A group of four tried to travel to beat the ban on inter-state travel during the lockdown by hitching a ride in an ambulance.

On Friday, the Hayathnagar police received information that some people were attempting to leave the city in an ambulance. The personnel at the check post near Hayathnagar, Gadwal and Suryapeta. Two days ago, Rachakonda police commissioner N. Mahesh Bhagwat had said that inputs were received that some people are travelling inside. They had

engaged ambulance driver Chandrasekar, 36, a resident of Saheb Nagar in Vanasthalipuram, to transport them home by paying ₹14,000.

The driver and the four passengers, were taken into custody as a case was booked. The ambulance was detained, said the police.

In a couple of days ago, the police caught over a dozen people travelling in a private ambulance near Hayathnagar, Gadwal and Suryapeta. Two days ago, Rachakonda police commissioner N. Mahesh Bhagwat had said that inputs were received that some people are travelling inside. They had

# GHMC packs off 16 to isolation wards

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

Sixteen persons who returned from abroad and did not follow the mandatory 14-day home quarantine were caught by officials of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC). These individuals have been since packed off to isolation wards designated by the government.

These 16 quarantine violators included six persons from Kukatpally zone, five from Ghazalpet, four from Serilingampally and one from the Khairatabad zone. GHMC officials said they had not received any instructions on further measures, including taking action against these individuals.

"If a police case is booked against the violator, the person will have to be presented before a court with two constables during the remand period. If any violator develops Covid-19 symptoms during the remand, that would put the health of police personnel at stake. In order to avoid such complications violators were shifted to isolation centres immediately," a GHMC health wing official said.

Earlier this month a man who came to Hyderabad from Dehra on March 15 fled to Tanuku in Andhra Pradesh without intimating authorities of his violation of coronavirus preventive measures. Even as the Khairatabad zone GHMC officials said they had not received any instructions on further measures, including taking action against these individuals.

# KCR: TRUCKS CARRYING POULTRY FEED, INGREDIENTS FOR FEED TO BE ALLOWED

**T.S.S. SIDDIHARTHI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

The poultry industry, which found itself caught between a rock and a hard place, one because of a severe drop in demand for chicken and eggs and two the lockdown resulting in stoppage of essential supplies of feed and feed ingredients, may find some relief with Chief Minister, K. Chandrababu Naidu's assurance on Friday that the road block for transport of the supplies will be cleared.

He told a press conference that orders have been issued to allow trucks carrying poultry feed, ingredients for the feed and other goods needed for the poultry industry to pass. He also said there will be no restrictions on vehicles transporting eggs from the poultry to other states. It may be recalled that boundaries with other states have been shut as part of the lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus. The government said that goods meant for poultry will be allowed to pass through as will be vehicles transporting eggs. "This news that the state and central governments approved the movement under the Essential Commodities Act, did not permit down the ranks of the police personnel manning the highways," Mr Sanjeev Chintawar, business manager, National Egg Coordination Committee, told Decan Chronicle.

### Virus impact



Deserted roads on the third day of the lockdown in Amerpet on Friday.

— R. PAVAN

# Media drivers beaten up despite CM's orders

**JAYATHRANYA T. | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

In another incident of police high-handedness, despite orders from Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu and Director-General of Police M. Mahesh B. Reddy not to stop media personnel and employees associated with media organisations, drivers working with a popular regional daily were reportedly beaten up on Thursday night in Hyderabad.

Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar warned his personnel of strict disciplinary action for any media personnel or employees associated with media organisations, drivers working with a popular regional daily were reportedly beaten up on Thursday night in Hyderabad.

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ing from duty after night shift were beaten up by constables. "It seems briefing is not happening properly that all media, press staff are exempted, including drivers, cleaners, class IV employees, guards on the production of an identity card or letter of authorisation from the editor," he reiterated.

The commissioner ordered that DCPs, ACTs and station house officers brief all police constables again on permitting members of media and those associated with media organisations. Any lapse will attract stern disciplinary action against the SHO, the commissioner said in his message.

LATE | WORK

### Roads empty, KTR wanted them repaired during lockdown; bitumen stuck at Vizag refinery

# Repair work hits a road block due to lack of bitumen

**MADDY DEEKSHITHI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27**

The state government's plan to repair roads during the lockdown period has hit a road block due to the shortage of bitumen.

Since there are no oil refineries in Telangana state, the bitumen has to be transported from Visakhapatnam. Despite instructions from ministerial administration minister, K.T. Rama Rao, and AP Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, to the directors general of police of both the states, the bitumen transportation has run into trouble.

Rao, in a recent review meeting, has instructed Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) officials to take up the comprehensive road maintenance project (CRMP) work on a war footing and complete it prior to the end of the lockdown.

CRMP work has been divided in to three packages and the state government has also released GO No 777, Go No 776 and Go No 775 dated November 23 pertaining to five packages.

BPCPL will execute road-laying, footpath and maintenance of greenery works in LB Nagar zone at an estimated cost of ₹238.42 crore.

M. Venkatarao Infra Projects Pvt. Ltd. will execute works worth ₹219.70 crore in Charminar zone.

NCCL Ltd. would execute ₹243.25 crore in the Serilingampally zone.

Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd. would execute works worth ₹146.71 crore in Kukatpally.

KNR constructions Ltd bagged work worth ₹240.61 crore in the Secunderabad zone.

Work in the Khairatabad zone has been split into two packages. KNR Constructions Ltd would execute works worth ₹165.68 in Khairatabad and Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd. would take up work worth ₹196.08 crore.

Instructions were given to the private agencies including BPCPL, M. Venkatarao Infra Projects

Pvt. Ltd., NCCL Ltd., Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd. and KNR Constructions Ltd. to transport five tankers of bitumen from Visakhapatnam crossing East and West Godavari in AP, Khammam, Suryapet and Nalanda to reach Hyderabad.

Mr Rao even spoke to Mr Reddy who, in turn, accepted the proposal. Immediate instructions were given to both the state DGPs to provide necessary protection to transport bitumen from AP to Telangana crossing the border at Sattupally.

The DGPs alerted the superintendents of police (SP) and commissioners to allow the vehicles to cross the district and state borders.

However, an objection was raised by a circle inspector (CI) in Visakhapatnam and a local sarpanch at the refinery site asking the private agencies not to move an inch during the lockdown period amid the Covid-19 crisis. They even roughed up labour

for transporting bitumen. Interestingly, the local sarpanch and CI, along with after being offered bribes, allowed the vehicles to leave from their jurisdiction.

Amid high drama, Mr Rao, on Friday, warned the private agencies for delaying the CRMP work. He even instructed GHMC to blacklist the agencies in case of any further delay.

However, the agencies informed the minister they have already started transporting the bitumen and CRMP works will begin by 9 am on Saturday.

Rao asked the GHMC to make the most of ongoing Covid-19 crisis. As the roads are deserted, it would be easy to lay roads and complete them prior to the lockdown period ending.

However, vital issues like social distancing are not being observed during the transportation is still a million-dollar question to be answered.

IN THE BRIEF

ACP attached to DGP office

Khammam: Khammam assistant commissioner of police P.V. Ganesh was attached to Director General of Police M. Mahendar Reddy's office as part of disciplinary action for behaving in a high-handed manner with a medical practitioner...

Vinod praises healthcare staff

Hyderabad: State Planning Board vice-chairman B. Vinod Kumar has lauded the work of doctors, paramedical, sanitation, medical staff in controlling the spread of Covid-19...

AP UPDATE

AP REPORTS 2 MORE COVID CASES, TOTAL 12

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 27

Two more fresh Covid-19 positive cases were found in AP taking the total number of cases to 13 in AP so far.

According to an official release from director of health and family welfare on Friday, a man from Visakhapatnam district came in contact with a Coronavirus (Covid-19) infected patient, who had returned from Birmingham, UK, on March 17. He was admitted into the hospital on March 21 and since then he has been in hospital quarantine.

SOCIAL DISTANCE SPARKS FIGHT, ONE KILLED

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC KURNOOL MARCH 27

An unexpected coronavirus-related crime has been reported from the faction zone of Kurnool district. A man asked his children not to play with the children of other families to avoid the spread of coronavirus. This angered the father of one of the children in the group, who thought he was being branted a Covid-19 propagator...

According to circle inspector Nagaraja Rao, the quarrel erupted when Sreeramulu saw his son playing with a group of friends, he pulled him out saying he would get Covid-19 if he played with the other children. Venkateswarlu, whose son was in the group. In a fit of rage, Venkateswarlu attacked Sreeramulu on the road and died. "A case was registered," the CI said.

3 ESCAPE QUARANTINE IN GUNTUR

MD ILIASI | DC VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

A youth has escaped from an isolation ward at Guntur General Hospital (GGH) while two NRIs were missing from their homes when they were ordered to be quarantined in Krishna district. The NRIs had come to their homes in Mylavaram of Krishna district on March 14. Medical teams were visiting their houses three days on Friday, they went missing and could not be traced.

At the GGH, the person who was suffering from coronavirus symptoms after return from Dubai escaped along with his case sheet after two days. GGH resident medical officer Dr. Anjanwarayan has lodged a complaint with the Kothapeta police of Guntur.

Wandering around town? Lose your vehicle



Traffic cops shift two-wheelers, which were seized from youth who were aimlessly roaming around, at Old City on Friday during the lockdown.

— SURENDRA

HC switches to work from home

VULINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27

In view of the lockdown against Covid-19, the Telangana High Court on Friday took a decision to hear only extremely urgent cases on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays every week till April 14 through video conference or through mobile apps.

If any matter needs urgent judicial intervention, either the advocates or party-in-person should come and the judicial academy remained closed till April 14.

To this effect, the Telangana High Court issued orders on Friday. All judicial staff members need not attend duty. However, they must be available over the phone and attend duty whenever required.

● If any urgent matter needs judicial intervention, an advocate or party-in-person should mail to the High Court registrar, explaining the reasons for urgency.

● After scrutiny and consideration by the Chief Justice, the matter will be heard through virtual court rooms using "Zoom Cloud Meetings App".

advocates or party-in-persons should download the "zoom cloud meetings" app. Subordinate courts, tribunals, the state legal service authority, mediation and arbitration centres and the judicial academy remained closed till April 14.

To this effect, the Telangana High Court issued orders on Friday. All judicial staff members need not attend duty. However, they must be available over the phone and attend duty whenever required.

interim orders which will expire between March 20 and April 14, the High Court took up a suo motu petition headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and comprising Justice M.S. Ramasubrahmanyam and Justice A. Rajashekar Reddy taking cognizance of the extraordinary circumstances.

The extension of orders would be in effect if there was no Supreme Court intervention in a particular case.

The High Court also kept the family of three women, issued after February 15, to execute decree in its favour till further orders.

