

WEATHER

Max: 37.2°C
Min: 23.6°C
RH: 29%
Rain: Nil
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky,
Max/Min temp. 37/23°C

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
1024	37
TS: 70	01
AP: 21	00

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

6,67,090

DEATHS

31,412+

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

183

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttaraksha
Tithi: Chaitra Sudha Shashti till 3.14 pm
Star: Rohini till 8.38 am
Varjyam: 8.38 am to 10.22 am and 11.14 pm to 12.56 am
Durmuhurtam: 12.36 pm to 1.25 pm and 1.25 pm to 3.02 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 pm to 9 pm
HUIJI CALENDAR
Shabam 4,144 AH
PRATERS
Fajar: 5.12 am
Zohar: 12.31 pm
Asar: 4.41 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.42 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6:23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:11 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 10:07 AM
MOONSET TODAY 11:30 PM

COUNTER POINT



IN BRIEF

German minister panics, ends life

Frankfurt Am Main: Thomas Schefer, the finance minister of Germany's Hesse state, has committed suicide apparently after becoming "deeply worried" over how to cope with the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak, said Sunday, state premier Volker Bouffier. Schefer, 54, was found dead near a railway station on Saturday. — AFP

Cong: Lockdown is thoughtless

New Delhi: The Congress on Sunday slammed the lack of preparedness by the Modi government before announcing the "thoughtless" lockdown to curb the coronavirus outbreak, alleging it was making "hasty" decisions in the same manner as it did during the 2017 demonetisation exercise. "Unfortunately, history is repeating itself today. The lockdown was announced in the same way as the hasty demonetisation was done," Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said.

INSIDE

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NATION 5

Modi sorry for India lockdown



WORLD 8

Trump nixes New York quarantine

TABLOID

Workout with household chores



Human bomb begins ticking



Migrant workers wait to board a bus to their respective villages during a nationwide lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic at Kaushambi in Ghazabad on Sunday. Hundreds of workers from Delhi, Haryana and even Punjab reached Ghazabad after taking arduous treks of many kilometres on foot to take buses to their villages. — PTI

TS tightens quarantine protocol

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

- Don't leave the house under any circumstance;
- Wash hands thoroughly;
- Use disposable paper towels or use dedicated cloth towel and avoid sharing household items;
- Wear a surgical mask at all times;
- If symptoms appear, the person should immediately inform nearest health centre or call 104.

In multiple cases in home-quarantined Coronavirus suspects in Telangana, not only are they testing positive for Covid-19 disease, but they passing the disease to others in their family, the health department said on Sunday while releasing what it called "Final Guidelines on Home Quarantine", with detailed instructions on how people placed under such restrictions, should behave and act.

It may be recalled that six members in one family from the Old City area of

Hyderabad, a doctor working at a corporate hospital who passed Coronavirus to two others in his family, and a few other similar cases caused a steep rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in the State over the past few days. Worried over the government's home quarantine plans not working out as hoped, and at worse, failing completely to contain the disease as planned, the health department in its Sunday's guidelines said that all people who have a travel history from other countries (symptomatic /

asymptomatic), asymptomatic contacts of lab-confirmed cases, and suspects who are COVID negative before discharge from isolation facility, must stay isolated within the house. Such a person should ideally be confined to a room all by himself or herself and if this is not possible, then others in the family should severely limit contact with the person with only one person from the family attending to the needs of the suspect. And in such cases, the attendant, must at all times, maintain a minimum distance of one metre from the suspect.

■ More on Page 4

TS, AP face threat from Delhi-returned TJ men

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

- MORE THAN half-a-dozen patients have had travel history that included trips to New Delhi, where they reportedly met Tablighi Jamaat members

They reportedly came into contact with people involved with Tablighi Jamaat (TJ), a loosely structured organisation whose workers work to educate Muslims on Quran, and leading a life of religiosity.

On March 28, the Telangana government announced that two of four persons who were

tested Covid-19 positive that day had travelled to Delhi. During his press conference on Sunday, Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu referred to some of the current patients in Telangana as having visited a mosque in Delhi. Just these two patients are believed to have transmitted Coronavirus infections to at least eight others in the city. Similarly, AP, over the past two days, also identified that three of its Covid-19 patients had connections to a religious meeting in Delhi.

■ Page 4: Centre suspects TJ men for Covid spread

2 ELDERLY MEN DIE OF ALLEGED STARVATION

JAYENDRA CHAITANYA T. | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Two unidentified elderly men at Raidurgam, who were reportedly starving, have died.

According to Raidurgam police, locals at Manikonda area shared information on March 27 that a person in his late 50s was found unconscious in a room. The man, who was suspected to be starving, was rushed to the Osmania General Hospital On Saturday night, the man died while undergoing treatment.

■ Page 4: Police tries to find out their identity

Coronavirus cases cross 1,000-mark

Contagion doubles its spread to 160 districts

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

As India entered Day 5 of a 21-day lockdown, eight more states were reported from six states in the past 24 hours, taking the death toll due to the deadly virus to 27 on Sunday. Of the 1,024 active Covid-19 cases, 95 patients have been cured and discharged.

The spread of the highly contagious virus has almost doubled — from 75 districts to 160 districts — in the last six days, and 106 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours.

In a bid to stop community transmission of the virus, the Centre has ordered the sealing of state and district borders across India to prevent the movement of migrant workers desperate to return to their villages, being left jobless, with many without food or shelter due to the lockdown. The Centre has warned that all those violating the restrictions will be sent to 14-day quarantine. The states were directed to allow the movement of essential commodities and stop people's movement on highways or across cities.

The PMO has constituted 11 high-level committees to suggest measures to ramp up healthcare, protect the economy back on track, and reduce the pain to people as quickly as possible. So far, Maharashtra has reported

TS will come out of pandemic, says KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu announced that 11 persons who were undergoing treatment for Coronavirus (Covid-19) at Gandhi Hospital in city had tested negative and would be discharged on Monday.

Addressing a press conference in the evening at Pragati Bhavan in the city, Mr Rao expressed hope that the state would recover and come out from the threat of Covid-19, April 7. He said that 25,935 suspects, who were under either self-quarantine or under surveillance of the government, would be dis-

charged from Monday to till April 7, after completion of their respective isolation periods.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with the person discharged after being cured from Gandhi Hospital during his *Man Ki Baat*. The cured person told PM Modi that facilities here are very good." Mr Rao said the total number of positive cases in the state as on Sunday was 70, of which one patient had already been discharged and the final report of 11 patients, who will be discharged on Monday, had come negative.

■ Page 4: KCR hopes for no Covid cases by April 7

With 203 cases, Maharashtra is the state worst-hit by Covid-19, followed by Kerala with 182 positive cases. In Delhi, the number of cases shot up to 72. In Telangana, the number of cases rose to 66,

including 10 foreigners, while Karnataka has reported 76 cases. In Tamil Nadu, the number of cases, including six foreigners, have tested positive.

The number of cases in Rajasthan rose to 55, including two foreigners. Uttar Pradesh reported 65 cases, including a foreigner, while in Gujarat, it has gone up to 58, including one foreign national.

■ Page 5: Collectors, SPs must enforce lockdown

KCR says migrant workers won't starve in Telangana

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Hailing the role of migrant workers as crucial in the process of building a great state and social callous, he termed the "partners in development", Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu said that 3.35 lakh migrant workers in Telangana would be provided 12 kilograms of rice and 500 each in this critical hour of lockdown forced by the threat of Coronavirus (Covid-19).

Speaking at a press conference after reviewing the Covid-19 situation in the state with district collectors through video conference, he said that if any of them did not have facility of cooking or lacks a shelter, collectors must provide them shelter at marriage function halls and arrange to feed them.

The Chief Minister, while reiterating his appeal to people to consume fruits, which had rich nutritional values to improve immunity, said that "nobody shall starve in Telangana" and state government would take

all steps to rescue each needy person in this critical hour.

He said that over 3.35 lakh migrant workers have been working as construction, poultry, irrigation projects, brick making and rice mills, most of them hailing from Chhattisgarh, Odisha, UP and Jharkhand.

He said that if any of them did not have facility of cooking or lacks a shelter, collectors must provide them shelter at marriage function halls and arrange to feed them.

The Chief Minister, while reiterating his appeal to people to consume fruits, which had rich nutritional values to improve immunity, said that "nobody shall starve in Telangana" and state government would take

special passes to vehicles carrying fruits, including sweet lime, orange, lime and pomogranate from the districts to the city.

While announcing relief to migrant labourers from government states, they are mostly from Hindi speaking states, Mr Rao, suddenly switching to chaste Hindi, said "you are our brothers and sons. We will treat you like our own family. The state government will provide you all help including food, shelter and medicines. Don't hesitate to meet district collectors, police, elected representative or any other official if you face any problem."

He further said, "As Chief Minister, I am assuring you that we will take full care of you. You that the agriculture and horticulture departments were ordered to provide

Lower-rung staff lose jobs Farmers stuck with produce

ADITHY CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

People belonging to the lowest rung of the organised sector, with usually regular salaries and some benefits, are already feeling effects of the nationwide lockdown. Over the past few days, many have come to understand the tenuous nature of their "job security". Those employed in recruiting agencies, sales and marketing agencies, or even working as private school teachers, are looking at a long April ahead. Madhusudhan (55), an employee of a company that recruits people to work for deliv-

ery companies, has not received his salary for three months. The company was already struggling financially and was not able to pay salaries regularly. When a lockdown seemed imminent, it decided to fire Madhusudhan and his colleagues. "The company management is not even giving us our salary for February. They want us to handover any company property we might have, but we are unable to do due to the lockdown," he said. Madhusudhan's wife, Yogapriya, is an employee at a medical diagnostic centre. The couple thought her salary would see them through the lockdown

period. However, she too has been asked to stop reporting for duty. "I don't know if I have been fired, but I was told to not come to office. The management told us there are no patients at the centre, so they won't pay us a salary for March or April," she said. The couple has a combined grand total of 7800 saved with them. They have no idea how they will survive until the end of the lockdown. Parshuram, a sales executive for an electronics shop, said, he was not sure if he still had a job. "My employer has closed his showrooms. Since there are no sales, he has asked us to not expect any

salary for April. For March too, he isn't sure when the money can be credited," he said. Vikram, a company secretary working at a firm which handles over 40 clients, mostly manufacturers, said his clients were not going to fire anyone right now. "They are all waiting to hear more about the lockdown. If it gets extended, they might start thinking about it. In any case, though March salaries won't be an issue, April salaries won't be given in full," he said. ■ Page 4: Private teachers to bear brunt

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29
With uncertainty looming over the future of Telangana farmers, who are facing difficulty in selling their produce after the implementation of lockdown, farmers are asking the TRS government to quickly implement its promise of buying their produce from their doorsteps. The worst hit amongst farmers are the cultivators of corn and mangoes, given that it is harvesting time for corn, paddy and others. Farmers who have already harvested corn, and are stuck in their fields with no options, are waiting for the government to procure. The cultivators of mango are highly disappointed, and crestfallen, due to late flowering of the crops, and the lockdown has added to their woes. "Even after the Chief Minister's assurance, procurement has not yet started," said Kannegani Ravi from the Rythu Sarwaja Vedika. Meanwhile, farmers have submitted a memorandum to the state Chief Secretary, explaining their plights and expectations. Mr K. Ravi said,

● THE WORST hit amongst farmers are the cultivators of corn and mangoes, given that it is harvesting time for corn, paddy and others. "Although the government has assured to procure produce nothing is happening at the ground level. At least cultivators of paddy are confident that the government might procure their produce. However, cultivators of maize (corn) are in a dilemma. Throughout Telangana, maize is grown in approximately 10-12 lakh hectares. They are going to be the worst hit by this

lockdown." Cultivators of mango are also going to be hit very badly by the lockdown. Already disappointed over late flowering of the crop due to the rainy season continuing till late November, which will impact both quality and quantity of their produce, if the lockdown continues for too long, it would impact their sale and consumption, he said. Srinivas, who cultivated Sangham president for erstwhile Warangal district. Somidi Srinivas, who cultivated edmaize in two acres of filed, said all his produce is stuck with him. ■ Page 4: Farmers want timely procurement

SHORT TAKES

HUNGRY THROW COVID-19 SAFETY NORMS ASIDE

MADHY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Scores of NGOs have reached out to feed the hungry and needy despite the lockdown in the wake of coronavirus. However, their noble intention is in violation of the mandatory social distancing norms. The homeless at their usual haunts or relatives of patients at the city's major hospitals jostle with one another in their rush to collect free food.

Many of the homeless are not fully aware of the situation resulting from coronavirus. While no one wears a mask, they also appear unaware about the need to at least first wash their hands before eating.

On Sunday afternoon, Satyam Pantulu, an enthusiastic citizen, distributed about 50 meals to homeless beneath the Musheerabad metro station.

He was accompanied by four volunteers, who served hot rice and dal to the needy, who queued up within close proximity of each other. Pantulu said he has been distributing food on regular basis at Goshala near Lower Tank Bund, Kavadiyuda and Katimaisamma temple in the vicinity of Tank Bund.

Imran Razvi of Professional Solidarity Forum (PSF) also distributed about 200 meals at the same spot. Razvi stated that their organisation has also been feeding the poor and needy at all major city hospitals like Niloufer, Gandhi and Nizam's. They distribute total 2,000 meals a day during lunch and dinner times.

Asked about crowding, Razvi and Pantulu said they repeatedly request people to maintain at least three feet distance from each other. But many of those who line up do not have the patience to listen to their advice.

When the issue was taken to the notice of Musheerabad police, who are just 500 metres away from the Gandhi Hospital, a policeman maintained that the particular area falls under the jurisdiction of Chilkalguda police hence he cannot take action.

MANY OF THE homeless are not fully aware of the situation resulting from coronavirus.

RAMANAVAMI CELEBRATIONS CANCELLED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

The Bhagyanagar Sri Ramanavami Utsav Samiti has called off the public celebration of Ramanavami, which falls on April 2, due to the nationwide lockdown.

The festival every year used to be marked by a shobayatra which would start from the Sitarambagh temple and wind its way to the Hanuman Vramshala at Ramkoti. Almost one lakh devotees would participate in the procession.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, samiti president Dr Bhagwant Rao said, "We request devotees to pray to Lord Rama for help to overcome the coronavirus pandemic, for the health of the citizens of the nation and the world." He appealed to the devotees to stay at home and follow the health guidelines.

Long way to social distancing

Residents, hit by the lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus, are facing innumerable problems in their day-to-day lives. At many places, people were seen not following the social distancing norm, even as some cabs packed people to the brim and tried to cross district border.



Despite strict government orders, customers fail to maintain social distance at a supermarket in view of the lockdown on Sunday. — P. SURENDRA



GHMC workers spray chemicals to prevent the spread of coronavirus on Sunday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE



Cops seize a taxi which was carrying six travellers from Hyderabad to Warangal, at Tarnaka on Sunday. The passengers later walked to Patancheru. While on way they were offered food at Sangeet Crossroads. — GANDHI



Police stop a vehicle in which many people were travelling. Later, only two persons were allowed to travel. — GANDHI

Attendees of patients do not follow social distancing norm at the Osmania General Hospital. — S. SURENDER REDDY

No lockdown for wildlife: Foresters see animals roam freely

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

The current unprecedented lockdown in Telangana state has come as an unexpected opportunity for the forest department to study the movement of wild animals across roads cutting through the tiger reserves at Amrabad and Kawal.

Ever since the lockdown on March 22, department officials say they have been receiving reports from the field about the increasing movement of wildlife on roads in the two reserves. The predominant absence of traffic, except an odd vehicle passing through, appears to have provided wild animals the much-needed relief to freely cross roads to get from one side of the forest to the other.

Lack of road traffic, neither inside wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves or other forests, has come as a

valuable opportunity for the forest department to begin studying movement of wild animals on roads. "All our field staff have been given detailed instructions to keep records of such movements. Once we have sufficient data, it will help us plan better traffic management in protected areas and elsewhere for preventing wild animal and vehicle collisions," principal chief conservator of forests R. Shobha told *Deccan Chronicle* on Sunday.

Armed with data - which will include time of the day, the species, their numbers and locations where they cross the roads - the department plans to formulate both passive and active vehicle management measures to prevent road kills of wildlife.

These steps are expected to include adding speed breakers at such points, installing signboards warning road



A dhole or Indian wild dog steps on the road in the Amrabad Tiger Reserve. Dholes are typically fearless and hunt in packs. — BALU PULIPAKA

users about possible crossing by wild animals, lowering speed limits, and staff patrols to ensure that road users are following the rules.

Nagarkurnool divisional forest officer M. Joji said forest personnel are collecting data on wildlife crossings on the otherwise busy road between Man-nanur village and Eagal-penta on Hyderabad-Srisaillam highway that bisects Amrabad tiger reserve spread over Nagar-kurnool and Nalgonda districts.

"We are seeing more and more animals on the road. Once we establish the crossing points, we can take steps

to control speed of traffic and prevent accidents or road kills in which both humans and animals might get hurt," he told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Mr B. Vinod Kumar, field director of the Kawal tiger reserve spread over the erstwhile united Adilabad district, said: "Just the other day, when I was returning from the forest, I saw a herd of Indian gaz with some calves crossing the road." While the animals were initially ambling across, at the moment they noticed the field director's vehicle, they trotted across the road and quickly disappeared into the forest.

"As long as there are no vehicles, the animals will not feel disturbed. We can use the data we are collecting to ensure that wild animals have the right of way on roads passing through forests," Mr Vinod Kumar remarked.

LACK OF PILGRIMS LEAVES MONKEYS HUNGRY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Troops of monkeys that are used to being fed by pilgrims travelling through the Amrabad Tiger Reserve in Telangana state while on their way to and from the temple town of Srisaillam in Andhra Pradesh, have begun losing weight. Their reliable supply of food has been cut off thanks to the coronavirus prompted lockdown.

On an average, every day under normal circumstances, 500 to 600 vehicles pass through the Amrabad tiger reserve either on their way back into Telangana. On weekends, the number of vehicles varies between 2,000 and 3,000. "The monkeys, most-

ly rhesus macaques, have been fed for years by people. Since a week now, they have been coming and sit near the speed breakers on the road inside the reserve where vehicles would slow down and give them something to eat," Amrabad forest range officer J. Sudhakar told *Deccan Chronicle* on Sunday. "Some of the monkeys have started losing weight. You can clearly see that they have become skinny," he added.

Mr Prabhakar said that though there were dense fruit-bearing areas in the forest, where the monkeys can migrate to feed, "they have been so used to easy meals that they are just coming and sitting by the roadside. May be in a week or so they will realise that the days of free meals are

over and move into the forest." It is quite possible that some of the monkeys might migrate to either Mannanur village on the highway which marks the beginning of the forest road in Telangana, or to Vatvarlapally village in the middle of the reserve.

However, with the lockdown, people in these villages are staying indoors and the monkeys may have no option but to look for food and water in the forest as they used to do.

This has already happened in the Kawal tiger reserve, through which several roads pass. Monkey troops here are reported to have returned to the forest and have been sighted around percolation tanks and feeding on the fruits of trees in the forest.

IN BRIEF

Rly hosp opened for govt workers

Hyderabad: The railway ministry has opened its hospitals and health units across the country to all Central government employees. The employees will be able to utilise the services by showing their ID cards. South Central Railway (SCR) general manager Gajendra Malwa instructed medical officials from the zone to make the necessary arrangements.

Homam performed to chase virus

Warangal: Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation Mayor Gunda Prakash Rao on Sunday performed a homam to "drive away" the coronavirus at the Vasavi Kanyakamatha Temple in Hanamkonda. He said the homam was performed to appease the God Dhanavanthari who is known as the god of medicine. "I performed the homam to ensure the people of Warangal do not fall prey to the virus and it is eliminated from the world," he said hoping that normalcy would return. Temple committee chairman Satyanarayana, secretary Anchuri Srinivas and priest Santhosh took part in the homam.

TS STUDENTS FROM ENGLAND SEEK KCR'S HELP

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Telangana state students and job holders held up at Manchester in England sought the help of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and municipal administration minister K.T. Rama Rao to return to India. In their appeal, the students said that their colleges were shut. Those who were employed had lost their jobs due to Covid-19 crisis. They said that the local government was not taking measures to contain the virus spread unlike the Telangana state government. They said British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prince Charles testing positive for the novel coronavirus was proof of it. The students and workers appealed to the Telangana state government to bring them back to their home.

RAILWAY TICKETS CANCELLED TO BE REFUNDED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

The Railways announced on Saturday that all tickets for journeys between March 21 and April 14 would be cancelled in full, irrespective of how they were cancelled. The Railways had cancelled most of the tickets issued up to the nationwide lockdown. However, many passengers had cancelled their tickets before the lockdown announcement. With Saturday's announcement, the cancellation fees they had incurred would be refunded to them. Refunds related to e-tickets would be processed as usual. Customers who had bought physical tickets would be able to file their claims with respective officials within six months of the date of cancellation. The South Central Railways said it will not levy charges for demurrage or wharfage of goods and parcel freight traffic from March 22 and April 14. No charges will be levied for stacking, detention and ground usage charge in case of container traffic either. In the last six days, SCR has transported 10.17 million tonnes of cargo. The commodities range from coal for thermal stations to milk transported from Renigunta to Delhi.

In addition, SCR, has handed inter change operations of 961 freight trains originating from other zones and passing through its network, averaging to around 160 freight trains daily.

● THE SOUTH CENTRAL Railways said it will not levy charges for demurrage or wharfage of goods and parcel freight traffic from March 22 and April 14.

● NO CHARGES will be levied for stacking, detention and ground usage charge in case of container traffic either.

Lockdown struggles



A Hyderabad police officer seen distributing food to the homeless and needy in the Old City on Sunday. (Right) Women collect leftover vegetables which are strewn at a market after it closed due to the lockdown on Sunday. — P.SURENDRA, R.PAVAN



Better air quality due to lockdown

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

The upside of the lockdown to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus disease is cleaner and purer air, as carbon-emitting vehicles are largely off the roads. Air quality measurements show a drop in hydrocarbons such as toluene, benzene, and methane. In the Bolaram Industrial Development Authority (IDA) area, the recorded level of benzene was 16 micrograms/m³ (micrograms per metric cube) on March 22. Four days into the lockdown on Sunday, it had dropped to 0.12 ug/m³.

The highest drop in benzene levels was recorded at the Hyderabad Central University — from 4.5 ug/m³ on March 22, to 3.96 ug/m³. There has also been an appreciable drop in the level of toluene. The pollution monitor at Crisat (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics), which showed toluene levels at 7.59 mg/m³ a week ago stood at two mg/m³ on Sunday. The monitor at the Nehru Zoological Park showed the level of toluene has come down from 2.59 mg/m³ to 0.42 mg/m³.

● THE HIGHEST drop in benzene levels was recorded at the Hyderabad Central University — from 4.5 ug/m³ on March 22, to 3.66 ug/m³.

Dr D. Saha, an expert in air pollution who is also listed with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), said, "Since there are no or very few vehicles moving around, the amount of pollution from unburnt fuel has reduced drastically." "Though there has been a reduction in carbon pollution, Particulate Matter (PM) levels of both 10 and 2.5 micron size have fluctuated. The PM 10 level in the Bolaram IDA was 75.5 mg/m³ on March 22 and dropped to 71.29 mg/m³ on March 29. No doubt, the corporation is going through the herculean task of monitoring about 13,000 foreign returnees since March 1. In a rear guard action, the state government had sent home quarantine seals and indelible ink boxes after the stamping of foreign returnees is over. It has not instructed workers to also sanitise their own hands immediately. It is a different matter that these workers have not been provided hand gloves to

Home quarantine seals put civic officials at risk

8,753 individuals have been stamped with seals till date

MADHY DEEKSHITH I DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has been defeating its own noble intention of home quarantining foreign returnees. While marking returnees with quarantine seals, they are missing out on instructing the field-level workers about sanitising the home quarantine seals and indelible ink boxes after the stamping of foreign returnees is over. It has not instructed workers to also sanitise their own hands immediately. It is a different matter that these workers have not been provided hand gloves to



A picture of the GHMC workers hand with ink stains.

● THE CIVIC BODY has been successful in identifying the returnees and stamping home quarantine seals on their hands. However, the corporation has missed out on instructing the field-level workers about sanitising the home quarantine seals and indelible ink boxes after the stamping of foreign returnees is over.

minimise the risk of surface contact while stamping the foreign returnees. Sources said over 10,000 workers on field are involved in the exercise. Many of them even have stains of indelible ink, a proof of civic apathy. Even labour unions have confronted GHMC officials for risking the lives of workers fighting the spread of deadly Covid-19 disease. When Decan Chronicle queried GHMC commissioner D. S. Lokesh Kumar over the issue, he maintained that special teams

have been sanitising the hands of foreign returnees prior to stamping of home quarantine seal. He conceded that the corporation has been not sanitising the seals or the indelible ink boxes. When asked about the number of people home quarantined, Lokesh Kumar stated the number could only be revealed by the health department in their daily bulletin and the civic body cannot reveal the figures. Highly placed sources, however, say 8,753 individuals have been stamped with home quarantine seals till date. The stamping process is continuing though.

PASSPORTS OF 991 FOREIGN RETURNEEES SEIZED

JAYENDRA CHAITANYA I DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

In order to ensure that foreign returnees do not leave their houses, Rachakonda police seized passports of as many as 991 persons besides booking 65 cases against violators of lockdown stipulations.