TRAVEL REMAINS CHALLENGE FOR SICK PERSONS

From Page 1

Doctors say that they are providing initial treatment, without waiting for test results. Maximum patients are coming early to private hospitals. Most of them are coming directly as they are aware of the danger. Only a few referrals are being referred by general physicians or hospitals.

Yet, there are some of them who are made to go from one hospital to another in a big challenge. "People do not want to go to government hospitals or to private hospitals. They are not taking the cases, hence they have to go only to designated ones," said a health volunteer who is co-ordinating with doctors and hospitals to take care of patients.

While tall claims are made by hospitals to show preparedness, there are still many experiences making people angry and upset. With travel remaining a major challenge, those who are sick have to scurry from one place to another and find it very difficult even with private vehicles.

Patient-26 met 169 people from 6 districts in AP, TS

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC KHAMMAM, MARCH 27

The list of people that Patient 26 of the state met is growing as the authorities intensify their contact tracing efforts. The patient was declared Covid-19 positive on March 18. He went to Raghavapuram, a village in Chintalapudi mandal in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, to attend a house-warming function after coming from London. So far, it is known that 169 persons from both states either shook hands or hugged Patient 26.

Officials of both Telangana state and AP are shocked hands with him. Officials of both Telangana state and AP are shocked hands with him. Officials of both Telangana state and AP are shocked hands with him.

KTR TO PAWAN KALYAN: NOT SIR, CALL ME BROTHER

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 27

There was an interesting exchange between IT minister K.T. Rama Rao and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan on Twitter when Pawan Kalyan addressed KTR as 'sir' and KTR told him not to call him 'sir' but to call him 'brother'.

Pawan Kalyan has donated ₹2 crore to both Telugu states and the Centre (₹50 lakh to each state and ₹1 crore to the Centre) to fight the Coronavirus. "You have given a great message as 'sir' and KTR told him not to call him 'sir' but to call him 'brother'." Pawan Kalyan replied: "Thanks Sir." He went on to praise CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and KTR for doing a wonderful job.

Walk to home

A man shows his X-ray film to prove that he was discharged from the hospital. The family of three were seen walking to their house on Friday as they were no transport vehicles available in the city.

TS likely to put off hike in taxes

Increase in power, registration charges delayed

S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 27

The coronavirus crisis has afforded some temporary relief to the people of Telangana who would otherwise be paying large increases in taxes in the ensuing financial year 2020-21.

Power tariffs, registration charges, property tax and house tax, excise duty on liquor and other taxes were to be increased in the ensuing financial year, which will start in the next four days.

The state government hoped to garner an additional ₹10,000 crore by raising the tariffs and taxes and save itself from the financial crisis it has created.

Since the state is under lockdown for the next three weeks and maybe more, the state government is in no position to burden the people with additional taxes now.

With everyone's attention to increase the power tariff and the latter is expected to earn ₹2,000 crore additional revenue by doing so. But the health crisis has delayed the whole process.

The Discoms (power distributing companies) have not yet submitted their Annual Revenue Requirement (ARR) report and tariff proposals to TS Electricity Regulatory Commission (ERC). After getting the proposals from the Discoms, the ERC has to conduct hearings to know the opinion of stakeholders regarding the power tariff proposals.

ERC) After getting the proposals from the Discoms, the ERC has to conduct hearings to know the opinion of stakeholders regarding the power tariff proposals. Next, the ERC decides the power tariff depending on government subsidy to the power department.

Completing this process takes at least two months. If the present lockdown situation continues for a longer period, it will take even more time to finalise the power tariff.

The state government is also considering increasing registration charges from six to nine per cent. At the same time government will also increase the land value.

Property tax and house tax were also to be raised, but were postponed due to the municipal elections. However, the state government feels increasing taxes and other charges will only have a negative impact politically on the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi.

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POWER DEMAND IN TS FALLS EVEN ON HOTTER DAYS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

The power demand has come down in Telangana state despite the present hot sunny days due to the lockdown.

In Hyderabad, power consumption plummeted. Overall, the state's power demand has come down to 219 million units (MU) on Sunday due to the janata curfew on March 21 and on the previous day.

Within GHMC limits, power demand has come down by 8 MU. Compared to on janata curfew day on Monday, the power demand increased a little. However, compared to previous days this month, the overall power consumption has reduced considerably.

Usually from March to June end, the power demand increases in the domestic and commercial sectors because of the rampant use of the ACs. On March 21, before the janata curfew, power demand in the state was 236 MU and on Monday, it was 224 MU.

In Hyderabad, the power demand was 48 MU and on Monday it was 42.8 MU. Transco and Genco chairmen T. Chandrababu Naidu and Devalapally Prabhakar Rao said that due to the lockdown, the power demand has come down in the state. He said the power consumption in the domestic and commercial sectors was reduced for the next few days.

After that, the power demand will be further reduced. Mr Rao said that they are supplying the power to all sectors in the state uninterrupted. He said due to state lockdown in the state, Transco field staff is not allowed by police to attend power problems if any.

He said he has requested the police not to obstruct the power staff in attending to emergency power problems in the city or in the state.



A man shows his X-ray film to prove that he was discharged from the hospital. The family of three were seen walking to their house on Friday as they were no transport vehicles available in the city.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Retired docs, fresh medical graduates to fight Covid-19

From Page 1

Retired doctors and fresh medical graduates will be requested to help the officials as having information and sent to the higher officials of Andhra Pradesh.

only way to contain the spread of Coronavirus is social distancing and maintaining hygiene, he appealed to people to follow strict self-discipline and abandon the attitude of "nothing will happen-to-us".

The state government was prepared for any eventuality even if it was a full-blown situation, Mr Rao said. All efforts by the government would, however, be futile if people do not cooperate, he said.

The threat of further import of the virus from foreign returns has now been nullified with cancellation of international flights, he said, "now it is time that we should be cautious and contain spread of the virus through local contacts. From government's side, we are not making any arrangements. But people should complement government efforts by staying indoors, maintaining social distancing and avoid gathering in groups."

He pointed out that any panic from these norms would only result in distract and divert much needed government focus and effort to 'avoidable exercises'.

BORED I ANDHRA

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

When the authorities, especially medical personnel, are trying to contain the spread of Covid-19, a section of people, especially youth, is making 'fun' calls to the 108 emergency response system (ERS) ambulance service. This has resulted in a steep rise in the volume of calls being made, which is hampering the service to emergency cases like labour pains, accidents and suspected cases of coronavirus.

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced lockdown with effect from March 25 for a period of three weeks, some idle youth have taken to calling the 108 ERS just for fun. They call even though the attendant is anxiously asking for details, and then hang up. This practice has become so rampant that in the last few days the normal number of 7,500 calls received per day seeking the service of 108 ambulance has gone up to 12,500 to 15,000.

The 108 ERS authorities say they have 25 agents attending to the calls on a regular basis. If the number of calls rises abnormally, a genuine caller may be forced to wait for a few minutes or longer if the phone remains engaged. They express fear that in case any caller is in urgent need of 108 ambulance due to advanced labour pains or accidents, some of the health emergency, the caller may not be able to access the agent immediately. Crucial time may be lost and anything may happen to the patient if he or she is not shifted to the hospital in time. ERS authorities say they attend to 375 calls pertaining to labour pains from all parts of the state. So far, they have also shifted 870 suspected cases of Covid-19 to the government emergency Response Service from all parts of the state. We appeal to the people not to call our service unnecessarily, as it may delay access for people who are in a genuine health emergency."

ERS call centres get 15,000 calls every day

YOUTH make prank calls to kill time

● Average response time for 108 ambulance service is 18 minutes in urban areas, 20 minutes in rural areas and 22 minutes in tribal areas of the state.

● "Though 'ineffective' calls to 108 are not uncommon, their number has gone up in the lockdown period.

● Authorities block numbers of such callers for a stipulated period to discourage the practice.

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SHORT TAKES

JAIL INMATES MANUFACTURE MASKS

M. B. GIRISH | DC SHIVMOGGA, MARCH 27

Inmates at Central Prisons across the state have been busy making masks for a week to meet the growing need of the protective gear against the backdrop of Covid-19 pandemic.

The project has been taken up by the inmates on the directions of DGP and IG (Prisons) Alok Mohan since March 17.

Shivamogga Central Prison Superintendent Dr Ranganath told Deccan Chronicle, "We had trained six inmates in tailoring in November and those are not manufacturing masks."

As of now, from Shivamogga Central Prison, masks have been supplied to Chitradurga, Davangere, Mangaluru, Udipi, Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga covering police, prisons and public.

The Chikkamagaluru Office of Superintendent of Prisons has been supplied with 1,500 masks and Chikkamagaluru Prison with 250. The IGP office at Davangere has been supplied with 300 masks and the Prison over there another 250.

Prison in Chitradurga has been supplied with masks of 250 and Udipi Prison 250 masks. The masks are priced at Rs 6.

INDIA EXTENDS HELPING HAND TO NEPAL

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

Indian Army is ready to dispatch a rapid response team to Nepal for assisting in the present Covid-19 situation there.

To assist civilian government of Nepal, DG Armed Forces Medical Services said that there are five hospitals across army, navy and Air Force. The 30 Command Hospital Air Force Bangalore, AFMC in Pune, Army R&R Hospital at Delhi. Army command hospitals at Udhampur and Lucknow which can carry out Covid tests. He said that all military hospitals are also being equipped shortly with the resources to begin testing.

Presently 29 Covid hospitals have been earmarked as Covid hospitals. This will include armed forces patients as well as civilian patients transferred from state health authorities, in case their capacity is overwhelmed," said Lt Gen Banerji.

He said that as of now, there has been only one case of serving soldier who tested positive for coronavirus.

"He was on leave at his home in Leh, taking care of his father, who had returned recently from Iran and suffering from Covid. The soldier has made an immediate recovery," said Lt Gen Banerji.

Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane on Friday launched "Namaste" as part of Armed forces effort to aid in combating Covid-19.

COP BOOKED FOR TRYING TO FERRY MIGRANTS

New Delhi, March 27: The Railways on Friday said the Delhi Police had suspended a constable for trying to ferry migrant workers to their hometowns in an empty train on March 26.

RPF DG Arun Kumar said the Government Railway Police (GRP) constable had taken money from migrant workers, saying he would help them get to their hometowns by train. CCTV footage at the New Delhi railway station showed that the constable facilitated around 45 people to get aboard an empty rake of the Magadh Express on Thursday, the railways said.

"They assembled at the GRP chauki, near metro gate number 1 at the New Delhi railway station. Then they moved to platform number 1 through an opening for construction work. When the RPF personnel saw this, additional force was called and the train was de-boarded from the train and ousted from the station. The train is still at the station," Northern Railway Spokesperson Deepak Kumar said.

Across the railway network, around 600 empty rakes were stranded away from their home bases and the local railway authorities have come under pressure to allow migrant workers to travel to their homes on these rakes.