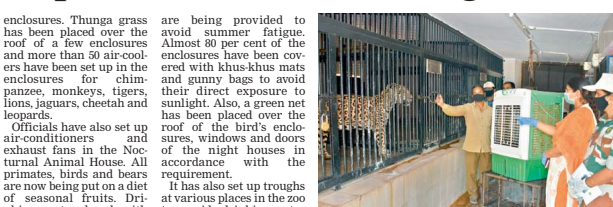
Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat said that as part of enforcing Covid-19 lockdown regulations, several persons found violating rules were booked under relevant Acts. On Saturday, 59 cases were booked against 70 persons and 29 vehicles were seized, while on Sunday six cases were booked at Jawahar Nagar and Neredmet against people selling liquor and for violating Section 144. "Across the commissionerate, out of 2,094 Covid-19 suspects, 1,834 were verified on Saturday. There are positive cases and 1,771 persons are home quarantined. So far, about 961 passports have been seized and handed over to district authorities," said the commissioner. He said that nearly 2,000 migrant labourers from Odisha and West Bengal were provided food and shelter on Sunday.

He appealed to the public to come forward and help the needy.

Zoo puts in place all summer arrangements

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH I DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

With summer round the corner and keeping in mind the heat it generates, officials at Nehru Zoological Park have made necessary arrangements to prevent summer heat afflict animals, birds and reptiles. These steps would be in place from March to mid-June. The steps taken up include sprinklers and small rain guns around animal enclosures. Also foggers have been installed in all the enclosures. Thunga grass has been placed over the roof of a few enclosures and more than 50 air-coolers have been set up in the enclosures for chimpanzees, monkeys, tigers, lions, jaguars, cheetah and leopards. Officials have also set up air-conditioners and exhaust fans in the Nehru Zoological Park. All primates, birds and bears are now being put on a diet of seasonal fruits. Drinking water laced with glucose, electoral powder and vitamin supplements are being provided to avoid summer fatigue. Almost 80 per cent of the enclosures have been covered with khush-khush mats and gunny bags to avoid their direct exposure to sunlight. Also, a green net has been placed over the roof of the bird's enclosures, windows and doors of the night houses in accordance with the requirement. It has also set up troughs at various places in the zoo to provide drinking water for the free-moving animals and birds.



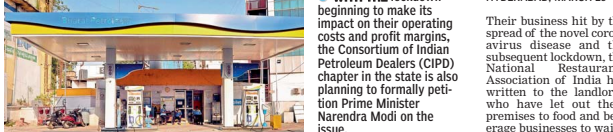
An air cooler set up for a leopard at the Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad.

VIRUS | DRAWBACKS Dealers urge Centre to grant one year let-off

Lockdown hits fuel outlets

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL I DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Petroleum dealers across the state have urged the Centre to grant a one-year exemption from bank interest on loans, as well as exemption of statutory fees. With the lockdown beginning to make its impact on their operating costs and profit margins, the Consortium of Indian Petroleum Dealers (CIPD) chapter in the state is also planning to formally petition Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue. "Telangana state has around 1,700 petrol bunking with Hyderabad accounting for around 600 of them. According to Mr Rajiv Amarnam, joint secretary of CIPD, who also runs a petrol pump at Bala Nagar, they sell about 10,000 litres of petrol a day and around 15,000 litres of diesel. "Since the lockdown, we are selling just about 10 per cent of the normal



Petrol bunk has few customers since the lockdown. — P.SURENDRA

petrol sale and between two and three per cent of diesel sales. And it is mostly ambulances that are mostly demanding diesel," he said. The group said the lockdown will result in losses because of reduced sales on one side and rentals, salaries to staff and power bills on the other. "The group said the lockdown will result in losses because of reduced sales on one side and rentals, salaries to staff and power bills on the other. The loss could vary between ₹2 lakh and ₹10 lakh, depending on the size of the pump and sales, he said.



Volunteers come together to help the deprived in Hyderabad.

GROUP TO HELP POOR DURING LOCKDOWN

ADITHYA CHUNDURU I DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

A group of Hyderabadis has come together to help the deprived during the lockdown. Over 300 of them, from IT employees to business owners, have formed a group called "Covid19Helpless". "They are going around town seeking donations for food and handing them to migrant labourers, slum dwellers and others who have been rendered penniless in the past few days. The group is coordinating on WhatsApp. The group came to be just four days ago. Abhinav, a restaurant owner and one of the main coordinators, said the group was seeking donations mostly of cooked food. They stopped taking dry rations after some of the people who got them tried to sell them instead of using it themselves. "We are accepting dry rations but we are cooking it ourselves before giving it away," he said.

"The group is getting a lot of help from people in areas like Gachibowli and Hydernagar. "We are trying to give food to each and every one of them," he said. For those seeking to donate, the volunteers can be reached at 758911111, 9856423333, 8000805924, 9849015960, 9849128400

● THEY ARE going around town seeking donations for food and handing them to migrant labourers, slum dwellers and others.

Hoteliers asked to waive rent for now

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Their business hit by the spread of the novel coronavirus disease and the subsequent lockdown, the National Restaurants Association of India has written to the landlords who have let out their premises to food and beverage businesses to waive rent for the period. "The association said in the letter "Our industry is going through an unprecedented crisis that threatens our very existence. We are fighting a very grim battle for our survival and we seek your immediate support. NATIONAL RESTAURANTS ASSOCIATION had as this one." "As long-standing business partners, today we seek your urgent help and support in these troubled times. While this shutdown may continue for a month or two, we will take many more months post that to get back on our feet and we will not be able to sail through this period smoothly without your support."

SHORT TAKES

Cops to identify the victims

FROM PAGE 1

In another incident on Sunday, at around 7 am, locals at a temple near Angadi Bazar called the police about an elderly man lying unconscious. A team reached the spot and found him dead. The body was shifted to OGH mortuary. Cases have been registered into the incidents and information about the deceased is also shared to find their identity, police said.

Eflu VC launches fund

Hyderabad: English and Foreign University Vice-Chancellor Prof. E. Suresh Kumar donated Rs 10 lakh to the EFLU University Social Responsibility Endowment Fund, an initiative he introduced in 2017.

Prof. Sudhakar, Director, USR, also deposited ₹25,000 and some staffers joined this endeavour. Under USR, the university will offer online educational resources, along with EnglishPro, a mobile app, for the benefit of the youth, that officials say will be launched soon.

ASPIRING PILOT INJURED IN ACCIDENT

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

A 23-year-old aspiring pilot at Begumpet airport, who was on his way to the city from Chittoor district, met with a road accident at Chetanpalli bridge in Shadnagar.

The biker, Anil Kumar, started his journey from Madanapalle Saturday night. According to Cyberabad traffic police, the accident occurred at around 4.45 am when the bike rumbled into a median.

The biker, who was wearing a helmet, fractured his left leg and received multiple injuries on his limbs. Police rushed him to a hospital where he is undergoing treatment.

"Due to the empty roads, riders tend to drive at high speeds and lose control," said Cyberabad DCP (traffic) S.M. Vijay Kumar.

STATE HEALTH DEPT ISSUES GUIDELINES

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

The detailed guidelines issued by the Telangana health state department on sanitation and hygiene are:

- No leaving the house under any circumstance;
- Wash hands thoroughly and often, with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Use disposable paper towels or use dedicated cloth towel and replace them when wet. Wash reusable items with household detergent thoroughly;
- Avoid sharing household items e.g. dishes, drink utensils, towels, bedding or other items;
- Wear a surgical mask at all times. The mask should be changed every 6-8 hours and disposed off, and not reused;
- Masks must be decontaminated using ordinary bleach solution (5% or sodium hypochlorite solution (1%) and then disposed either by burning or deep burial;
- If symptoms appear (cough/fever/difficulty in breathing), he or she should immediately inform nearest health centre or call 104.
- Caregiver should wear a medical mask fitted tightly to face when in same room, and especially during movement;
- Avoid direct contact with suspect;
- Use disposable gloves for all activities related to suspect, decontaminate and dispose;
- No visitors allowed inside the house;
- Frequently touched surfaces, including bathroom and toilet surfaces, must be cleaned and disinfected at least once daily;
- In case person being quarantined becomes symptomatic, all his close contacts will be home quarantined (for 14 days) and followed up for an additional 14 days; or till report of such case turns out negative on lab testing.

Stopped on way to Delhi



Youth from Delhi and other places from North India, who came to Hyderabad to sell clothes, were stopped by the police as they were returning to their native places on foot, at the Telangana Secretariat, on Sunday. — P. SURENDRA

Bumper paddy, maize crop; promise procurement from doorstep: KCR

SA. ISHAQUI I DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Sunday assured farmers that the state government shall ensure procurement of their entire produce of paddy and maize from their doorstep.

"It is on a happy note I say that Telangana has seen unprecedented produce of 1.05 crore tonnes of paddy and 14.50 lakh tonnes of maize in current Rabi season. Since formation of new state six years ago, this has happened for the first time. But it is unfortunate that we are in a critical phase of Covid-19 threat," he said while addressing a press conference in Pragati Bhawan.

Mr Rao spoke after reviewing arrangements made for procurement of farm produce with district collectors and officials of the departments concerned. He said that in view of the lockdown of the entire country, it is

obvious the state will not get its share of the Central tax devolution. The state government would be constrained to regulate the salaries of state government employees and stop salaries to ministers, legislators and Legislative Council members.

Despite this critical situation, the state government has released ₹25,000 crore to the civil supplies department for procurement of paddy and ₹3,200 crore for procurement of maize.

Mr Rao said that procurement will be taken up in controlled manner and every farmer will be issued a coupon with a procurement date and the amount their produce fetches, which will be paid online. He said if farmers venture to approach procurement centres at villages, then it can't be helped if they get beaten up by the police for violating the lockdown restrictions. While appealing to farm-



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao receives a cheque from DGP M. Mahendar Reddy towards the DGP Relief Fund to fight Covid-19. The state IPS cadre had donated their day's salary for the fund. Chief secretary Somesh Kumar is also seen.

ers not to worry about procurement of their produce due to the lockdown, Mr Rao said that all market yards were closed and around 850 staff of marketing department will come to villages to procure the produce. Referring to shortage of

skilled workers to load harvesters, which are tractor-mounted, he said that the government was making arrangements to mobilise them from towns to villages to complete harvesting of crops as paddy and maize had ripened in the fields

across over 50 lakh acres. He said the Chief Secretary was in coordination with Bihar government to mobilise hamalis to transport procured paddy to rice mills and then to warehouses of the Food Corporation of India.

2 alcoholics try to end life for booze

DC CORRESPONDENTS HYDERABAD/KOTHA GUDUM, MARCH 29

A 40-year-old alcoholic attempted suicide by slitting his throat allegedly frustrated over non-availability of alcohol because of the lockdown.

Identifying the person as Raju, police said he hails from Kodangal and had come to the city in search of livelihood. Over the past few days, with all shops being shut, he began craving for a drink, which led him to desperation, said Saidabad sub-inspector M. Prasad.

He added, "On Saturday, he began behaving strangely and quarrelled with his wife. Sunday morning, he slit his throat in front of his wife and two children." He was rushed to a hospital where he is recovering.

The report from Kothagudem said one R. Rambabu tried to end his life at Model Colony in Aswarapet in Bhadrachalam district on Sunday. Rambabu, a small farmer, used to consume alcohol every day. He tried to buy in black but failed to get any liquor. Out of frustration he tried to kill himself.

Hijra-phobic posters seen near Ameerpet Metro stn

ADITYA CHUNDURU HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

A few bizarre, transphobic posters appeared at some places near the Ameerpet Metro Rail station and elsewhere in the vicinity. Written mostly in Telugu, these posters urged the general public to not allow 'kojis' and 'hijras' (derogatory terms for transgender persons) near their shops.

"If you talk to them or have sex with them, you will have coronavirus. If you come across them, either hit them and shoot them away or call 100 to

appealed to police and the GHMC to get such posters removed. SR Nagar station house officer S. Murali Krishna said that he had received complaints about these posters in the morning.

"We sent a team to check for them but we couldn't find the poster," he said, adding that it was possible they were removed by people who put them up after the tweet went viral.

"We are looking at CCTV footage to identify people who put the posters up. We will take action once we identify them," he added.

He asserted that there was no question of shortage of essential commodities until April 14, when the lockdown ends. He said 177 mobile farmer hazzards had been set in 331 areas to prevent any shortage.

The minister said that the government would take appropriate measures to avoid any complications. Mr Niranjan Reddy maintained that there are sufficient stocks of onion and potato. They would be made available on

AIR helps starving migrant labourers

JAYENDRA CHAITANYA IDC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

A group of 14 migrant labourers from Uttarakhand living in Hyderabad, who have been starving for the last three days due to the lockdown, received help from the Narsingi police after they attempted to talk to Prime Minister Narendra Modi through the Mann Ki Baat programme, thanks to quick action by the All India Radio (AIR) staff.

On Sunday, Jales, a migrant labourer from Uttarakhand, called up AIR Hyderabad and asked to be connected to the PM during his Mann Ki Baat which was being broadcast at that time.

He told AIR that he and his friends and other labourers from Uttarakhand had come to the city to seek a livelihood. For three days, they have been unable to earn any money and were starving.