Volunteers pack food packets to distribute at government hospitals and among poor people, during the complete lockdown across the country to contain the coronavirus spread at Ernakulam Karayagam in Kochi on Friday.



A policeman punishes a rickshaw-puller for allegedly flouting the lockdown imposed in wake of coronavirus pandemic in Guwahati on Friday.

SC allows BS IV vehicles sale for 10 days after lockdown

15,000 cars, 12,000 commercial vehicles to be sold within just 10 days

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

In the wake of the Covid-19 lockdown, the Supreme Court on Friday permitted the sale of 10% of the unsold BS IV vehicles within 10 days of the lifting of the lockdown with a caveat that these vehicles would not be sold in Delhi NCR. The last date for the sale of BS IV vehicles as per 2018 top court order is March 31, 2020.

"Observing that vehicle dealers want to take advantage of a few days lockdown" in March on account of corona, a bench of Justice Arun Mishra and Justice Deepak Gupta said that the BS IV vehicles that have been sold prior to lockdown could be registered after it was lifted.

Rejecting its order on a plea by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association, the court said that it understood the "psychology of businesses, dealers".

Observing in the course of the hearing that there was "no point extending time for BS IV vehicles, burdening environment further", the court said,

"We are pleased to see that the government has taken a proactive step to assist the automobile dealers to submit on affidavit the details of sold and unsold vehicles, within one week."

Additional Solicitor General A.N.S. Nadkarni, appearing for the Centre through video conferencing from Goa, Senior Advocate K.V. Vishwanathan, appearing for FADA, linked up from

his office here. During the hearing, Vishwanathan said that the deadline needs to be extended due to the ongoing lockdown and economic slowdown faced by the country due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The top court said that it cannot keep extending time for BS IV vehicles and dealers should be ready to sacrifice and do something for the country environment."

Nadkarni said that people might have faced hardship in registering their vehicles sold before March 31 due to the lockdown and therefore time till end of April or May, be provided.

The bench disposed of two applications filed by FADA and Honda India seeking modification of apex court's order of October 24, 2018, by which it had fixed the March 31, 2020 deadline for sale and registration of BS IV compliant vehicles.

On February 14, the top court had rejected the plea filed by an association of automobile dealers seeking extension of the March 31, 2020 deadline by one more month to sell Bharat Stage-IV norms compliant vehicles across the country.

In 2016, the Centre had announced that India would skip the BS-V norms altogether and adopt BS-VI norms by 2020.

In its October 2018 order, the court had said that any extension of time in introducing new emission norms would adversely impact the health of citizens as the pollution has reached an "alarming and critical" level.

"It had said there cannot be any compromise on the health of citizens which has to take precedence over the 'greed' of a few automobile manufacturers who want to stretch the time-line to make a 'little more money'."

The court had passed the order in 2018 while deciding the issue of whether BS-IV compliant vehicles should be permitted to be sold in India after March 31, 2020.

Meanwhile, with a huge reduction in vehicular movement and factories being shut amid lockdown, the air quality of the national capital has significantly improved in just the first three days of the lockdown.

Delhi, which is infamous for its terrible air quality

'Coronavirus map' likely to steal your data

SAURABH JOSHI | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 27

Amidst the Covid-19 outbreak, Dhule police has unearthed a malware called "coronavirus map" devised to steal confidential data, including bank account details and passwords.

The police found out about the malware a week ago and have urged people not to open any coronavirus-related links circulated on social messaging apps.

The officials said that the malware was being shared on messaging apps like WhatsApp and other social networking platforms," said a police officer.

The accused are being questioned on how many persons have been targeted so far and the quantum of the fraud. This malware link was being shared through WhatsApp and other social networking platforms," said a police officer.

The link lured the persons with information on the prevention of coronavirus, claiming that it has important information about ways to prevent infection. If one clicks on the link, it installs a spy software, which can steal bank account details, passwords and other personal data. The police said that the cyber wing is gathering details of the victims and will identify them and record their complaints for carrying out detailed investigation in connection with the fraud.

The police file have filed a case of cheating, forgery, acts of common intention per the Indian Penal Code and as per the provisions of the Information Technology Act and further investigation is underway.

Maha sees 28 cases in 24 hours, count 133

Number of coronavirus cases in Maharashtra climbed to 153 with 28 new patients in the state on Friday. The new patients included 15 persons in Sangli district, four from Nagpur, two each from Mumbai and Thane and one each in Palghar, Kolhapur, Gondia and Pune. State health minister Rajesh

LENS ON FAMILY AS DOCTOR DIES OF COVID

VRUSHALI PURANDARE | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 27

Mumbai's senior medico died of Covid-19 in the wee hours of Friday at privately-run Hinduja hospital. Two members of the deceased's family have tested positive and rushed to civic-run Kasturba Hospital. His grandson had returned from the United Kingdom on March 12 and was under self-quarantine since then, said an official.

According to sources, the grandson of the deceased showed mild symptoms of Covid-19 at the airport, but he successfully convinced the health officers that he will stay in quarantine strictly for next 14 days. Six members of the family along with the maid are under the scanner.

The 85-year-old doctor, however, started coughing four days ago. Upon testing in a private lab, the result turned out to be positive and the doctor was admitted to the privately-run Hinduja hospital. He succumbed to the Covid19 infection on Friday. The patient had diabetes and also had a pacemaker installed. He was ailing with cardiac ailments," stated the press note issued by the state health department.

Topre said the state government is considering providing insurance cover to the medical staff treating Covid-19 patients in the state. Several private doctors have stopped their medical due to the coronavirus scare.

As per the information received by the Sangli district collector, medical squad had collected swab samples of 25 members of a family who are under institutional quarantine in Islampur. Out of which, 15 reports turned out to be positive and they will be treated in the Miraji civil hospital. They had come in contact with a family, which had returned from Saudi Arabia and some members of the family had tested positive for Covid.

VHP says chant 'Vijay Mahamantra' 108 times daily to beat coronavirus

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

To combat the Covid-19 pandemic, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has asked people to invoke divine intervention by chanting the "Vijay Mahamantra" 108 times every day at their homes.

While the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh affiliates are helping the poor and the needy by providing food and assisting the people who are in distress during the ongoing national lockdown to combat the virus, the VHP has also prescribed the mantras as it feels that the "war" against the pandemic can be won "with the blessings of the para and supra (absolute and relative powers)."

"Our country has been fighting the deadly coronavirus pandemic. The Centre government and all state governments are working tirelessly to overcome it. Divine blessings are necessary to fighting such crisis. Therefore, we appeal to the entire country to leave the invocation of divine powers in this difficult hour," reads a statement issued by saints representing the VHP, which also includes two members of the Supreme Court-mandated Shri Ramjanambhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust.

The RSS has deployed its volunteers to assist the Centre and state governments to assist people during the lockdown. They are engaged in services like distributing food packets, creating awareness about the

avirus pandemic. The Centre government and all state governments are working tirelessly to overcome it. Divine blessings are necessary to fighting such crisis. Therefore, we appeal to the entire country to leave the invocation of divine powers in this difficult hour," reads a statement issued by saints representing the VHP, which also includes two members of the Supreme Court-mandated Shri Ramjanambhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust.

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NEET POSTPONED DUE TO CORONA

New Delhi, March 27: The HRD ministry on Friday postponed the national medical entrance exam, Neet, in view of the countrywide lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak, officials said.

The HRD ministry's National Testing Agency took the decision in view of the three-week lockdown as well as pending board exams for a few subjects, a senior official said.

are reaching out to households urging them to donate food for the poor.

Bio masks: Leaves come in handy for tribals

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 27

Coronavirus outbreak has led to people resorting to some ingenious ways of making masks in the vicinity of Chattisgarh.

Tribal women and men were currently seen moving wearing bio-masks in villages in south Bastar districts of Narayanpur, Sukma and Bijapur.

"We have received reports of tribals in remote pockets of Bastar using masks made of leaves in Chattisgarh outbreak. This clearly indicates that awareness has already been generat-

ed among the tribals in Bastar in this period of crisis with the people beginning to wear masks out of the leaves, now popularly called 'bio-mask' in the region."

Mr Sundarra, however, appeared worried over possible disruption of efforts by local administrations to protect the tribals in their regions from coronavirus. He said that earlier this week ambushed a search party of security personnel in Sukma killing 17 jawans.

The urbanites in Chattisgarh were also seen making up with the acute shortage of medical masks by using handkerchiefs and cloths to cover their mouth and noses.

"There is acute shortage of medical masks in the region. They are selling at highly inflated price of ₹150 per piece against the actual price of ₹5. Hence, people have no option but to use hankies and cloths as makeshift masks when they venture outside," tax consultant of Raipur, Ajey Devta told DNA newspaper.

Meanwhile, some enterprising businessmen in Raipur have started pac-

tomers, leading masks to appear in various colours and shapes such as stars and ribbons.



Tribal people wearing a mask made of leaves.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

28 MARCH 2020

Stimulus package may fail to mitigate distress

In a joint effort to mitigate financial stress expected to be caused by the deadly Covid-19, the Central government and the RBI have announced a stimulus package worth ₹5,40,000 crores. In addition to this, the RBI has declared a three-month moratorium on the payment of loans...

After Omar, free Mufti swiftly

The release earlier this week of former J&K chief minister and National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah from nearly eight months in detention by the father of the late Chief Minister, the late former CM and NC chief, was set free on March 13, is likely to release some international pressure on the Narendra Modi government on the Kashmir issue...

The NC and PDP have been bitter regional rivals and yet NC leaders have said they will address political matters only after they have had a chance to confer with Ms Mufti. This is a new chapter in the political history of Kashmir...



Subhani

Fear, panic not the best way to fight a pandemic



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The lockdowns in Italy, Spain, France, Britain, the United States and of course India in the wake of the coronavirus (or covid) outbreak are a necessary response, but it hides the fact that governments and people the world over are running scared of the virus...

The medical fraternity feels less confident when it is not armed with a tested vaccine or medicine to fight Covid-19. But clinical data about the 100,000 or so who have recovered... must provide clues...

points, it can be readily inferred that all those who are infected would not require hospital care, though they would need to be quarantined wherever they are staying at home, and that all of them would not end up in an intensive care unit and telling people that Covid-19 does not mean a death sentence...

LETTERS CORONAVIRUS

Covid-19 seems to be an opportunity in disguise to help laying new foundations for the economy, medical infrastructure and policy making. The efforts to beat the pandemic in the early stages must be appreciated when compared to the negligence of developed countries.

Unfortunately, all the good work done by Telangana and AP are getting wiped out by an unnecessary conflict over inter-state migration. For the CMs should be following a common procedure of taking or returning their respective citizens by arranging transport. Let us treat everyone equally as the uncertainty looms large.