The AIR staff shared the phone number of Jales with his friends and other labourers from Uttarakhand who responded and provided food. For three days, they have been unable to earn any money and were starving.

necessary arrangements for their survival during the lockdown.

"We are from Uttarakhand. Due to the lockdown, we are in a hopeless state. With no options left, we approached All India Radio so that we can talk to the PM and request help. Now, we have got food for 14 people from Narsingi police. If we are provided with transport to go home, we will be happier," Jales told the AIR staff.

I am very happy that there is someone to listen to the problems of the common man," he added. "Venugopal has been constable at the Narsingi police station said, "We got a call from AIR that some labourers are suffering for three days without food, and a number was shared with us. Our team city to seek a livelihood. For three days, they have been unable to earn any money and were starving.

Narsingi SI T. Sridhar, the AIR staff supervised the arrangements of food for needy people, told *Deccan Chronicle*. "There are approximately 400 people at the Narsingi police station said, "We got a call from AIR that some labourers are suffering for three days without food, and a number was shared with us. Our team city to seek a livelihood. For three days, they have been unable to earn any money and were starving.

KCR hopes for no cases by April

FROM PAGE 1

"This should come as good news for the state," he concluded. As of now, there are 58 patients undergoing treatment and their condition was stable, except one patient in his seventies, who is critical and has other ailments and their condition is not stable, the CM added.

Mr Rao explained that as many as 1,859 suspects would be discharged from quarantine on March 30, 1,440 on March 31, 1,461 on April 1, 1,887 suspects on April 2, 1,476 on April 3, 1,453 on April 4, 914 on April 5, 454 on April 6, and remaining 397 suspects on April 7.

Mr Rao hoped that if there were no new positive cases in coming days,

then the state can certainly have a sigh of relief after April 7. He said that as a threat of Covid-19 through foreign returns was minimised after cancellation of all international flights, now the state machinery was concentrating on containing the spread of virus

too, the CM added. Maintaining that people of the state were showing a remarkable discipline in observing the lockdown and maintaining social distance, barring a disgruntled few, Chief Minister urged people to continue self-restraint, control and discipline till April 14, so that Telangana state could be safe from the pandemic.

Blackmarketers will be punished

REDDY SRINIVAS REDDY IDC HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Agriculture minister S. Niranjan Reddy has directed marketing department officials to take stern action against traders who are hiking rates of vegetables during the lockdown period in the state.

He asserted that there was no question of shortage of essential commodities until April 14, when the lockdown ends. He said 177 mobile farmer hazzards had been set in 331 areas to prevent any shortage.

The minister said that the government would take appropriate measures to avoid any complications.

Mr Niranjan Reddy maintained that there are sufficient stocks of onion and potato. They would be made available on

demand. He said 6,500 quintals of onion had been imported from Maharashtra. The government faced difficulty in importing potato from Uttar Pradesh and other states due to the lockdown but appropriate measures are being taken to get over this issue.

The minister advised vendors to obtain vehicle permits from their market authorities for transporting fruits and vegetables. He appreciated the steps taken by officials of the marketing department to ensure that all vegetables available to the people at reasonable prices.

Mr Niranjan Reddy advised officers and staff not to neglect their duty of keeping markets clean, so as to avoid the spread of coronavirus.

The minister also asked them to take personal precautions to avoid getting infected.

Farmers fear delay will result in crop damage Farmers for timely purchase

FROM PAGE 1

"On two acres of land, I managed to produce 90 quintals of corn. At harvest time, I am firstly facing a severe scarcity of labour. Next, all market yards have been closed due to lockdown. I can't transport my produce to government designated places," Mr Somidi said.

He said, "Although the state government have declared a minimum support price (MSP) of ₹1,750 per quintal for corn, private traders are offering ₹1,250, or around ₹500 less. How can I sell my produce for so low a price?" He said, "since we farmers are facing difficulty in selling our produce at any

market, we have kept it on the agriculture field itself and are clueless about our future."

"If the government assures us to procure produce, it should do so on time, otherwise the crop could get spoiled. Also, with rumours of spreading of this virus through chicken and eggs has impacted the purchase of corn, leading to a huge drop in prices."

Due to this, farmers had to suffer a loss of at least ₹20,000 per acre of maize, said Mr Ramu, adding that cultivators of mango are going to face huge losses. "Flowering of most mangoes didn't happen on time and now due to lockdown, we going to face lots

of problems," he said. In the memorandum submitted to the government, Rythu Swaraja Vedika requested that rabi crops like Bengal gram, red gram and paddy are ready for harvest, responsibility to procure them at village-level must be given to farmer producer companies.

With cooperation of marketing department, necessary funds and infrastructure must be provided to cooperatives, self-help groups and FPOs. In villages where farmers are growing flowers, they must be procured at a large level and necessary arrangements need to be made to send them to the market.

CENTRE SUSPECTS TJ MEN FOR COVID SPREAD

FROM PAGE 1

While two of these patients had visited Delhi, the third was a contact of one of these two patients. The patient had travelled to Ajmer in Rajasthan and was tested positive for the novel coronavirus disease after returning to Andhra Pradesh.

It may be recalled that 10 Indonesian religious preachers, who were first found in Karimnagar town, subsequently tested positive for Covid-19. This group of 10, was among hundreds of other preachers who had gathered at the Tablighi Jamaat in the old city of Delhi.

PRIVATE TEACHERS TO BEAR BRUNT

FROM PAGE 1

Sheikh Shabbir Ali, founder of Telangana Private Teachers Forum, said that private teachers were among the worst hit by the lockdown. "Very few of them get decent salaries and rarely do they have savings. Eighty per cent of them don't have bank accounts."

According to current academic calendar, if schools reopen after the summer vacations in June, the teachers won't see their salaries until the end of the year. Central and state governments have asked employers to not cut salaries but unless this is enforced, private teachers will have no respite," he said.

The garment and textile industry too is looking at layoffs in the long run, though they are unlikely to happen immediately. Mr Pawan Bansal, member of TG Garments Manufacturing Wholesalers Association, has pledged to pay all employees for March. "However, if the lockdown is prolonged by even a few days, companies will start bleeding. After that, they will have no choice but to let people go," he said.

SHORT TAKES

BJP MLA FALLS ILL, SPARKS PANIC IN MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 29

BJP MLA Satyanarayan Adiyasi showed symptoms of Covid-19, giving a jolt to other legislators in the party. He has been kept in home quarantine. He had attended the recent BJP legislative party meeting to elect Mr Chouhan as its leader. He also attended the CM's oath taking ceremony here a few days back. In another development, a security guard of outgoing chief minister Kamal Nath showed symptoms of Covid-19. He caught cold and fever and was kept in home isolation.

Meanwhile, seven fresh cases of coronavirus positive have been reported in Madhya Pradesh in last 12 hours, taking the tally of confirmed cases in the state to 34. The seven fresh cases were found to have no travel history giving rise to apprehensions that community spreading of the virus may have begun in MP. In a significant development, a Covid-19 patient being treated in a government hospital in Gwalior has recovered.

In Chhatisgarh, the state government has declared that it will establish 100-bed hospitals in each district. The state exclusively for coronavirus patients.

COLLECTORS, SPs MUST ENFORCE LOCKDOWN: CENTRE

FROM PAGE 1

In Delhi, the number of Covid-19 cases has gone up to 72, with 23 new cases reported Sunday. Punjab reported 38 cases, while 33 have so far been detected in Haryana, including 14 foreigners. Madhya Pradesh has 29 cases, Jammu and Kashmir 31, West Bengal 18, Andhra Pradesh 19 and Ladakh 13.

Bihar has 18 cases, Chandigarh eight and Chhattisgarh reported seven cases so far. Uttarakhand has seven cases, including a foreigner. Himachal Pradesh and Odisha have reported three cases each. Nine cases have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Goa has reported five coronavirus cases. Puducherry, Mizoram and Manipur have reported one case each.

On Sunday, the Centre issued fresh directions to all states and Union territories to strictly enforce the three-week lockdown. During a video conference with chief ministers and DGPs, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba and Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla directed that the district collectors and SPs should be made responsible for the implementation of the lockdown directions. The top Central officials told the chiefs of police and civil administrations of all states to make adequate arrangements for food and shelter for poor and needy people.

WOMAN GIVES BIRTH IN TAMIL NADU COVID WARD

DC CORRESPONDENT KANYAKUMARI, MARCH 29

A pregnant woman admitted to the Covid-19 ward at the Kanyakumari government medical college hospital (KGMCH) gave birth to a baby girl on Sunday.

The 27-year-old returned home from Dubai on March 20 and was admitted in the coronavirus isolation ward at KGMCH in Nagercoil, where she delivered the baby at around 1.40 am on Sunday.

Her condition is said to be stable though the baby born in 34 weeks is pre-term and is kept under continuous monitoring, according to hospital sources. Swab and blood samples of both mother and the baby were sent for testing in Tirunelveli.

Meanwhile, a 54-year-old man, complaining of a dry cough, who was while in the isolation ward at the hospital in Nagercoil, died within two hours of his admission. He was brought to KGMCH in an unconscious state in the few hours of Sunday and was said to be suffering from diabetes and myocardial infarction. He was undergoing long-term treatment at a private hospital in Madurai. The Kanyakumari collector, Prakash M. Wadner, however said that the district has reported no corona-positive cases and all the seven who died in a week, till Sunday morning, tested negative for coronavirus.

Modi sorry for India lockdown

Nation in a 'war-like' situation, says PM

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 29



Affirming that India is in a 'war-like situation' against the dreaded coronavirus, that the country would 'win the battle', Prime Minister Narendra Modi apologised to all Indians for the difficulties they are facing due to the three-week national lockdown that began on March 25 but said there was no other way but to take this harsh decision that was necessary as it is a 'fight between life and death.' He said the lockdown would keep the country safe.

"I apologise to all countrymen. I know you will forgive me. This decision has led to difficulties, especially for the poor. Some must be angry. But there was no other way."

NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

Unfortunately, some are breaking it. They don't understand the gravity of the situation. Don't play with your lives." He further said, "The decisions taken (by countries) have never been seen before in the world. India's steps will be to adhere to the lockdown but Indians in future will break all barriers and march ahead. We have to win. We will win."

Striking a philosophical note, Mr Modi said the duration of the lockdown was a time to "look within ourselves and maintain emotional distances" when it strikes people.

"Sounding a word of caution to those defying the lockdown for frivolous reasons, Mr Modi said, "You have to save everyone by following the lockdown. It is a national emergency. Lakshman rekha. Don't break it, the law."

Renew your interactions, reduce emotional distances," he said. The Prime Minister also told the people not to misbehave with those who had risked their lives to help the nation fight the fight against the dreaded coronavirus. He said those who had been abroad had been quarantined following norms but that they should not be stigmatised. He also exhorted people to take care of the poor and hungry in these difficult times, saying it is "part of our culture."

Mr Modi also praised the efforts of the "frontline soldiers," including doctors, nurses, health workers and sanitation workers, in the war against the coronavirus, and also saluted the courage and resilience shown by survivors who had been infected but have recovered.

In this context, the PM spoke to an IT professional from Hyderabad Rangamma Teja who had been infected with the virus while on a work-related trip to Italy but was subsequently treated in a hospital in Hyderabad. "I recovered after two weeks but it was scary," he told Mr Modi.

Agra-based businessman Ashok Kapoor told Mr Modi how his two sons and son-in-law had been infected while on a business trip to Italy, leading to his entire family being infected on their return but that they had all recovered. Delhi-based Dr Nitish Gupta told Mr Modi that doctors were upbeat and deployed in critical care units to fight coronavirus "like the Army on the border."

PMO to guide 11 panels in India's economic recovery

DC CORRESPONDENT KANYAKUMARI, MARCH 29

The government on Sunday constituted 11 empowered groups to suggest measures to ramp up healthcare, put the economy back on track and reduce misery of people as quickly as possible post 28 March lockdown to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

These committees looking after various aspects will work under the overall guidance of P.K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, sources said.

The sources further said that these groups have been set up under the Disaster Management Act, and the Department of Expenditure has issued special instructions to enable expeditious decision making in procurement matters.

The panel on the 'Economy and Welfare' headed by Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty has been tasked to address the concerns of various sectors, including both formal and informal segments of the economy - hit hard by coronavirus outbreak and subsequent lockdown. The panel is expected to suggest various relief measures to put the economy back on track, as soon as possible, the sources said. Special emphasis will have to be welfare schemes for the poor who have suffered a lot on account of the lockdown, they said, adding poor and vulnerable section of the society has been the key focus of the government and top priority will be given to deal with the challenges before them in the coming days. The groups have been empowered to formulate plans and to take all necessary steps for their time-bound implementation, the sources said.

Besides, two other working groups under the leadership of Niti Aayog member V.K. Paul and Environment Secretary C.K. Mishra will work on preparedness for medical emergency, seamless supply of medicine, medical equipment and hospital availability. They have been entrusted with the task of mapping of hospitals across the country and medical facility of public sector undertakings and other government agencies, including police forces and army roped in to come up with emergency situation, post lockdown.