One of the brutal fatalities of the surge in coronavirus cases is the scanty treatment of health care workers. The few hours they have to rest after continuously serving patients is also lost in looking for alternative accommodation or in arguing with house owners.

Badal cabinet sworn in

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 27 A three-member Punjab Ministry headed by Mr. Prakash Singh Badal, the Akali (Sant gurbani) leader was sworn in this evening...

few months ago, it would have been impossible to imagine the world so still. Planes flew across the skies, men and women rose in the mornings and set out to work, children went to school and the world hummed along. All of that is fast becoming the jurisdiction of memory...

Watch the birth of a brave new world amid Covid-19 churn

Harari's words are thought-provoking and to some extent heartening. It feels good to consider the future, beyond the question of the sickened and the dead. That future, the long-term future brought close by transformations and decisions that are taking place now, will sound different, look different and feel different.

There will be positive consequences from this as energy will be saved when offices shut down. Instead, businesses will have to invest in ensuring that workers have access to adequate housing and communication facilities. Women, who often face hostile and adverse work environments, could well have an edge in this new world.

all the women saddled with this thankless job now have to work constantly. And that is the most positive scenario; as happens often during public holidays, more women are likely to face violence from their abusers (usually the men of the family) are constantly at home.

physical proximity. For whom the requirement of physical presence has been onerous, halted and stymied by borders and passports, this may just be the breakthrough they need. If an accountant works from home, it does not matter whether that accountant is in Tibet or New York or Karachi. The already borderless virtual world will become even more important.

SHORT TAKES

BRAHMAKUMARI CHIEF PASSES AWAY AT 104

Jaipur, March 27: Rajyogini Dadi Janki, the chief of Brahmakumaris Sansthan, the world's largest spiritual organisation run by women, passed away at the age of 104 after a prolonged illness. She breathed last at 2 am on Friday at a hospital in Mount Abu. She was suffering from respiratory and stomach-related problems for the last two months, an official statement said. Her last rites will be performed on Friday at a ground located in Shanti Van campus of Brahmakumaris headquarters. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over her demise. Rajyogini Dadi Janki, chief of the Brahmakumaris, served society with diligence. She toiled to bring a positive difference in the lives of others, he tweeted. The Prime Minister said her efforts towards relieving women were noteworthy. My thoughts are with her countless followers in this sad hour. On Shanti, he wrote. Rajyogini Dadi Janki was born on January 1, 1916 in Hyderabad, located in Sindh province in Pakistan. She had embraced the spiritual path at the age of 21.

NOTED PAINTER GUJRAL PASSES AWAY

New Delhi, March 27: Satish Gujral, one of India's best known artists and who has died in his Delhi home, his family said on Friday. He was 94. Gujral, who was renowned for his versatility in different mediums, died on Thursday night of old age reasons. He was the brother of former Prime Minister I K Gujral and is survived by his wife Kiran, daughters Ajana and Raseel and son Mohit. The noted painter and architect passed away peacefully at 10.30 last night in his home. He died of old age, the artist's nephew and Rajya Sabha MP Nareish Gujral said. Gujral, who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian honour, was an architect, painter, muralist, sculptor and graphic artist. His artworks were heavily inspired by the turbulence of his early years. He had the illness that impaired his hearing as a child and the partition of the subcontinent. Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the death of the artist, who was born in 1925 in Jhelum, a partition west Punjab and not just witnessed the division of the country but also helped several refugees cross the border safely. Satish Gujral Ji was versatile and multifaceted. He was admired for his creativity as well as the determination with which he overcame adversity, Modi wrote on Twitter. He said Gujral's intellectual thirst took him far and wide, yet he remained attached to his roots. On Shanti, the Prime Minister added.

PAKISTAN VIOLATES CEASEFIRE AGAIN

Jammu, March 27: Pakistani troops have violated the ceasefire again by resorting to unprovoked firing, mortar shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, an official said on Friday morning. According to reports, the shelling began on Thursday night and continued till Friday morning. Pak army violated ceasefire along LoC by resorting to firing with small arms, mortar shelling with mortars in Mendhar sector since 2345 hours, defence spokesperson said. The Indian Army is retaliating befittingly, he said. Pakistani troops resorted to shelling and firing from across the border in Degwar sector in Poonch, officials said. There was no report of any casualty on our side, the spokesperson said. The Pakistan Rangers had resorted to firing on the International Border (IB) in Hiranagar sector of Kathua district on Thursday. There were a total of 646 incidents of ceasefire violations along the International Border (IB) as well as the Line of Control (LoC) between Jammu and Kashmir on April 14 and February 23 this year, Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik had said on Wednesday. Over 3,200 ceasefire violations by Pakistan troops were recorded in 2019.



Migrant workers along with their families walk to return to their villages in Prayagraj on Friday after the 21-day nationwide lockdown was imposed by the government in wake of coronavirus pandemic. — PTI

IAS officer suspended for violating quarantine norms

Kollam sub-collector was advised self-quarantine following his foreign trip

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 27 The Kerala government on Friday suspended Kollam sub-collector Anupam Mishra from service for violating home quarantine norms after his return from abroad. However, the officer left his official residence after informing his superiors. The IAS officer was advised to go under home quarantine after returning from his honeymoon trip abroad. However, the officer left his official residence in Kollam on Thursday without intimating anyone. The government decided to place him under suspension on the basis of a preliminary inquiry conducted by Kollam district collector B Abdul Nasser. The IAS officer, when the information was cross

'No liquor' triggers youth to end life

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 27 A youth committed suicide allegedly because of non availability of liquor in Kunnankulam in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. The body of Sanjay, 38, was found hanging from the ceiling of his room at the house on Thursday in Kunnankulam on Friday. He was unmarried. The Kerala government on Wednesday decided to shut all liquor outlets in the state during the 21 day lockdown period. There are 265 outlets run by government owned Beverages Corporation and 39 run by the Consumers. According to relatives of Sanjay, the youth was showing signs of restlessness and disorientation for the last two days because of non availability of alcohol. A painting worker, he used consume liquor thrice a day at a local bar. They say the youth probably could not cope with the withdrawal symptoms and had severe health and mental complications that finally pushed him to take the extreme step. Kunnankulam police has registered a case.

J&K: 4 more test +ve for Covid-19

MUSLIMS URGED TO OFFER PRAYERS FROM HOME

The number of Covid-19 cases in Jammu and Kashmir went up to 18 on Friday after four more persons, all of them Srinagar residents, tested positive. Thirteen more persons are being treated for the deadly disease in Ladakh. One of the affected persons died at a hospital in Srinagar on Thursday. Meanwhile, no Friday congregations were held in any major mosque in J&K or Ladakh. While in most cases the custodians of mosques voluntarily called off the weekly gatherings, the law enforcing agencies had to intervene at place to prevent people from entering the places of worship. Srinagar's DC Shahid Iqbal Choudhary has on Thursday with a view to prevent the spread of the virus issued a formal order for the closure of all places of worship in the district. However, the management of Srinagar's famed Dargah Hazratbali, historic Jama Masjid and Khan kah-e-Naqashbandia had already been shut for worshippers. The custodians of City's Chattipatshahi Gurdwara followed suit whereas revered Hindu shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi tucked away in Trikuta hills near Jammu was closed for pilgrims last week. The virtual lockdown as part of an official order to stem the spread of Covid-19 was enforced on ground by the J&K police and Central armed police forces on the ninth consecutive day on Friday. Around Noon, adhan or azaan (call for prayers) was given from some locality mosques in Srinagar and some other towns of the Valley. I have appealed to people to stay at home and offer namaz there instead of going to mosques. There is no other way. People who are making inquiries over phone are also being advised to offer prayers at home, he said. Bukhari said only a handful of people were present offering daily prayers at the mosque as people were gradually realising the gravity of the situation. — PTI



A doctor checks temperature of a police officer on duty near a bus stand in Jammu on Friday. — PTI

India to be part of solidarity trials to develop potential Covid drugs

New Delhi, March 27: India is soon likely to participate in the WHO's 'solidarity trial' for developing potential drugs for Covid-19, officials said on Friday. At a press briefing on coronavirus at 4 pm, Health Ministry Joint Secretary Dr Agarwal said 75 new cases of coronavirus and four deaths have been reported in the last 24 hours. We are soon likely to participate in the WHO solidarity trial for developing potential drugs for Covid-19. Earlier we did not do it because our numbers were small and our contribution would have looked minuscule. Raman R Gangakhedkar, Head of Epidemiology and Communicable diseases at ICMR, said. Agarwal said that a PSU has been ordered to provide 10,000 ventilators while Bharat Electronics Limited has been requested to purchase 30,000 additional ventilators in one-to-monthly instalments. A shortage of the machines in the country. Punya Sallia Srivastava, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, said that states and union territories have been requested to make arrangements for food, water and sanitation for migrant labourers. Hotels and rented accommodation should stay open and functional. — PTI

PEOPLE THROU VEGETABLE MARKETS IN ASSAM, EXEMPTION WITHDRAWN

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MARCH 27 Assam government on Friday declared that the vegetable markets of the Guwahati Medical College and Hospital as exclusive of Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters, We have signed MoU with 36 private nursing homes, Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters, We have signed MoU with 36 nursing homes to take the load of patients going to Guwahati Medical College and Hospital for two months so that the GMCH could be converted into an exclusive hospital for Coronavirus infected patients. Informing that all the patients from Guwahati Medical College and Hospital, except maternity, cancer and emergency wards will be shifted to 36 private nursing homes. Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters, We have signed MoU with 36 nursing homes to take the load of patients going to Guwahati Medical College and Hospital for two months so that the GMCH could be converted into an exclusive hospital for Coronavirus infected patients.

Homeless more worried about food than Covid-19

Noida, March 27: 'Self-quarantining ourselves is a luxury homeless like me cannot afford,' said 68-year-old Rupa who has been living on the streets of Delhi-NCR for as long as she can remember. Rupa, currently living near a Noida metro station, said she does not understand everything happening around her — whether it is empty roads or closure of most shops — but what she does realise is that there is a disease which has forced people to stay indoors. Asked if she worries about being infected with the virus, Rupa casually replies that she has seen worse and for her it is nothing more than a flu. 'Getting food is a major concern for me not this (coronavirus),' she said. I want to a shelter home but I got scared that I will catch some other disease there, said Rupa who refused to give details of the shelter home where she was taken. At some distance, Ghanshyam, another homeless in his late 40s, explains how procuring food has been the biggest challenge for him in the past few days. My worry is not that I will get infected by getting food. All the hotels and restaurants from where I used to eat have been shut. I used to beg but now there is no one to give me alms too, he said. India is under the biggest lockdown in its history with all 1.3 billion people asked to stay home for three weeks in view of the coronavirus outbreak, which has claimed 17 lives and more in 2 months. Ghanshyam said he has been surviving by eating food from the garbage since the lockdown was announced and is worried how procuring food has been the biggest challenge for him in the past few days. The Uttar Pradesh government on Thursday directed officials to start community kitchens to provide food to the poor and migrant labourers amid the lockdown imposed to check the spread of coronavirus. — PTI

LOCKDOWN | IMPACT Daily wage earners living in slums strive to make ends meet Poor struggle for food, other essentials

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOJ | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 27 Basanti Barik, a 61-year-old widow working as maid, has kept herself confined to her shanty in Akhandalamani slum at Palasuni here in the city since March 21 when Odisha government first imposed a one-day lockdown. The lockdown was further extended by seven days and she was not able to come out ever since. Her confinement has further extended till April 14 as Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24 announced another 21-day nationwide lockdown. Basanti's daughter Geeta and her 10-year-old son Kalia, living in a 10/10-feet room in the same Palasuni slum have also not come out ever since. Whatever foodstuff they had stored has almost been exhausted. On Friday, Basanti called for her employer Nalini Sahu asking for some food and biscuits. I don't have any money with me. Nor my daughter Geeta has any money to buy rice and grocery items. Please organise some food for me, she told Nalini. Basanti and Geeta are not the only people in Bhubaneswar who are now desperately crying for food. Over three lakh people out of total 9.39 lakh people of Bhubaneswar have failed to make their livelihood by working as daily wage earners. Most of the women work

as maids while male members also out their living as construction workers and labourers. Basanti regrets that though nearly a week has passed since Odisha government imposed lockdown, no people's representative nor any government official has reached to them with any relief materials. A few benevolent individuals and some voluntary organisations, with due permission from authorities, have started reaching out to people in a certain slums with packaged and cooked foods. However, their intervention has failed to instill much hope and assurance in the slum-dwellers as they realise such helps are for temporary period and inadequate. Apprehending worse days ahead, many slum dwellers, mostly belonging to Bhubaneswar's nearby districts, are seen walking with one meal a day, entering long distances. Many people reportedly up 120 km to reach their native places. The situation in our slum is quite serious. Many families are managing with one meal a day. Children are not getting adequate food. Things will turn worse if we are not supplied with food stuff within a day or two, says Basanti. Meanwhile, Odisha Chief Minister on Friday announced ₹2,200 crore package to provide assistance to the people of the state amid countryside lockdown for Covid-19 outbreak. The government will provide ₹1,000 each to 94 lakh Food Security Act beneficiary families. An amount of ₹500 crore will be spent in this regard, the CM said. Ration of three months will be given to them in advance, he said. Similarly, 48 lakh beneficiaries of social welfare schemes in the state will be provided for the purpose, he said. Announcing assistance for construction workers, he said ₹1,500 each will be provided to 22 lakh such workers, for which ₹300 crore will be spent.

10-month-old baby tests Covid-19 +ve

From Page 1 The Karnataka health department has confirmed 62 Covid-19 positive cases which resulted in 10 deaths. Seven new cases were detected since March 26, 5:00 pm to March 27 8:00 am. Patient number 56 is a 10-month-old male child from Delim in Karnataka who has no history of travel to Covid-19 affected countries. He is isolated and kept at a designated hospital in Dakshina Kannada. As per the preliminary investigation, the child was taken to Kerala by his family members. The detailed investigation is under process and six primary contacts have been traced and are under house quarantine. Apart from 15 lakh air travellers, several people have also entered India through seaports and international land borders. The government has asked Chief Ministers to prepare designated Covid hospitals in their States. Government is immediately procuring 10,000 ventilators through its PSUs while BIL has been asked to provide 30,000 ventilators in 2 months time. Meanwhile, with hospital OPDs shut, the health ministry issued guidelines for tele-medicine facility and urged patients to take advantage of it. Government has given permission to 44 private labs to test for Covid.

IN BRIEF

**Iran virus toll rises to 2,378**

Tehran: Iran on Friday announced 144 new deaths from the novel coronavirus, bringing the official number of fatalities to 2,378 in one of the world's worst-hit countries. "In the past 24 hours, we've had 2,926 new confirmed cases of Covid-19 infections across the country," health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahangour said in a televised news conference. "This brings the overall confirmed cases to at least 32,352," he added, noting that 133 of those hospitalised so far have recovered.

**Spore may jail who stand close**

Singapore: Singaporeans could be jailed for up to six months if they intentionally stand close to someone else, under tough new rules announced Friday to halt the spread of the coronavirus. The city-state has introduced a series of new measures to tackle the virus, including closing bars, cinemas as well as banning large events. One step aimed at ensuring "social-distancing" — a key approach used worldwide to halt the spread of the contagious disease — is a ban on individuals standing less than one metre (three feet) apart in certain settings.

**Venezuela reports 1st virus death**

Caracas: Venezuela reported its first coronavirus death on Thursday after a 67-year-old man with a pre-existing lung disease died, the government said. The man from the northern Aragua state had previously suffered from an "occupational disease in the lungs," Vice-President Nancy Rodríguez said in a television address. The patient had been admitted to a private clinic suffering from pneumonia and three days later tested positive for Covid-19, Rodríguez said. The South American country has reported 107 virus cases.

**Flights sent to rescue tourists**

Kathmandu: Foreign governments on Friday stepped up operations to evacuate tens of thousands of tourists stranded by the coronavirus pandemic in remote locations across South Asia from Everest base camp to beach hotels in Sri Lanka, as well as chartered by Berlin took 304 people out of Kathmandu in the first of a series of flights aiming to ferry more than 10,000 people from Nepal. Almost 17,000 tourists are stuck in Sri Lanka as well as thousands of travellers and expatriates are in India, according to authorities in the two countries. All have cut or virtually halted international flights over the past week in a bid to curb the coronavirus spread. The plane that left Kathmandu was carrying Germans and other European nationals. Sagar Khrel, director general of Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority.

**UN CONDEMNS 'HEINOUS' TERROR ATTACK**

United Nations, March 27: The UN Security Council has condemned the "heinous and cowardly" terrorist attack on a gurdwara in Kabul that killed 25 people, underlining the need to hold the perpetrators and sponsors of these "reprehensible" acts to justice. The bomber stormed a prominent gurdwara on Wednesday in the heart of Afghanistan's capital of Kabul, in one of the deadliest attacks on the minority Sikh community in the strife-torn country.

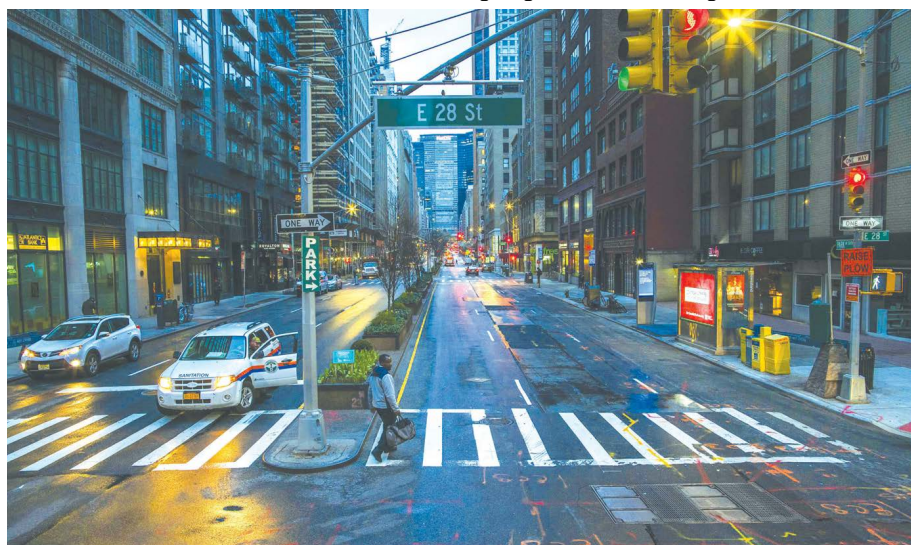
In a statement issued on Thursday, the 15-nation Council said it "condemned in the strongest terms" the "heinous and cowardly terrorist attack" that took place in Shor Bazar area. The Islamic State (IS) terror group, which has targeted Sikhs before in Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for the attack. Expressing "deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the government of Afghanistan," the Council members reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. —PTI

**US stops world, Italy logs 1k deaths**

USA has recorded 1,178 deaths and more than 83,000 people have tested positive for virus

Washington, March 27: The United States on Thursday took the grim title of world's largest coronavirus hot spot as the most coronavirus infections and reported a record, scientific, medical, pharmaceutical and military resource, to halt its spread and protect our citizens. US President Donald Trump said. With about 40 percent of Americans under lockdown orders, Trump urged citizens to do their part by practicing social distancing: "Stay home. Just relax, stay home."

Just days after he termed the coronavirus as a "Chinese virus", leading to a furious response from Beijing, a much-chastened United States President Donald Trump on Friday said he had "a very good conversation" with Chinese President Xi Jinping and praised China, adding that both countries were "working together" amid "much respect". This was just hours after a G-20 "Extraordinary Virtual Summit" in which leaders did not discuss the origins of the virus nor China's initial handling of the crisis when the pandemic first broke out in Wuhan. The US is reeling under the coronavirus pandemic and there are fears it may become the new epicentre of the dreaded virus. "Just finished a very good conversation with President Xi of China. Discussed in great detail the Coronavirus that is ravaging large parts of our Planet. China has been through much and has developed a strong understanding of the Virus. We are working closely together. Much respect" US President Trump tweeted. China had on Wednesday lashed out at its critics and said it had "neither created the (coronavirus) nor intentionally transmitted it", adding that the "so-called (term) 'Chinese virus' is absolutely wrong". Beijing had also claimed "there is no evidence that China is the source of the virus that caused the crisis" although Wuhan city in China first reported the virus outbreak.