In addition to this, the

THESE GROUPS have been set up under the Disaster Management Act, and the Department of Expenditure has issued special instructions to enable expeditious decision making in procurements

panel will also focus on augmentation of trained medical professionals and capacity building. Suggestions are also solicited on increasing capacity for manufacturing of ventilators and other medical equipment. Research and Development in the medical field is another focus area for the panel, they added. Committee under V.K. Paul and C.K. Mishra are expected to ease out burden of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which is currently doing heavy lifting in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis. At the same time, they will do in-depth study on protective gear to be used by public to ensure infection is contained post April 14.

Logistics will be another critical area which would be looked by a working group for ensuring movement of goods, medicine, medical equipment, doctors and other services. Each group will have about 6 members with one officer from the PMO and Cabinet Secretariat, but that there is a full coordination and suggestions accepted are implemented without any delay. In all about 20 secretaries of various departments as well as ministries, and 40 other officials have started working on various issues and come up with measures at the earliest, the sources said.

— PTT



A drone is used to spray disinfectant to mitigate the spread of coronavirus at Marina Beach during a nationwide lockdown, in Chennai on Sunday. — PTT

2 Army men test positive for virus

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, MARCH 29

The Indian Army has two new cases of Covid-19, one a colonel-rank doctor and a JCO testing positive on Sunday for coronavirus. This takes the total number of Covid-19 positive cases in the army to three.

Army authorities have, however, denied that a soldier with the Territorial Army also tested coronavirus positive.

The Indian Army has cancelled leave of all its soldiers due to the coronavirus threat looming large.

₹500 CRORE will be collectively provided by the defence ministry from various wings to fight coronavirus

The colonel-rank doctor at Army Command Hospital in Kolkata had tested positive after he had recently travelled to New Delhi. He developed fever on March 24 and breathlessness on March 28.

His sample has tested positive for Covid-19. The officer has been put under quarantine and all precautions are being taken. His colleagues have been quarantined as well.

The other coronavirus positive is that of the JCO in Dehradun.

The first Covid-19 case of the Indian Army was that of a jawan from Ladakh Scouts.

The jawan, who was on leave, got the infection from his father, who had returned from Iran last month and had also tested positive.

The jawan was helping the family during the quarantine of his father.

Centre flies in 275 more from virus-affected Iran

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

A fresh batch of 275 evacuees from Iran arrived on Sunday morning at Jodhpur.

Following procedure, preliminary screening of the evacuees upon arrival was conducted at Jodhpur airport by medical teams from civil administration and Army.

THEY WILL BE kept at the quarantine facility for 14 days and will be tested for coronavirus. If they are found Covid-19 negative, they will be discharged.

Army authorities, as part of Operation Namaste, have created medical camps, which has all amenities and is fully geared to accommodate all the evacuees and provide them with requisite medical and administrative support during their quarantine period.

Some 277 evacuees from corona virus-hit Iran were brought on Wednesday to the Indian army's quarantine facility in Jodhpur. The earlier batch has settled down comfortably and are being regularly monitored by the army medical teams.

Defence forces are gearing up their facilities to help civilian authorities in combating Covid-19.

There are five hospitals across the army, navy and air force which can carry out Covid-19 tests, including command hospital air force in Bangalore, armed forces medical college in Pune, army M&R hospital in Delhi, army command hospital at Idhampur and Lucknow. Six additional hospitals are also being equipped shortly with the resources to begin testing.

Presently, 28 service hospitals have been earmarked as Covid-19 hospitals for managing only Covid-19 cases. This will include armed forces patients as well as civilian patients transferred from state health authorities, in case their capacity is overwhelmed.

PRELIMINARY screening of the evacuees upon arrival was conducted at the Jodhpur airport by medical teams from civil administration and Army

THEY WILL BE kept at the quarantine facility for 14 days and will be tested for coronavirus. If they are found Covid-19 negative, they will be discharged.

Army authorities, as part of Operation Namaste, have created medical camps, which has all amenities and is fully geared to accommodate all the evacuees and provide them with requisite medical and administrative support during their quarantine period.

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Railway resumes parcel van service

New Delhi, March 29: Indian Railways has decided to run parcel vans to keep up uninterrupted flow of essential commodities in the country during the ongoing lockdown to contain COVID-19 outbreak, officials said Sunday.

By suspending passenger trains from March 22, the Railways had also by default suspended parcel vans attached to them carrying perishable items, mostly daily essential needs like vegetables, daals, pulses, and fish.

Officials said special Parcel express trains shall run on the New Delhi-Guwahati. New Delhi-Mumbai, New Delhi-Kalyan, New Delhi-Horwarh, Chandigarh-Jaipur and Moga-Changarsari routes. They said it was necessary to resume parcel van services because essential



Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation staff cooks food for the homeless and the poor at Patna on Sunday. — PTT

commodities were in short supply in local markets as most of the labour engaged in loading, unloading had returned to their villages owing to the lockdown. With ample availability of parcel vans, sitting-cum-luggage rakes and locomotives

GOYAL: RAILWAYS DONATED ₹151 CR TO FIGHT VIRUS

New Delhi, March 29: The Railways Ministry Secretary Piyush Goyal said on Sunday "Following PM's call, I, Suresh Angadi, will donate one month's salary, i.e. ₹151 crore to PM-CARES fund."

The Centre has set up a public charitable trust in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. The PM chairs trust with the defence minister, home minister and FM as members.

WORK ON 1,000 BED HOSPITAL ON IN FULL SWING

DC CORRESPONDENT DUBLANESWAR, MARCH 29

The construction work on India's biggest hospital to treat Covid-19 patients is going on in full-swing in Bhubaneswar. It will be ready by April 1. The facility will have 1,000 beds - 500 beds at KIIMS and 500 beds at Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital.

FAITH MATTERS

Faithful asked not to take part in ceremonies in view of Covid lockdown

Church to livestream Holy Week rituals

Kochi, March 29: The liturgical celebrations of the Holy Week from April 5 would be low-key and restricted in view of the lockdown and would be livestreamed in view of the lockdown as part of measures to prevent spread of coronavirus, the Syro-Malabar Church has said. "We are in the 21-day lockdown announced by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The celebra-

CELEBRATIONS of the Holy Week should be limited in respect of curbs imposed by the state, the Syro-Malabar Church said

authorities," the Syro-Malabar Church said. "On the basis of the restrictions imposed for the assembly and movement of people, to contain this pandemic, it is decided that the rites of the Holy Week should be celebrated without the presence of the faithful," guidelines issued in respect of the restriction imposed by the state government and the civil

streaming of the liturgical celebrations should be done for the benefit of the faithful," according to the guidelines issued on Saturday. The church said the ritual of washing of feet is to be skipped on Maundy Thursday. Urging the faithful to limit the breaking of bread within individual families, it directed that there should be no common breaking of the bread

either in ward groups or as a community. "On Good Friday no public veneration of the Cross or Way of the Cross should be held. These may be scheduled on a later occasion; like September 14," for instance, the influential Syro-Malabar Church said. The Blessing of Water need not be held and this can be done at a later time, it said. "The Easter rituals need not be held at

night. Offering mass in the morning will suffice," it said and added that the Holy Week should be a time of incessant prayers in families. Directing the Bishops to celebrate the liturgies in the Cathedral and the priests in their respective parishes, the guidelines, however, insisted that care should be taken that there are not more than five people at any time. — PTT

DECCAN Chronicle

30 MARCH 2020

Centre must reach out to the last man on the road

India has started feeling the tremors of the nationwide lockdown, the shock and awe strategy the Narendra Modi government put in place to fight the deadly Covid-19. Lakhs of migrant labourers in various states, but predominantly those who were employed in the national capital, have started a long march home. But home, in most cases, is hundreds of kilometres away.

With an uncertain future ahead of them, and despairing about the eventual duration of the lockdown, these people do not want to stay where they are, as wanted of them by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he declared the lockdown. They are worried about their families back home, who are also impacted by the measure. Men, women and children have set out on foot to cover distances of 200 km, 400 km and even 600 km as no mode of transport is available.

Saturday saw the worst crowding of people defying the rules of social distancing with milling crowds taking over bus stations in Delhi looking for vehicles that will take them home. About a thousand people came out on the road in Kottayam in Kerala on Sunday, wanting to go home. Government officials and people's representatives should take the last man, ensured them of essentials and sent them back to the camps where they had been put up. But their demand remains the same — let us go home.

All this exposes cracks in the harebrained decision of the government to declare the lockdown without assessing its impact on millions of poor, including migrant labour, in the country. The essence of the call was to remain indoors. It was fine for the people who have an assured supply of daily bread, but made a cruel demand on the people who have to eke out a living on a daily basis. And it looks like the government's relief package will not salvage the situation as men lives not by bread alone. Worries about the safety and health of their families back home would continue to wrench their hearts. They will become restive, and no use of force would be sufficient to contain them.

The Union government must address the issue comprehensively. It should work with state governments to keep the migrant labour back, after making them aware of the gravity of the situation and assuring them of their well-being for the period of the lockdown. It should take the last man in the camp into confidence. Next, the government must reassure them that the relief package it announced last week will take care of the immediate needs of their near and dear ones.

The Union government must also help state governments design and implement a comprehensive welfare policy for migrant labour which could outlast the lockdown period. As most states are cash-strapped, it should also consider sharing the financial burden. Urgent and decisive measures are called for, lest the matter go out of control and defeat the very purpose of the lockdown. We cannot have more people dying of disease mitigation steps than of the disease itself.

When leaders fail

The way leaders guide people through this coronavirus crisis matters. At a time when those at the helm at the national and state levels are being challenged like never before, the curious case of the Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan comes into focus as he presides over large state in solitary splendour. He is a chief minister without a trace of a Cabinet. He was sworn in, almost furtively, on the night before the national lockdown when even the one man who made possible his fourth term — Congress rebel Jayprakash Scindia — was not able to be present.

Toppling elected governments may rank high on the BJP's political play-book, but MP came at a critical time when the country and the world was just beginning to realise the enormity of the crisis. The timing of the swearing-in apart, it did not seem to have struck the national BJP leadership that either a caretaker rule by the Congress CM, Kamal Nath, or a spell of President's Rule during the lockdown would have been the more politically correct and prudent course of action. Instead, what was floating triumphantism of the CM as seen in Chouhan's smiles at the investiture.

Globally too the leadership is being stretched like never before and parts of the western world, which are now the epicentre of the virus, are showing cracks at the very top. A British Prime Minister who was disdainful of the emerging crisis himself caught the virus. That is no fault of his except that as a leader in isolation he is now a forlorn figure much like Chouhan presiding as CM in MP. Their differing in the face of a crisis leads to governments failing to put together the coherent responses most needed in an emergency. Strong leadership may have helped contain the virus early with pro-active screening and testing but none in power in many parts of the free world could drive the bureaucracy to counter this public health catastrophe. Too many have failed when they should have been leading decisively.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Dilip Cherian
Dilipi Ka Babu

Ashwani Lohani babu in demand; situations vacant; official disregard

He may have left behind a mixed legacy at Air India, but Ashwani Lohani is clearly a babe in demand. After heading the helm of the now defunct carrier twice, and having been chairman of the Railway Board, amongst his other accomplishments, some thought that Mr Lohani's successful run as a bureaucrat was over.

But the Jagan Reddy government in Andhra Pradesh has now appointed him chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation, with the rank of a Cabinet minister.

It is Mr Lohani's stints at Air India that brought him most attention, especially since he had no previous background in aviation, having been an officer of the Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers.

At Air India, he smoothed ruffled feathers of disgruntled employees,

and expanded and repositioned the airline. His legacy would have endured had he stayed on to oversee its privatisation and ensured a smooth transition to the private sector.

But clearly, his administrative skills have also endeared him to the Andhra CM. He is expected to harness the tourism potential of the state. He also happens to be the second former babe brought in from Delhi to the state, after former finance secretary Subhash Chandra Garg. Of course, this is a matter of consternation to those ruling the roost locally.

The appointment of IAS, IPS and other Group A services officers through promotions declined by 50 per cent between 2016 and 2018. A Lok Sabha query revealed that the number of appointments through promotion was 2,918 in 2018. Comparably, it was 5,583 in 2016 and 5,944 in 2017.

However, no one seems to know the reason behind this drastic dip in promotions. According to sources, Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) officials say that the reduction could be the result of ongoing court cases, fewer retirements, etc. but these reasons are insufficient. Especially when we consider another fact: there are a massive number of vacancies in the Centre.

One reason for this, it is being said, is that promotions from deputy secretary level to secretary level are made by committees and selection panels. There are delays in meetings of these committees, obviously no promotions can be made. Whatever it is, it is indeed a confusing situation.

Bureaucrats, by definition, are meant to follow rules and make others follow them, too. But not here, not even when the

entire country is locked down and is making a valiant effort to fight the Covid-19 outbreak which is spreading and has claimed several lives. While the government is strictly enforcing quarantine, social distancing and other methods to check the spread of the epidemic, some bureaucrats are bending the rules to accommodate the wishes of some "VIPs" and their ilk.

Those in know cite the recent big business family from Mumbai who arrived at the airport from the UK, were received at the tarmac and promptly whisked away to their home. They are following a routine for all passengers who arrive in the country from abroad. Then a relative of a former minister meeting a minister's emissary at the airport, flouting all rules.

But in terms of sheer officious callousness and stupidity, this has to be West Bengal's first confirmed

case of Covid-19 has forced senior officials to go into self-quarantine. Apparently, the son of a senior official in the state Home department returned from London, but the youth's mother, a West Bengal civil service officer promoted to the Indian Administrative Service, still chose to attend office, meet top officials, and go to meetings while her son didn't appear for tests, and rather chose to skip them, until much later when the suspicion was confirmed.

This reckless behaviour has now placed top bureaucrats — including the director-general of police, the home secretary, and some other senior IPS and IAS officers — in isolation, at a time when all hands are required on the deck to fight the virus that threatens us all.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipcherian@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/dilipcherian). Let's multiply the effect.



Shameen stir recast in tune with Covid times

Subhani
Saeed Naqvi
Wide Angle

Apity that television cameras were not on to record the elegance with which the protesters at Shaheen Bagh pulled back the reins, paused and recast their movement to harmonise with the requirements of public health in view of the pandemic and the rule of law, in order not to be foul of Section 144 and the curfew. The banners, graffiti and flags are now on the walls and balconies facing the protest site. Even the wayside library that had sprouted nearby has moved to a balcony. The Shaheen Bagh protesters against the anti-CAA are now on the walls and balconies facing the protest site. Even the wayside library that had sprouted nearby has moved to a balcony. The Shaheen Bagh protesters against the anti-CAA are now on the walls and balconies facing the protest site.

The latest to grapple on that theme have been two senior members of the Indian Foreign Service, a story I have done on recently. Deh Mukharji, of the 1964 batch, a former high commissioner to Bangladesh, in an article in a leading newspaper, applies the image of the falcon, which is what Shaheen means, to the Shaheen Bagh movement. The bird that soared — is his preferred simile. This invites a riposte from Kanwal Sibal, 1966 batch, and a former foreign secretary. "Incidentally, falcons are predators," says Mr Sibal's riposte on the IFS blog. So unabashed is he on the secularism-nationalism debate that Mr Mukharji feels constrained to challenge him, rapier in hand, on the very same blog.

What should a discerning non-Hindu's stance be towards conversations of this nature which are taking place at numerous levels with a frequency gathering in momentum? First, consider the evidence. Justice S. Muralidhar of the Delhi High Court is transferred within hours of his criticizing

'Muslim women have liberated themselves from the taboos that kept them confined to their homes... Veiled women have been able to look their interlocutor in the eye...'

success of the Shaheen Bagh that you extol, and of course, Mamata Banerjee's ravings. Mr Mukharji is determined not to let this go unchallenged. "I am disturbed by your comment about cutting off our Northeast by Muslims who form a majority in the Chicken's Neck area." Having been posted in Bangladesh, Mr Mukharji knows the vulnerability of Chicken's Neck. He therefore asks with authority: "But what is the Muslim connection?"

On Mr Sibal's *tukde-tukde* swipe, he is hard-tired. "When approached under RTI, the home ministry said they had no knowledge of any such rationists like Mr Sibal that India is not yet a fascist state," but I think we are showing disturbing signs of a pre-fascist one."

This war within has had its share of martyrs too: rationalists like M.M. Kalburgi, Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare and Gauri Lankesh, to name just a few.

Participation in this epic Kurukshetra by Muslims like the personal law boards have in the past helped exactly the forces which menace the national unity. Keep an equal distance from the Hindu, who by himself is better situated to let a hundred flowers bloom. Even more important is to keep the venerable maulanias away, busy with matters of faith.

Emulate the women of Shaheen Bagh who, guided by an intuitive and robust common sense, have been extraordinarily focused on the Constitution, the national anthem and the flag. The larger society is still sorting itself out.

The writer is a senior journalist and commentator based in New Delhi

Keep an equal distance from the Hindu, who by himself is better situated to let a hundred flowers bloom. Even more important is to keep the venerable maulanias away.

LETTERS

CORONAVIRUS

The Government Nizamia General Hospital, declared as a level-1 isolation hospital for Covid-19 patients, lacks water, electricity and sanitation. It is also filled with stray animals. Wards are in poor condition with garbage not cleared. The hospital lacks basic life support and emergency medical care. The staff and management are not not skilled or trained to take care of Covid-19. The hospital is in a densely populated residential area. I request the authorities to appoint qualified staff to serve patients instead of spreading infection.

Ayesha Siddiqua Hyderabad

I request the CM to give a piece of his mind to the cops. They are acting like gods. Though the CM has allowed purchase of essential goods from 9 am to 5 pm, we are unable to do so due to lack of money. When there is money police is not allowing us to buy things. Police is raising hands. They can see people are holding household things in their hands. Seems like they have forgotten to maintain law and order. Do they want to kill the citizens? They can take action after 6 pm, but till 5 pm let them allow us to buy grocery.

Madhav Hyderabad

States are relaxing lockdown from 6 am to 12 noon urging people to do shopping of essential goods. Afternoon the lockdown continues nobody should talking, police is keeping equal distance from the Hindu, who by himself is better situated to let a hundred flowers bloom. Even more important is to keep the venerable maulanias away, busy with matters of faith.

N. Bhaskara Ramam Hyderabad

A.P. Govt. buys plane for ministers

By a staff reporter HYDERABAD, MARCH 29 The State Government had purchased an aircraft "Beech Baron" at a cost of Rs 4.30 lakhs for the Ministers' use.

This was 50 YEARS AGO IN CHRONICLE

disclosed in the State Legislative Assembly by the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. J. V. Narasinga Rao during the question hour today.

Replying to a question of Mr. Poola Subbaiah, Mr. T. C. Rajan and Mr. N. Srikanth Reddy, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the spare parts of the aircraft useful for a period of five years were also purchased at a cost of Rs 2.70 lakhs.

SHORT TAKES
J&K: 627 HELD FOR VIOLATING LOCKDOWN

Jammu, March 29: Expressing satisfaction over the people's cooperation in the success of the current lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus, J&K police chief Dilbag Singh on Sunday said a total of 337 FIRs were registered and 627 persons were arrested for violating prohibitory orders in the Union Territory. In addition, 118 shops and 490 vehicles have been closed for defying the orders. DGP Singh said, highlighting the need for a united action to combat the deadly disease. Jammu and Kashmir administration had on March 23 ordered a shutdown of all establishments, except those providing essential services and commodities, to prevent the spread of the coronavirus infection, which has so far claimed two lives in the Union Territory. A total of 337 FIRs were lodged against the lockdown violators in which 627 persons have been arrested till Saturday evening. Most of the arrested were later released after sensitising them about the threat, the police chief said in a statement. He said the police is very strict against the lockdown violators. Reiterating his appeal to the people to follow the health advisories, he said,

OVER 450 CAPF DOCTORS TOLD TO JOIN IMMEDIATELY

New Delhi, March 29: Over 450 doctors recruited recently as medical officers in the CAPFs have been asked to join service "immediately" as the forces are ramping up their healthcare setup to combat Covid-19. A top paramilitary officer said on Sunday. Retired medical officers have been "alerted" and medical staff are being worked on to hire doctors on contractual service to man the chain of the forces' country-wide hospitals and quarantine centres that have a combined strength of more than 7,200 beds, ITBP Director General (DG) Surjeet Singh Deswal said. "Over 450 doctors who were recruited as medical officers for all the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) recently have been called to join duty immediately with no loss of time. "They will enhance our strength in combating the situation arising out of the coronavirus outbreak in the country," Deswal said. A senior official said the plan was formulated at the ITBP headquarters and top-level sanctions were obtained from the Union Home Ministry before summoning these doctors. These doctors, the DG said, were recruited recently by the government for the CAPFs and ITBP as the medical agency for their recruitment. The CAPFs have a combined strength of over 2,000 doctors and specialists at the units apart from other paramedical staff. These doctors are being posted to CAPF hospitals and bases near their respective units so that they can join without having to travel far, the ITBP chief said. The government had recently taken over the chain of 32 CAPF hospitals across the country, with a total capacity of about 1,500 beds, for isolation and treatment of Covid-19 affected patients.

LOCKDOWN CURBS EASED TO LET GOODS TRANSPORT

New Delhi, March 29: As an unprecedented milestone, Covid-19 entered its 5th day, the government on Sunday eased some restrictions to allow transportation of all essential and non-essential goods. The Union Home Ministry also allowed use of private vehicles for the state disaster response force (SDRF) to shelter migrant workers and the homeless stranded due to the lockdown. They also urged industrial and commercial establishments not to sack people or cut their salaries due to the lockdown, while landlords in several states were asked not to insist on asking for rent during this period. The home secretary Bhalla added that the entire supply chain of milk collection and distribution, including its packaging material, has also been allowed during the lockdown period, along with groceries, medicines including hygiene products such as hand wash, soaps, disinfectants, body wash, shampoos, surface cleaners, sanitizers and tissue papers, toothpaste/oral care, sanitary pads and diapers, battery cells, chargers etc., are permitted during the lockdown.



Family members of a man who died due to Covid-19, bury his mortal remains at a graveyard, at Tangmar in Baramulla district on Sunday. — PTT

Centre orders states to seal borders, quarantine migrants
Ensure people don't move across cities or highways, chief secretaries, DGPs told

New Delhi, March 29: The Centre on Sunday asked the state governments and Union Territory administrations to effectively seal state and district borders to stop the movement of migrant workers, who will be put in 14-day quarantine at destinations. During a video conference with the state chief secretaries and DGPs, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba and Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla asked them to ensure that there is no movement of people across cities or on highways as the lockdown continues. "There has been movement of migrant workers in some parts of the country. Directions were issued that district and state borders should be effectively sealed," an official statement said. States were directed to ensure that there is no movement of people across cities or on highways and there should be strict implementation of the lockdown. Only the movement of goods should be allowed. Those who have violated the lockdown and travelled during the period of



Migrants from West Bengal stage a protest demanding transportation at Paippad village in Kottayam district on Sunday. — PTT

lockdown will be subject to minimum 14 days of quarantine in government quarantine facilities, the statement said. Later, at a press conference, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs Punay Salia Srivastava said those migrant workers who have violated the lockdown and travelled during the curf will be put in 14 days quarantine at their destinations. The Union Home Ministry issued an order in this regard on Sunday afternoon, saying "the migrant people, who have moved out to reach their home states/ home towns, must

be kept in the nearest shelter by the respective state/Union Territory government quarantine facilities, the statement said. Later, at a press conference, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs Punay Salia Srivastava said those migrant workers who have violated the lockdown and travelled during the curf will be put in 14 days quarantine at their destinations. The Union Home Ministry issued an order in this regard on Sunday afternoon, saying "the migrant people, who have moved out to reach their home states/ home towns, must

India unique, can't handle curbs: Rahul

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 29: Terming India's conditions "unique" Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said that the country required to take steps that were different from those taken by other large countries that are following a total lockdown strategy. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr Gandhi said that the world has been forced to take urgent, immediate measures to contain the rapid spread of the virus that causes Covid-19. India is currently in the midst of a three-week lockdown and "I suspect that the government will eventually extend this even further." But, he wrote, "It is critical for us to understand that India's conditions are unique. We will be required to take different steps than other large countries that are following a total lockdown strategy. The number of poor people in India who are dependent on a daily income is simply too large for us to unilaterally shut down all economic activity." Asserting that the consequences of a complete economic shut down will disastrously amplify the death toll arising from Covid-19, the former Congress president asked the government to consider a nuanced approach that takes the complex realities of Indian people into consideration. "Our priority must be to protect and isolate the elderly and vulnerable from the virus and to clearly and strongly communicate to the young the dangers of proximity to older people," he wrote. "Large population centres will require big dedicated hospitals with thousands of beds and ventilators," the letter continued.