General view of Park Avenue after it was announced that some streets will be shut as lockdown continues in response to the coronavirus outbreak on Friday in New York City. —AFP

**US, China to fight together: Trump**

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

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On the G-20 Summit on Thursday that was held through video-conferencing, sources had earlier said that "there were no discussions on the origin of the crisis" and that it was the "best illustration of global cooperation". It may be recalled that angered over United States President Donald Trump's initial use of the term "Chinese virus", Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi had spoken to Indian external affairs minister S. Jaishankar opened its borders with all-weather ally China for a day to accept Chinese medical supplies to fight the coronavirus outbreak which has infected nearly 1,300 people and killed nine others, officials said. China on Thursday asked Pakistan to open the border between the two countries for one day so that medical supplies to fight coronavirus pandemic could be transported into the country. The number of coronavirus patients in Pakistan has risen to 1,286, according to the latest data. "There were 440 patients in Sindh, 419 in Punjab, 131 in Balochistan, 176 in

United Nations, March 27: The UN Security Council, under the presidency of China this month, has not yet scheduled any meeting to discuss the rapidly escalating coronavirus crisis even as the number of Covid-19 cases across the world crossed 530,000 and over 24,000 people have died due to the disease. The number of Covid-19 cases across the globe has skyrocketed to 531,860 and a total of 24,057 people have died so far. At 8:58, the US now has the highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the world, surpassing China and Italy. —PTI

**UN YET TO DISCUSS VIRUS CRISIS WITH CHINA**

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**HUNGARY ORDERS TWO WEEK LOCKDOWN**

Budapest, March 27: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Friday ordered a nationwide lockdown for two weeks to fight the spread of the new coronavirus. "We are introducing curfew restrictions throughout Hungary between March 28 and April 11," he told public radio. "For two weeks we can all leave our homes or places of residence only for work or for managing basic needs." Exemptions include trips to shops and pharmacies for necessities, with infringements liable to police fines of up to 500,000 forints. "Shops will be open exclusively for the aged between 9 am and 12 noon to 'separate youth from elderly in a bearable way," said Orban. The move is the latest in a series of government decrees including school closures introduced after a state of emergency was announced March 11. Hungary closed its borders to non-nationals from March 17, which led to chaos for travellers and freight hauliers at border crossings and Budapest airport. Parliament is set to grant Orban sweeping powers of decree until the government declares an end to the state of emergency. —AFP

**UK PM Boris tests +ve for virus**

Madrid, March 27: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson became the first major world leader to test positive for the coronavirus on Friday, after Prime Minister Boris Johnson saw a record number of deaths from the pandemic that is threatening the millions around the world. In a grim milestone, the United States overtook China as the country with the most coronavirus cases, while seeing an unprecedented amount of newly unemployed amid fears of a global economic meltdown. And Africa's economic powerhouse South Africa on Friday became the latest nation on the continent to go under lockdown as it reported its first Covid-19 deaths. Johnson, whose country has more than 11,000 declared coronavirus

cases and 578 deaths, said he had developed mild symptoms over the previous 24 hours and was self-isolating after testing positive. Spain reported that its death toll had hit 4,858 after 769 people died in 24 hours, recorded one-day figure for fatalities and far higher than in Italy, which counted 662 deaths in its last daily update on Thursday night. Although France — reeling from the deaths of more than 1,600 people including a 16-year-old girl — was facing difficult days ahead. "We find ourselves in a

crisis that will last, in a best situation that will not improve any time soon," Philippe said. But focus is turning from Europe to the United States, where the number of known infections reached almost 85,000 on Friday and higher than both China and hard-hit Italy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi swiftly sent a "get well" message to his British counterpart on Twitter, hailing him as a "fighter" and expressing confidence he would "overcome this challenge as well". Mr Modi tweeted, "Dear PM @BorisJohnson you're a fighter and you will overcome this challenge as well. Prayers for your good health and best wishes in ensuring a healthy UK." —Agencies

**Pak opens border with China for aid**

Islamabad, March 27: Pakistan on Friday opened its borders with all-weather ally China for a day to accept Chinese medical supplies to fight the coronavirus outbreak which has infected nearly 1,300 people and killed nine others, officials said. China on Thursday asked Pakistan to open the border between the two countries for one day so that medical supplies to fight coronavirus pandemic could be transported into the country. The number of coronavirus patients in Pakistan has risen to 1,286, according to the latest data. "There were 440 patients in Sindh, 419 in Punjab, 131 in Balochistan, 176 in

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 91 in Gilgit-Baltistan, 27 in Islamabad and 2 in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. So far, nine patients have died, 25 recovered and 7 others are in critical condition. A Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party lawmaker of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly from Mardan was tested positive for coronavirus on Friday. "I am not saddened by my diagnosis; my conscience did not allow me to look the other way while others were suffering. God willing, I will recover soon and continue to work for the people of my constituency," Member of Provincial Assembly Abdul Salam Afridi said in a video message. —PTI

**VETERAN ACTOR MARK BLUM DIES OF CORONAVIRUS**

Los Angeles, March 27: Actor Mark Blum, best known for featuring in movies such as "Desire Under the Silk" and "Crocodile Dundee" and Netflix series "You", has died of complications from Covid-19. He was 68. The news of his death was shared by Rebecca Damon, the executive vice-president of Screen Actors Guild - American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. "It is with such deep sorrow that I'm writing to share the news that our friend and former board member Mark Blum has passed away as a result of complications from the coronavirus," she said. "Mark was a dedicated Screen Actors Guild and SAG-AFTRA member serving from 2007-2013," Damon tweeted. "Friday and suspended his church's services. But he insisted that was because of official restrictions on public transportation, and said the doors would remain open for worshippers." —AFP

**RIGHT TO WORSHIP Most places have suspended services, often broadcasting prayers online**

**Brazil lists churches as 'essential service'**

Brasilia, March 27: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro decreed Thursday that places of worship are "essential services" that must be exempted from coronavirus containment orders, the far-right leader's latest jab at aggressive containment measures. The decree, published in the government diary, adds "religious activities of any kind" to the list of exempted services, alongside supermarkets and pharmacies. "It must be carried out in accordance with health ministry guidelines," Bolsonaro, who was elected in 2018 with the backing of Brazil's burgeoning evangelical Christian community, has clashed with local authorities who have closed schools and businesses in places such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in a bid to contain the spread of the new coronavirus. The president, who has called the reaction to the pandemic "overblown," says such measures are unnecessary. "I have to say, I love that many people are already infected (with the coronavirus) in Brazil, weeks or months ago — they already have antibodies that help it to not proliferate," Bolsonaro said, speaking to reporters out-

side the presidential residence in Brasilia. Last week, the influential evangelical pastor Silas Malafaia, a Bolsonaro ally, called confinement measures "a tactic by Satan." "My friends, do not worry about coronavirus. It is just another tactic by Satan. Satan works with fear," he said. "Malafaia changed course Friday and suspended his churches' services. But he insisted that was because of official restrictions on public transportation, and said the doors would remain open for worshippers." —AFP

Brazilian soldiers disinfect a train carriage in Central Station as a measure against the spread of the coronavirus, in Rio de Janeiro. —AFP

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## quick BITES

### INDICATORS

INDICATORS	Value	%
Sensex	29,815.59	-0.44
Nifty 50	8,660.25	0.22
S&P 500*	2,544.36	-3.26
Dollar (₹)	4.85	0.419
Pound Sterling (₹)	91.45	-1.51
Euro (₹)	82.449	-0.01
Gold (Oz) (\$)	1,653.70	-0.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)	24.61	-6.57
IN 10-yr bond yield	6.144	-1.318
US 10-yr T-bill yield*	0.738	-8.663

\* As of 9:30 pm IST

### Govt raises ₹11,500 cr from strategic sale

The government has raised Rs 11,500 crore through strategic sale of its stake in two state-owned power companies, THDC and NTPC. With this, the total disinvestment proceeds in the current fiscal stand at over Rs 46,500 crore. The government has sold 74.49 per cent stake in THDC for Rs 7,500 crore and 100 per cent in North Eastern Electric Power Corp (Neepco) for Rs 4,000 crore.

### Cognizant to pay extra 25% on base salary

IT firm Cognizant said it will give employees who are at associate level and below in India and the Philippines an additional payment of 25 per cent of base pay for April, in recognition of their extraordinary continuity-of-service efforts amid the Covid-19 outbreak. The move benefits over 1,30,000 Cognizant employees in India. CEO Brian Humphries said the extra payment will be processed with their April pay.



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### News of branch closure false: DFS secretary

Denying reports of branch closure, financial services secretary Debashis Panda said customer service branches are committed for necessary services during the lockdown and there is no shortage of cash. The Department of Financial Services asked people not to believe rumours of the closure of customer service bank branches. "Customer service bank branches...will continue to provide services," Panda said.

### JICA, Centre sign ₹15,295-cr loan pacts

Japanese government funding agency JICA has on Friday signed agreements totalling Rs 15,295 crore with the Indian government for three mega rail infrastructure projects under these agreements. JICA has granted Rs 8,553 crore for phase-1 of the Dedicated Freight Corridor; Rs 4,262 crore for Mumbai Trans Harbour Link Project (II) and Rs 2,480 crore for the Mumbai Metro Line 3 Project (III).

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# ■ Injects massive liquidity into system, facilitates credit flow, eases burden of borrowers RBI brings cheers amidst gloom

### FALAKNAZ SYED MUMBAI, MARCH 27

In an unprecedented move, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday unleashed war efforts to fight Covid-19 impact on the economy, bring financial stability and restore business confidence. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI cut interest rate sharply to a two-decade low, surpassing market expectations.

In addition, the RBI also announced a series of measures to address the stress in the financial conditions caused by the pandemic such as injecting liquidity into the financial system, ensuring credit flow, relaxation in repayment and debt servicing measures for individuals and corporate borrowers and improving the functioning and stability of the financial markets. Temporary compliance relaxations were also announced for the banking sector.

The RBI announcement came days ahead of the MPC meeting that had to be held on March 31 to April 3. The benchmark repo rate (the rate at which banks borrow short-term money from the central bank) has been cut by a whopping 75 basis points to 4.40 per cent below the global financial crisis level in 2009. The cash reserve ratio (CRR) was cut by 100 basis points to 3 per cent. CRR is the portion of banks deposits that needs to be kept with the RBI.

The cut in the repo rate will include asymmetric slicing of the reverse repo rate by 90 bps to 4 per cent in an attempt to dissuade banks from parking money with it and instead divert the money towards the markets.

### SBI cuts lending, deposit rates

#### FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, MARCH 27

State Bank of India on Friday reduced its lending and deposit rates after the RBI cut interest rate sharply to a two-decade low. The bank cut its lending rate for new and existing loans by 75 basis points on loans linked to External Benchmark-Linked Lending Rate (EBLR) and Repo Linked Lending rate (RLLR) from April 1.

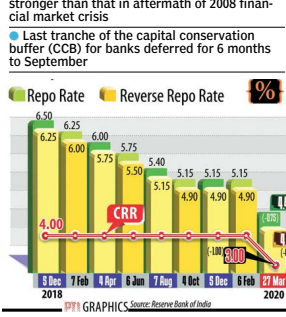
The EBLR reduced to 7.05 per cent per annum from 7.80 per cent while the RLLR reduced to 6.55 per cent per annum from 7.40 per cent. SBI said EMIs on home loan accounts linked to EBLR or RLLR will get cheaper by Rs 82 per Rs 1 lakh on a 30-year loan. The bank also reduced interest rates on retail and bulk deposits by between 20 to 100 basis points across various tenors.

The measures are expected to bring down the lending rate to ease the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the livelihood of millions of individuals following the lockdown in the country, the central bank said.

In another significant move to ease the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the livelihood of millions of individuals following the lockdown in the country, the central bank said that all commercial banks including housing finance companies, have been allowed to give a moratorium of three to six months on term instalments in respect of all term loans outstanding

## FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

- Repo rate slashed by 75 basis points to 4.40%
- Reverse repo rate cut sharply by 90 basis points to 4%, making unattractive for banks to deposit funds
- Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decides to continue with the accommodative stance as long as it is necessary
- Several measures taken to infuse liquidity of about ₹3.74 lakh crore into the financial system
- RBI to undertake repo operation to infuse ₹1 lakh crore
- Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) cut sharply by one per cent to three per cent releasing ₹1.37 lakh crore into the system
- RBI assures to work in mission mode, monitoring the evolving financial market and macroeconomic conditions
- All instruments – conventional and unconventional – on table to support financial stability and revive growth
- RBI assures that banking system in India safe; deposits safe in private bank; public should not resort to panic withdrawal
- RBI says macroeconomic fundamental stronger than that in aftermath of 2008 financial market crisis
- Last tranche of the capital conservation buffer (CCB) for banks deferred for 6 months to September



## Tata Motors looking for a partner? Splits car business into a subsidiary

### MICHAEL GONSALES PUNE, MARCH 27

Tata Motors, India's biggest automaker on Friday decided to convert its passenger vehicle (PV) business unit into a separate subsidiary. The move is aimed at facilitating any potential alliance partnership for the group.

There have been hints of Tata Motors looking for a partner for its car business, mostly Chinese carmaker Chery, and this restructuring could be the first step in such a move. The company has in the past made a few unsuccessful attempts at forming partnerships with global automakers. In 2015, it was in talks with French carmaker PSA Peugeot Citroen for a tie-up that would have seen Tata manufacturing and producing the cars for the French company from its Sanand factory in Gujarat. However, the deal did not fructify. In 2017, it signed an MoU with Skoda-led Volkswagen Group to jointly develop a small car platform. It was called off after just four months. With a clutch of Chinese carmakers looking to enter

### 'Clear we have entered recession': IMF chief

Washington, March 27: The coronavirus pandemic has driven the global economy into a downturn that will require massive funding to help developing nations, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Friday. It is clear that we have entered a recession that will be worse than in 2009 following the global financial crisis, she said in an online briefing. With the worldwide economic "sudden stop," Georgieva said, the IMF estimate for the overall financial needs of emerging markets is \$2.5 trillion. But she warned that estimate "is on the lower end." Governments in emerging markets, which have suffered an exodus of capital of more than \$80 billion in recent weeks, can cover much of that, but "clearly the domestic resources are insufficient" and many have high debt loads. Over 80 countries, mostly of low incomes, have already have requested emergency aid from the IMF. —AFP

## Banks see ₹53,000-cr withdrawals in 2 weeks

### SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 27

Amidst Covid-19 fears, people are keeping more cash in hand to meet any eventuality. In the fortnight ending March 13, customers withdrew around Rs 53,000 crore in cash from banks, which is a multi-month high. During the fortnight, people withdrew Rs 52,985 crore and the cash with the public went up to Rs 23 lakh crore. The total cash held by public around the same time last year, or the fortnight ending March 31, 2019, was around Rs 20 lakh crore and the cash with the public then stood at Rs 22 lakh crore. In the previous fortnight that ended on February 23, 2020, people were seen depositing more cash, and net deposits were at Rs 2,085 crore. The total currency with the public then stood at Rs 22 lakh crore. Cash withdrawals were as low as Rs 3,411 crore in the fortnight ending January 31.

It was expected. This is definitely due to the impact of coronavirus as people want to hold more cash in hand during emergency. In the past seven to eight days we have seen increasing number of withdrawals through bank branches and ATMs.



Clearly a war effort has to be mounted and is being mounted to combat the virus, involving both conventional and unconventional measures in a continuously battle-ready mode

— SHAKTIKANTA DAS RBI GOVERNOR

## FORECAST

- GDP growth rate of five per cent for 2019-20 at risk from the impact of pandemic
- Global slowdown to deepen with adverse implication for India; crude oil slump upside for country
- Upside growth impetus to emanate from monetary, fiscal measures and the early containment of Covid-19
- Food prices to soften on back of record food-grain production
- Refrains from giving out credit, inflation outlook for coming fiscal on uncertain outlook

as on March 1, 2020 without any impact on the asset classification downgrade and an impact on borrowers credit score. The move provides huge relief to home loan borrowers, car loans, personal loans, credit card borrowers, MSMEs and corporate borrowers. Banks are allowed to defer payment of interest rate on working capital loans for three months.

In a video address, Shaktikanta Das, governor, RBI, said the decision to announce the MPC meeting has been warranted by the destructive force of the coronavirus. "We are living through an extraordinary and unprecedented situation. Everything hinges on the depth of the Covid-19 outbreak. Its spread and its duration (Classified) is a war effort has to be mounted and is being mounted to combat the virus, involving both conventional and unconventional measures in a continuously battle-ready mode. Life in the time of Covid-19 has been one of unprecedented loss and isolation. Yet, it is worthwhile to remember that tough times never last; only tough people and tough institutions do," said Das.

Liquidity to the tune of Rs 3.74 lakh crore would be made available in the banking system on account of the measures announced with regard to targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO), CRR cut, increased marginal standing facility (MSF) accommodation, said the governor. All the six members of the MPC, who met on Monday, were in favour of the policy rate, however in terms of quantum of the rate cut, four members voted for a 75 bps cut while two member sought a 50 bps cut.

## Quotes



"Today RBI has taken giant steps to safeguard our economy from the impact of the Coronavirus. The announcements will improve liquidity, reduce the cost of funds, help middle class and businesses"

— Narendra Modi, Prime Minister



"Appreciate RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das' reassuring words on financial stability. The 3-month moratorium on payments of term loan instalments (EMI) and interest on working capital give much-desired relief. The slashed interest rate needs quick transmission"

Nirmala Sitharaman, finance minister



"The RBI policy announcements are bold, decisive, compelling and with a humane touch... (the measures) will help financial markets stabilise, lead to immediate rate transmission and address the credit needs of the real economy"

— Rajnish Kumar, chairman, SBI



"Such robust measures were unanticipated and would restore the confidence of the market, restrict foreign capital outflows and will help in arresting depreciation of rupee"

— Arun Singh, chief economist, Dun & Bradstreet

# Despite govt word, e-com deliveries stay suspended

### SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 27

Despite the central government issuing standard operating procedure to handle supply of essential goods, e-commerce companies have not resumed their deliveries yet. While some have started taking orders, all are still waiting for more clarity from the local authorities. In meeting with industry stakeholders to discuss the issues faced by them due to the Covid-19 lockdown, minister for commerce and industry Piyush Goyal assured that the government is committed to ensure that essential goods reach the people in the most convenient and safest manner. At the request of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, the Ministry of Home affairs has issued standard operating procedures for state governments' guidance on how to handle various aspects related to supply of essential goods. The department has also set up a control room to monitor the situation in the field of transportation and delivery of goods, manufacturing, delivery of essential commodities to the common man and the difficulties being faced by various stakeholders during the present period. The meeting with Goyal was attended by representatives of Snapdeal, Flipkart, Grofers, NetMedz, PharmEasy, 1MG Tech, Udaan, Amazon India, Big Basket, Zomato. Large retail operators were represented by Metro Cash &

Carry, Walmart and RPG while Express Industry Council, Delhivery, Safespresso, PayTM, Swiggy represented logistics operators. However, the e-commerce companies have yet resumed their operations. According to industry insiders, the operating procedures have to reach the state and district level authorities. "Although a central directive has come, it will take some time for that to reach the local level authorities. The issue of huge backlog also has to be sorted out. Hence, it will take some more time for the customers to receive the deliveries," said an industry insider. However, some of the players have started taking orders again. "We are taking orders only essential products through pre-paid payment methods, while we work towards resuming deliveries." Amazon told its customers. Flipkart has started taking orders and hopes to make deliveries by the weekend. Operations of Flipkart and Grofers continued to be suspended.

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"The RBI has gone all out to fight the economic fallout of Covid-19. Although the rate cut is big, we believe the economy will benefit more from the liquidity and regulatory actions"

— Vijay Chandok, MD & CEO, IICI Securities

SHORT TAKES

O'Brien in tears after crowd-fund

Christchurch: Stranded after his flight was cancelled three times due to the Covid-19 pandemic, former New Zealand's bowler Iain O'Brien couldn't hold back tears after mustering enough money via crowd-funding to book his way back home. The 43-year-old from Wellington, who now lives in the UK, was in New Zealand to deal with his mental health issues but his month-long trip was disrupted after countries went into a lockdown mode. After three of his flights were cancelled, O'Brien decided to seek donations to arrange the money for his ticket. On Friday morning, he woke up to find that his target of £2,250 was well surpassed and he now had £3,660 in the coffers, more than enough to cover his travel cost. "I woke up this morning and in my life I cried before I got out of bed," he said in the tearful video message to the people who had contributed for his return. — AFP

Badminton body takes dig at stars

New Delhi: The Badminton World Federation said it is "appointing" that some players, including Indian star Saina Nehwal, questioned its "sincerity and motives" when it dealt with the All England Championships despite the rapid-growing threat of Covid-19 pandemic. BWF's decision to cancel the tournament in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak came for shuttlers, including Saina, who had accused the sport's administrators of placing money above players' safety. In an open letter, BWF secretary general Thomas Lund said the decision to go ahead with the All England Championships was made based on the best advice at that time. "It has been very disappointing to our members of the badminton community speculate on the sincerity and motives of the BWF in this time of crisis," Lund wrote. — PTI

Djokovic donates one million euros

Belgrade: Tennis world number one Novak Djokovic said on Friday he was donating one million euros (\$1.1 million) to help his native Serbia buy respirators and other gear to combat the coronavirus. The player was speaking in a video conference from the southern Spanish city of Marbella, where he and his family are currently hunkering down under nationwide lockdown orders. "Our donation is for the purchase of life-saving respirators and other sanitary equipment," said the tennis star, normally based in Monaco. His family's stay in Spain is "a pure coincidence," according to his spokesperson. The 32-year-old said he was working on keeping a "positive spirit" and enjoying the family time with the tennis season thrown into chaos by the pandemic. — AFP

FRENCH EURO WINNER COACH HIDALGO DEAD

Paris: Michel Hidalgo, the coach who led France to the 1984 European Championship title and the 1982 World Cup semifinals, died Thursday. He was 87. The French Football Federation confirmed the death. Hidalgo coached the national team from 1976-84 and led host France to its first major title at Euro 1984. Les Bleus reached the World Cup semifinals two years earlier but lost to West Germany. Football purists adored the way Hidalgo's teams were almost fixated on creativity, even at the expense of defending. The midfielder, led by Platini, was known as the "Magic Foot" and was arguably the best in the world at the time. Alain Giresse, Jean Tigana and Bernard Genghini were the other three. "I would like to express all my affection and my support to his wife Monique, to his family and all of those close to him," Platini said. — AP