DGCA suspends booze tests for pilots, air crew

New Delhi, March 29: Aviation regulator DGCA on Sunday said it was temporarily suspending breath analyser alcohol test for all aviation personnel, including the pilots, hours after an Air India union made the request saying these tests could aid the spread of coronavirus. The decision came hours after SpiceJet said that one of its pilots, who did not fly any international flight in March, has tested positive for the virus. The DGCA said in its order that due to the "extraordinary" circumstances over Covid-19 and directions issued by high courts in Delhi and Kerala, the breath analyser tests for "all aviation personnel" were temporarily suspended "at all airports till further orders". "Every aviation personnel, who is reporting for duty is required to submit an undertaking in respect of the fact that he or she is not under the influence of alcohol and that he or she has not consumed alcohol/psychoactive substance in last 12 hours from the time of reporting for duty," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) stated. The regulator noted that if the undertaking submitted by the aviation personnel is violated, his or her licence approval will be suspended for a period of three months. "The airline should carry out random checks for pilots and cabin crew members to ensure the compliance of Section 24 of Aircraft Rules, 1937. — PTT

SPICEJET PILOT TESTS POSITIVE; IN SELF ISOLATION

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

In another shocker, a SpiceJet pilot who operated a domestic flight from Chennai to New Delhi on March 21 as a co-pilot has now tested positive for the virus. The DGCA said in its order that due to the "extraordinary" circumstances over Covid-19 and directions issued by high courts in Delhi and Kerala, the breath analyser tests for "all aviation personnel" were temporarily suspended "at all airports till further orders". "Every aviation personnel, who is reporting for duty is required to submit an undertaking in respect of the fact that he or she is not under the influence of alcohol and that he or she has not consumed alcohol/psychoactive substance in last 12 hours from the time of reporting for duty," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) stated. The regulator noted that if the undertaking submitted by the aviation personnel is violated, his or her licence approval will be suspended for a period of three months. "The airline should carry out random checks for pilots and cabin crew members to ensure the compliance of Section 24 of Aircraft Rules, 1937. — PTT

Migrants hit Kerala streets seeking transport home

Kottayam, March 29: Seeking transportation to travel to their native places, hundreds of migrant workers on Sunday hit the streets near Chengamangry village along the 21-day lockdown announced by the government to prevent spread of novel coronavirus. Police talks with the agitating migrant workers on the streets of Paippad village, a shocked Kerala government quickly stepped in to defuse the tension by deploying police force and sending Kottayam district authorities to pacify the agitating migrant workers, who are called guest labourers in the state. The Kottayam district Collector and Superintendent of Police held talks with the agitating migrant workers on the streets of Paippad village town and managed to

send them back to their camps. They assured them that all facilities would be provided for their comfortable stay in the state during the lockdown period. The migrant workers rejected their demand for travel facilities citing directives issued by the Central government banning movement of people outside the dwelling place. The programme is in line with the 'work from home' concept adopted by various government and private organisations to protect their employees from infections. "We have evolved a strategy to ensure that academic pursuits of students are

MIGRANTS NOT WELCOME BACK HOME IN BIHAR, UTTAR PRADESH VILLAGES

New Delhi/Patna, March 29: Many of the thousands of jobless workers, marching from their workplaces to their native villages in states like Bihar and UP hundreds of kilometres away amid the coronavirus lockdown, are not being welcomed back home from states and Nepal and return were reported to the police, who, in turn, handed them over to medical authorities for tests and subsequent measures. Some villages in Bihar have gone into lockdown, refusing entry of people even from neighbouring areas, to curb the spread of infection. "Four of my co-villagers working in Nepal returned home two days ago. But villagers informed police about them following which they swooped on the village with ambulances and handed them over to the medical team," Abhishek Singh said on phone from Alawalpur village on the outskirts of Patna. — PTT

and mass education department told this correspondent here on Sunday. The one-hour 'home class' for students of Standard VI to 12 will begin at 11 am and will be conducted on all week days. Students can clarify doubts from their respective teachers through WhatsApp. "We are initially planning to teach mathematics and science. Later, we may cover other subjects if the response is encouraging", the spokesman said. Meanwhile, the Madhya Pradesh government has decided to promote students of classes except standards 10th and 12th, of the state schools without exams in view of the coronavirus outbreak, an official said on Sunday. The 10th and 12th board exams are carried forward, an official spokesman said. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday night reviewed

Gujarat has 63 +ve cases, toll 5

GUJARAT TO FREE 1,200 PRISONERS FOR 2 MONTHS

Ahmedabad, March 28: With eight new coronavirus positive cases reported in Gujarat on Sunday, the number of infected persons in the state climbed to 63, a senior health department official said. The death toll due to coronavirus went up to five in the state after a 45-year-old man died in a hospital in Ahmedabad on Sunday, the official said. In Ahmedabad, one Covid-19 patient was discharged from the hospital, making him the first person in the state to fully recover from the infection and sent back home. Principal Secretary (Health) Jayanti Ravi told reporters.

GUJARAT TO FREE 1,200 PRISONERS FOR 2 MONTHS

Ahmedabad, March 29: The Gujarat government on Sunday said it will release around 1,200 prisoners for two months to provide an opportunity to reduce jail crowding in view of the Covid-19 outbreak, an official said. The state Home department has been asked to prepare a list of inmates who could be released for two months, he said. "Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has informed the home ministry, which will prepare a list of convicts, undertrials who can be released on parole and interim bail respectively," Ashwani Kumar, Secretary to the CM, said. — PTT

India shifts staff in Herat to Kabul **NEW METHODS Programme akin to 'work from home' adopted by companies** **MP plans e-teaching for school children**

New Delhi, March 29: India has shifted its diplomats and staff from its consulates in Afghan cities of Herat and Jalalabad to Kabul in view of fast-spreading cases of Covid-19 in that country which shares a long border with Iran, the worst hit nation by the pandemic in the region. Government sources said the Indian staff from the two consulates were shifted to Kabul as there are no adequate medical facilities in Herat and Jalalabad. The Indian diplomats and staff in Kabul have been told to take all required precautions to insulate themselves from the virus while carrying out their normal duties in the embassy. — PTT

higher as several provinces in the country do not have facilities to carry out lab test to check the infection. Two foreign diplomats and four officials of the NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan were among the positive cases in the country, as per Afghan media. The sources said the Indian staff from the two consulates were shifted to Kabul as there are no adequate medical facilities in Herat and Jalalabad. The Indian diplomats and staff in Kabul have been told to take all required precautions to insulate themselves from the virus while carrying out their normal duties in the embassy. — PTT

MP plans e-teaching for school children. The programme is in line with the 'work from home' concept adopted by various government and private organisations to protect their employees from infections. "We have evolved a strategy to ensure that academic pursuits of students are

not affected due to the lockdown. The 'class from home' or e-teaching programme specifies teaching through FM radio and various social media networking sites like WhatsApp". The programme is in line with the 'work from home' concept adopted by various government and private organisations to protect their employees from infections. "We have evolved a strategy to ensure that academic pursuits of students are

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Children play on a deserted city street during a nationwide lockdown in Kolkata on Sunday. — PTT

IN BRIEF

Spain, Italy seek EU virus help

Barcelona: Spain and Italy demanded more EU help as they fight surging Covid-19 infections amid the continent's worst crisis since World War II. In the US, authorities urged millions in the hard-hit New York City region to stop travelling to keep the virus contained. From Milan to Madrid to Michigan, medics are making tough choices about which patients to save with the limited breathing machines they have. Spain and Italy alone account for more than half of the world's death toll and are still seeing over 800 deaths a day each.

Hubei begins domestic flights

Belling/Wuhan: China on Sunday resumed domestic flights in the Covid-19 epicentre Hubei province, except for its capital Wuhan, as part of a plan to ease the lockdown in the region following a steep decline in the number of confirmed cases. Hubei's capital Wuhan, which bore the brunt of the vicious virus for over two months, would begin its air services from April 8. China began to ease its lockdown of Hubei province, home to over 56 million people, from March 25 by resuming local transport services and easing quarantine to prevent people tested negative for Covid-19 pandemic.

S. African couple's balcony marathon

Dubai: A South African couple who ran a marathon on the balcony of their Dubai apartment, streamed it online, plan to take the project global to help people shake off the Covid-19 blues. Collin Allin, 41, and wife Hilma covered the 42.2-kilometre distance by running more than 2,100 laps for over two weeks from dawn on Saturday. A stopwatch provided by the couple shows they covered the distance in five hours, nine minutes and 39 seconds. "We did it... #balconymarathon," Allin said on Instagram congratulating his wife on her first ever marathon and thanking the virtual crowd that cheered them on. "I did it for all the love and support for doing something silly... it was great to have you all along for the ride," he said.

8 killed in Manila airport plane blaze

Manila: A plane carrying eight people caught fire on Sunday while attempting to take off from Manila's airport on a flight bound for Japan, killing all those on board, officials said. The plane, which was carrying six crew members and two passengers, was on a mission to bring a patient to Tokyo when it caught fire at the end of the runway. Manila airport general manager Ed Monreal, "There were no survivors," Monreal said at a news conference. He said two of the eight on board were foreigners — one American and one Canadian — and the rest were Filipinos. Firetrucks and rescue personnel rushed and doused the aircraft with foam to try to extinguish the flames.

HUTHI MISSILES INTERCEPTED OVER RIYADH

Riyadh, March 29: Saudi air defences intercepted Yemeni rebel missiles over Riyadh and a city on the Yemen border, leaving two civilians wounded in the curfew-locked capital amid efforts to combat Covid-19, state media said Sunday. Multiple explosions shook Riyadh late Saturday in the first major assault on Saudi Arabia since the Huthi rebels offered last September to halt attacks on the kingdom after devastating twin strikes on Saudi oil installations. The Iran-aligned insurgents claimed responsibility around 15 hours after the attacks, with a rebel spokesman saying it was "the largest operation of its kind" as the Riyadh-led military intervention in Yemen enters its sixth year. "Two ballistic missiles were launched towards the cities of Riyadh and Jizan," the official Saudi Press Agency reported, citing the Saudi-led coalition fighting the rebels in Yemen. "Their interceptive electronic raining on residential neighbourhoods in the cities, leaving two civilians injured in Riyadh," the civil defence spokesman said.

Trump annexes New York quarantine

Tweets travel advisory is the way to go; Gov. postpones state's Prez primary to June

New York, March 29: As Covid-19 cases rose in the national epicentre of New York, President Donald Trump surprised governors of the state and neighbouring New Jersey and Connecticut by saying Saturday that he might impose a quarantine on their residents before tweeting later in the day that a travel advisory was the way to go. Trump's comments about a quarantine led New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo to call it illegal and "a federal declaration of war." The travel advisory urges residents of the three states to avoid all but essential travel for two weeks. Meanwhile, Cuomo postponed New York's presidential primary from April to June and made anguished pleas for more protective equipment and rebuffed officials' claims that supplies are adequate. With New York cases expected to mushroom toward a mid-to-late-April peak, Cuomo took a temporary air mask in hand to show what might lie in store if needed ventilators don't arrive in time. Trump told reporters at the White House he was supporting the travel advisory to prevent people in the tri-state area from

travelling for a short time. Late Saturday, though, he tweeted that he'd decided to go with a travel advisory to immediately avoid any nonessential travel for two weeks. All 50 US states have reported some cases of the virus, but New York has the most, with over 52,000 positive tests and more than 700 deaths. About 7,300 people were in New York hospitals Saturday, including about 1,800 in intensive care. The federal government has the power to take measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, but it's unclear whether that means Trump can order people not to leave their state. He cited requests from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a fellow Republican and outspoken Trump supporter, who has complained about New Yorkers coming to his state amid the outbreak and ordered them to isolate on arrival for 14 days.



People take their daily exercise as they cross the Wilford Suspension Bridge over the River Trent in Nottingham, on Sunday, as life in Britain continues during the nationwide lockdown to combat the novel Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP

Deaths may top 1 lakh Washington, March 29: The US government's worst infection disease expert says the United States could experience over 100,000 deaths and mil-

lions of infections from the Covid-19 pandemic. Dr. Anthony Fauci, speaking on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday, offered his prognosis as

the federal government weighs rolling back guidelines on social distancing in areas that have not been hard-hit by the outbreak at the conclusion of the nation-

wide 15-day effort to slow the spread of the virus. "I would say between 100,000 and 200,000 cases," he said, correcting himself to say he meant deaths.

"We're going to have millions of cases." But he added "I don't want to be held to that" because the pandemic is "such a moving target." — AP

Spanish Princess 1st royal to die

Washington D.C., March 29: Spanish Princess Maria Teresa of Bourbon Parma has become the first royal to die due to Covid-19 complications. According to Fox News, the 86-year-old was a cousin of Spain's King Felipe VI. She died after contracting Covid-19. The post reads, "On this afternoon... our sister Maria Teresa studied in Parma and Borbon Bussat, a victim of the Covid-19, died in Paris at the age of eighty-six." Princess Teresa's death comes weeks after King Felipe VI of Spain tested negative for

the virus. According to People magazine, born on July 26, 1933, Princess Maria Teresa studied in France and became a professor at Paris's Sorbonne as well as a professor of Sociology at Madrid's Complutense University. She was known for her outspoken views and activist

work, which led to her nickname the "Red Princess". A funeral service for the princess was held on Friday in Madrid. Prince Charles became the first British royal to test positive for Covid-19, earlier this week. The coroner confirmed in a Wednesday morning statement: "The Prince of Wales has tested positive for Covid-19, has been displaying mild symptoms but otherwise remains in good health and has been working from home throughout the last few days as usual." A Buckingham Palace spokesperson said Queen Elizabeth II remains in a healthy condition despite her on testing positive. — AP

Pakistan's Sindh to release prisoners

SHAFQAT ALI IDC ISLAMABAD, MARCH 29: Pakistan's Sindh provincial government has decided to release the prisoners charged with minor offences for four months amid the Covid outbreak. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah approved a summary prepared by the Home Department, granting permission to release the prisoners convicted in National Accountability Bureau (NAB), drug and other crimes.

le the total number of cases have surged to 1,526. Officials said 481 patients have tested positive in Sindh, 138 in Balochistan, 558 in Punjab, 188 in Islamabad, 116 in Gilgit-Baltistan, 43 in Islamabad and two in Pakistan Administered Kashmir. Officials said the aid includes 15 ventilators, masks, medical protective kits and other items.