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Heat's off Tokyo Olympic postponement provides silver lining

Tokyo, March 27: Every cloud has a silver lining and the devastating postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics could hand organisers a heaven-sent opportunity to solve their other massive problem: the summer heat. The historic decision to delay the Games due to the coronavirus pandemic gave Tokyo a wide range of options when rescheduling. The Games will be held "beyond 2020, but not later than summer 2021." This leaves open the possibility of a spring Olympics when the weather in Tokyo is at its finest and removes at a stroke the worries about athletes and fans suffering in the brutal heat and humidity of Japan's summer. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike confirmed the postponement had opened up this tantalising option — that would also give her the opportunity of reclaiming the marathon which before the postponement was left to the northern city of Sapporo over heat fears. "Since we are in this situation, our idea is to host (the IOC) move the date to a time that is not hot," she said. Koike later added with a smile: "I think Tokyo would be good" to host the marathon if temperatures were less fierce. IOC chief Thomas Bach himself said rescheduling "is not restricted just to the summer months. All the options are on the table, before and including the summer of 2021." And it was clearly on the mind of Tokyo 2020 chief Yoshiro Mori, even in the immediate aftermath of the crushing postponement. "We are trying to set a new schedule to be done by the summer. It might be earlier. As a result, if the hottest part of the summer could be avoided, wouldn't that be a happy turn of events just months after the postponement." Bach has described the unprecedented task of reorganising the world's biggest sports event as a huge "jigsaw puzzle" and any rearranged date brings challenges. A spring Olympics would clash with the end of the European football season, as well as the NBA playoffs and the early part of the baseball season in the US, noted Marcus Luer, CEO of sports branding firm Total Sports Asia. "I like the general idea, April-May is a beautiful time in Japan, it makes sense from that point," he said. However, any rescheduling involves clashes as the summer Games would require athletics and football to move their World Championships. In terms of cost, organisers had already put aside huge sums for innovative antidotes to the summer heat and humidity, including heat-absorbing road paint, water sprinklers, and even fake snow. After admitting that the delay will cause "massive" extra spending, Tokyo 2020 would surely welcome the saving if anti-heat measures were no longer required. — AFP



In this file photo, Governor of Tokyo (left) Yuriko Koike exchanges fist bump with Japan's President Shinzo Abe.

Early birds to keep Games spots

Paris, March 27: Athletes who had already qualified for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics before they were postponed will keep their places when the showpiece takes place in 2021, sources said. Around 57 per cent of the 11,000 scheduled participants for Tokyo had already made sure of taking part when the IOC pushed the Games back to 2021 due to the coronavirus on Tuesday. The IOC and 32 international sports federations held a teleconference on Thursday where it was decided to reschedule the qualification process. "Thomas Bach first explained the reasons for the postponement of the Games, then said that the athletes qualified for Tokyo 2020 would automatically be qualified for 2021," one of the participants in the conference said. "One of the main subjects was to know when and how to organise the qualifications. In some federations, many sportsmen and sportswomen are not qualified and it takes at least three months for the Olympic Games to organise them," the participant added. The 2020 Tokyo Games were scheduled for July 24-August 9, but after teleconferencing between Bach and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a historic joint decision was taken for the first postponement of an Olympics in peacetime. However, there is no definite date yet for the rescheduled Games with Bach saying Tuesday the Tokyo Olympics "must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community." — AFP



India's star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has already qualified for the Olympics.

Tokyo delay good news for Aussie rugby player

Washington, March 27: A season-ending knee injury had Ben O'Donnell convinced he'd be watching the Tokyo Olympics from a distance, with absolutely no chance of pulling on the Australian jersey for the Rugby Sevens competition. "Forgive him for being a tiny bit pessimistic when the Tokyo Games were postponed to 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic. I have seen (teammates) walking around me that I'm the only bloke that is smiling around here," O'Donnell said in a television interview with the Associated Press. "For me, it's a little silver lining, a little chance, a little creek in the door. Still a long way to go though. I've still got over nine months of rehabilitation and still need to force my way back into that team," he added. The decision by the IOC and Tokyo organisers to postpone the games ended more than a month of speculation about the prospects of the Olympics starting on schedule on July 24. Olympic gold medalists were among the athletes and federations urging the IOC to delay it. Yeah, it's obviously a common sense decision, O'Donnell said Friday getting more serious when talking about the difficult time it was for most athletes and coaches in Olympic sports. "A lot of teams have worked really hard in their qualifications to secure a spot there and it's tough," he added. — AP

prospect of the Olympics starting on schedule on July 24. Olympic gold medalists were among the athletes and federations urging the IOC to delay it. Yeah, it's obviously a common sense decision, O'Donnell said Friday getting more serious when talking about the difficult time it was for most athletes and coaches in Olympic sports. "A lot of teams have worked really hard in their qualifications to secure a spot there and it's tough," he added. — AP

Sachin steps up to fight Corona

New Delhi, March 27: Barring maestro Sachin Tendulkar on Friday donated ₹50 lakh to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, which has so far claimed 17 Indian lives and wreaked havoc globally. Tendulkar's donation is so far the biggest contribution among India's leading sports persons, some of whom have pledged their salaries while a few others have donated medical equipment to fight the dreaded outbreak, which has caused more than 24,000 deaths globally. "Sachin Tendulkar decided to contribute ₹25 lakh each to Prime Minister's Relief Fund and Chief Minister's Relief Fund in his bid to join the fight against Covid-19. It was his decision that he wanted to contribute to both funds," a source privy to the development said on conditions of anonymity. Tendulkar has been associated with a lot of charity work and there has been unmet times, he has taken up social causes, helped people, which has never been brought to public notice. Cricketer-MLA Laxmi donates three months salary, BCCI pension Meanwhile, former India cricketer Laxmi Ratan Shukla, who is currently the sports minister of West Bengal, has donated his three months BCCI salary along with BCCI pension for the same period to fight the Covid-19 pandemic in India. "It is the need of the hour that we all contribute to the best of our abilities. I have already donated three months of my MLA salary to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Also, I get pension from BCCI. I have donated three months of my BCCI pension," Shukla said on Friday. Shukla, played three ODIs for India in 1999 before an injury cut short his career. A respected all-rounder in domestic cricket, he represented Bengal and East Zone in over 100 first-class matches and has also been a part of IPL-winning Kolkata Knight Riders team. Among other prominent cricketers, the Pathan brothers Irfan and Yusuf — donated 4,000 face masks to Baroda police and health department, while Mahendra Singh Dhoni, through a Pune based NGO, made a contribution of ₹1 lakh. — PTI



Sachin Tendulkar



Laxmi Ratan Shukla

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Hima runs to the rescue of patients

New Delhi, March 27: Star Indian sprinter Hima Das has donated her one month's salary to the Assam government to help the state combat the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic. Das, an Asian Games gold-medallist besides being an under-20 world champion in 400 metres, is employed with PSU major Indian Oil as an HR officer in Guwahati. "Friends it's high time to stand together & support people who need us. I am contributing 1 month of my salary to Assam Govt. in Assam Arogya Nidhi Account made to safeguard the health of people in the wake of Covid-19. @narendramodi @sarbanandindral @KirentiJiju @himantabiswa." Das tweeted on Thursday. Hima joined a growing list of sports personalities, including shuttler P. V. Sindhu, wrestler Bajrang Punia and BCCI President Sourav Ganguly, who have come forward to provide financial aid to fight the pandemic. The Assam Cricket Association offered to convert its Barasagor Stadium premises into a quarantine centre as the state government braced up for the Covid-19 pandemic. Though Assam is yet to report a positive coronavirus case, the state government is not taking any chances and has asked people to strictly follow the 21-day lockdown. — PTI

UMPIRE DAR OFFERS MEALS TO JOBLESS

Lahore, March 27: In a heart-warming gesture, Pakistan umpire Aleem Dar is offering free food at his restaurant here for all those rendered jobless by the Covid-19 pandemic. Pakistan is under a lockdown right now fighting the coronavirus outbreak after recording more than 1,000 positive cases. "During this lockdown, people have become jobless. I own a restaurant named Dar's Delight on Fia Road in Lahore. People who are jobless can come there and eat food for free. Dar, an ICC elite panel umpire, said in video message on Twitter. "The 51-year-old Dar has officiated close to 400 international games. "Coronavirus has spread all over the world, and its effects are now being seen in Pakistan as well," said the former first-class cricketer. — PTI

An athlete and a policeman in times of crisis

New Delhi, March 27: They were at the forefront of pursuing glory for the nation as athletes and now as Indian sporting heroes are playing a key role in the raging battle against the Covid-19 pandemic — manning the streets as police officers persuading people to stay home amid a national lockdown. World Cup-winning cricketer Joginder Sharma, Commonwealth Games gold medal-winning boxer Akhil Kumar and Asian Games champion kabaddi player Ajay Thakur have emerged as common. They are all full-time police officers, jobs which they got thanks to their sporting accomplishments. Sharma and Kumar, both Haryana Police officers and good friends, listed the challenges that come with "doing duty" during an unprecedented crisis. "I have been a DSP since 2007. This is one of a kind challenge for me as a police officer because of the general fear and I can tell you that I have seen quite a few challenges in my years of service," said Sharma, who has also immortalised himself with the trophy-winning final over against Pakistan in the 2007 World Cup summit clash in South Africa. The 36-year-old is currently posted in Hisar as the nation observes a 21-day lockdown till April 14 to combat the pandemic, which has killed more than 24,000 globally. "Our duty time starts around 6 am and we do patrolling, making people aware, send those who are out for fun to their homes, help those in need of essentials or medical aid and take action against those who try to defy without any good reason," Sharma said giving a rundown of his average day. Serving with the Gurugram Police as ACP since September



Former Indian boxer Akhil Kumar (left) and kabaddi player Ajay Thakur, Indian 2700 World Cup winner Joginder Sharma.

services are being kept open so there is not much panic. I believe only a strict enforcement of lockdown will be able to halt this virus. People are slowly understanding this," because of the general fear and I can tell you that I have seen quite a few challenges in my years of service," said Sharma, who has also immortalised himself with the trophy-winning final over against Pakistan in the 2007 World Cup summit clash in South Africa. The 36-year-old is currently posted in Hisar as the nation observes a 21-day lockdown till April 14 to combat the pandemic, which has killed more than 24,000 globally. "Our duty time starts around 6 am and we do patrolling, making people aware, send those who are out for fun to their homes, help those in need of essentials or medical aid and take action against those who try to defy without any good reason," Sharma said giving a rundown of his average day. Serving with the Gurugram Police as ACP since September

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