ACROSS THE GLOBE

● A 108-year-old woman, who survived two world wars and the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, has become the UK's oldest victim after she died within hours of testing positive for Covid-19.

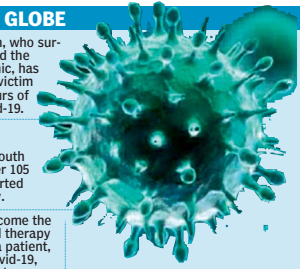
● China reported 45 new Covid-19 cases in South Korea after 105 were reported on Sunday.

● A US hospital has become the first to try experimental therapy after infusing blood of a patient, who recovered from Covid-19, into a critically ill patient.

● The Bureau of Prisons says the first federal inmate in the US died of Covid-19.

● Singapore's death toll due to Covid reached three after a 70-year-old man died following a 27-day battle.

● Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's wife said Saturday that she has recovered from being ill caused by the new Covid-19. "I am feeling so much better," Sophie Gregoire Trudeau said.



● Egypt has shuttered several hospitals and quarantined villages to halt rising infection rate of new Covid-19 in the most populous Arab state.

● First linked to the novel Covid-19 pandemic reported from Uruguay

● The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, the philanthropic arm of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan, pledged \$25 million to a research fund exploring possible Covid-19 treatments.

Boris writes to Britons: Stay home, follow rules

London, March 29: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is self-isolating after testing positive for the Covid-19, has written to every UK household to ask people to stay at home and follow the distancing rules to fight the pandemic, warning them things will get worse before they get better. In letters which will arrive through the post for nearly 30 million homes along with a leaflet outlining the UK government's advice, at an estimated cost of £5.8 million, Johnson says he will not hesitate to impose stricter measures.

WE ARE making the right preparations, and the more we all follow the rules, the fewer lives will be lost and the sooner life can return to normal. —BORIS JOHNSON British Prime Minister

know things will get worse before they get better. But we are making the right preparations, and the more we all follow the rules, the fewer lives will be lost and the sooner life can return to normal," Johnson says in his letter to the nation. "From the start, we have sought to put in the right measures at the right time. We will not hesitate to go further if that is what the scientific and medical advice tells us we must do," his letter reads. The 55-year-old Conservative Party leader goes on to express his gratitude to

everyone who is "working flat out to beat the virus", including the "truly inspiring" doctors, nurses and other carers. "Thousands of retired doctors and nurses are returning to the NHS — and hundreds of thousands of citizens are volunteering to help the most vulnerable. That is why, at this moment of national emergency, I urge you, please, to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives," he adds. The letter outlines the guidance everyone should follow and the measures the government has put in place to fight Covid-19 and to support businesses and workers. The accompanying leaflet contains UK-wide information as well as directions about where to access online guidance specific to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It includes clear explanations of symptoms, hand washing guidance, rules on leaving the house, self-isolating. —PTT

Bibi, Gantz move towards unity govt Astronauts' pee may build Moon bases

Jerusalem, March 29: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his erstwhile rival Benny Gantz on Sunday announced "significant progress" in talks towards forming an emergency unity government amid the novel Covid-19 pandemic. Gantz, whose new fractured centrist Blue and White coalition party woned itself as the alternative to Netanyahu in three inconclusive elections over the past year, was elected parliament speaker Thursday. The two men had earlier talks throughout the night "aimed at estab-

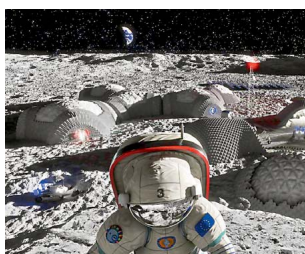
lishing a national emergency government to deal with the corona crisis and the additional challenges facing the "two states", said a joint statement from Blue and White and Netanyahu's Likud. "Significant progress was made during the meeting," it added. "During the course of the day, an additional meeting will be held in order to come to a finalised agreement."

NEW STUDY Urine urea to help erect modules being planned by space agencies Astronauts' pee may build Moon bases

London, March 29: The urea in astronauts' urine may help erect modules that major space agencies plan to build on the Moon, according to a study which says the chemical could be used as an additive in making concrete for the structures. According to the researchers, including those from the Polytechnic University of Cartagena (Murcia) in Spain, the colonisation of the Moon poses problems such as high levels of radiation, extreme temperatures, meteorite bombardment, and the logistical issue of getting construction materials to

the lunar surface. They said, currently, transporting about 0.45 kilograms of material from Earth to space costs about \$10,000, adding that the construction of a complete module on any satellite in this way would be very expensive. Hence, the scientists said, space agencies are working out ideas to use raw materials from the moon's surface, or even those that astronauts themselves can provide, such as their urine. The study, published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, assessed the potential of urea in urine

as a plasticiser — an additive that can be incorporated into concrete to soften the mixture and make it more pliable before it hardens. "To make the geopolymers concrete that will be used on the moon, the idea is to use urea from their excrement and the water from ice present in some areas," explains Ramon Famies, a co-author of the study from Polytechnic University of Cartagena. "But more importantly, we have seen that a waste product, such as the urine of personnel who occupy moon bases, could also be used," he said. —PTT



quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	29,815.59 -0.44
Nifty 50	8,660.25 0.22
S&P 500	2,541.47 -3.37
Dollar (₹)	74.85 0.42
Pound Sterling (₹)	91.45 -1.51
Euro (₹)	82.44 -0.01
Gold (Oz) (\$)	1,628.15 -2.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)	24.93 -5.35
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.144 -1.318
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	0.676 -2.45

As of Saturday

Labour ministry notifies EPF withdrawal relief

The labour ministry has allowed over 6 crore subscribers of retirement fund body EPFO to withdraw an amount not exceeding their three months basic pay and dearness allowance from their EPF account in view of the lockdown. Besides, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation also introduced online claim settlement facility without manual intervention in Samsam for all KYC-compliant subscribers.

Anil Agarwal takes Vedanta board role



Metals and mining magnate Anil Agarwal has for the first time taken a board position on his flagship Indian firm, Vedanta Ltd, replacing his brother Navin. Agarwal, 65, had so far headed the board of London-headquartered Vedanta Resources. The firm said Agarwal was appointed "as the non-executive chairman of Vedanta Ltd". He replaces Navin, who will now be the executive vice chairman of the board.

Contributions to PM relief fund meets CSR norms

The corporate affairs ministry said contributions to the PM-CARES Fund would qualify as CSR spending under the Companies Act. "The macro picture is that over the last five years, CSR contributions amounting to around Rs 52,000 crore have been made against total demand of around Rs 77,000 crore. In other words, some are not spending and some are not spending," said corporate affairs secretary Injeti Srinivas.

Sun Pharma's Halol unit tagged as OAI

un Pharmaceutical Company said the US FDA has classified its Halol facility in Gujarat as official action indicator (OAI). The FDA had inspected the facility from Dec. 3-13, and had issued eight observations. Sun Pharma said the OAI classification implies inter-alia that the USFDA may withhold approval of any pending product applications or supplements filed from this facility till the observations are resolved.

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Analysts see chances of a lockdown-led recession

ASHWIN J PUNJEN
MUMBAI, MARCH 29

The pandemic-driven lockdown is likely to cripple domestic economic activities across the value chain, pushing the economy into a recession after three decades.

According to experts despite the official monetary measures, the impact of lockdown would be felt through several channels including surging domestic demand and disruption in supply chain and financial markets. The lockdown is causing significant disruption across multiple sectors, including manufacturing, oil and financial.

By various estimates, only 25-40 per cent of the economy is currently operating. Report says the restrictions on commercial activities and people gatherings would impact global and domestic growth from this month onwards.

Many brokerage houses are predicting a bleak scenario for Indian GDP growth.

Bank of America Securities has sharply cut the June quarter growth



forecast by 90 bps to a low of 3.1 per cent and the full-year India GDP target by 100 to 14.1 per cent for FY21, citing an almost certain global recession due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We estimate a month's shutdown will cost about 50 bps of annual GDP," said Bank of America Securities, adding that it expects the Indian economy to come out of this slump only by FY22 in a 6 per cent.

Explaining the rationale for the doom-scenario, it said a global recession is a reality and the general shutdown in India is seen extending to the end of April and not mid-April.

Experts believe India's informal sector, the back-

bone of the economy, will be the hardest hit.

"Just as everywhere else in the world, the Indian economy is bracing for the fallout (from this unprecedented event). We expect the lockdown to dramatically reduce GDP in... subsequent quarters, while there will be prolonged economic gloom throughout the rest of the year," said Prakash Sakpal, Asia economist at ING.

According to Dun & Bradstreet's latest Economic Forecast, the probability of countries entering recession and companies going bankrupt has increased and India is not likely to remain "decoupled" from the global meltdown.

Brokerage firm Motilal

Oswal has warned that India could witness its first recession in about three decades amidst the coronavirus lockdown.

"With two consecutive quarters of GDP decline, India could see its first recession since the 1990s," the brokerage house said in a note.

According to its sensitivity analysis of the adverse impact of lockdown, a single day of complete lockdown could shave off 14.9 basis points (bps) of annual growth and 55-75 bps from quarterly growth.

It implies that with seven days of complete lockdown and 8 days of partial lockdown, real GDP could decline by about 9 per cent year-on-year in the January-March quarter. If this happens, it would mean the first decline in the country's GDP numbers since the government started publishing quarterly numbers from Q1 of 1997-98. With 14 days of complete lockdown in April, the brokerage expects the situation to deteriorating further. Assuming things normalise from mid-May GDP could decline by 12.2 per cent year-on-year in April-June.

JAVIER BLAS,
ALEX LONGLEY &
SHEILA TOBEN
MARCH 29

The global oil market is broken, overwhelmed by an unmanageable surplus as virus lockdowns spread through the world's largest economies.

Onshore tanks in many markets are full, forcing traders to store excess oil in idle super-tankers. Refineries are starting to shut down because nobody needs the fuels they produce. In physical oil markets, barrels are already changing hands for less than \$10, and in a few landlocked markets producers are paying consumers to take away their crude.

"The physical oil market has seized up," said Gary Ross, an industrial oil analyst and chief investment officer of Black Gold Investors LLC. "The logistics are struggling to cope because we are facing a catastrophic loss of demand."

The global airline industry is grounded, countless businesses and factories are shuttered and billions of people have been forced to stay home. "Demand clearly is off, in some parts of the world, very dramatically," Chevron CEO Mike Wirth said.

ROSNEFT HALTS
WORK IN VENEZUELA

MOSCOW, MARCH 28: Russian oil giant Rosneft announced on Saturday it is halting its activities in Venezuela and selling its assets there, a country that has been hit by US trade sanctions.

"Rosneft announces the termination of its operations in Venezuela and the disposal of its assets, related to operating in Venezuela," the company said in a statement.

Rosneft said it had sold its Venezuelan assets to a company 100 per cent owned by the Russian government.

of 1929, the twin oil shocks of the 1970s and the global financial crisis don't come close. The world normally uses 100 million barrels of oil a day, and traders and analysts reckon as much as a quarter of that has disappeared in just a few weeks.

The global airline industry is grounded, countless businesses and factories are shuttered and billions of people have been forced to stay home.

"Demand clearly is off, in some parts of the world, very dramatically," Chevron CEO Mike Wirth said.

FPIs pull out over ₹11 cr this month

New Delhi, March 29: With the coronavirus pandemic triggering fears of a global recession, foreign investors have started pulling back from the Indian capital markets by withdrawing over Rs 11 lakh crore in March, after remaining net buyers for six consecutive months.

Lockdowns in many countries have led foreign investors to adopt a cautious stance, experts said. Depositories data showed that a net amount of Rs 11,188 crore was pulled out from equities and Rs 52,811 crore was withdrawn from the debt segment by foreign investors (FPIs) between March 2 and 27.

The total net inflow stood at Rs 1,12,188 crore till Friday. This is the highest withdrawal since FPI investment data became available on the National Securities Depository Ltd.

"With complete lockdown announced by the government, the businesses and trade have come to a halt, which could further slow down the pace of domestic economic growth," said Himanshu Srivastava, senior analyst at Morningstar India.

"The concerns about the global economy witnessing a prolonged downturn have gained momentum. This is what is keeping foreign investors away from emerging markets like India, which are considered to be more susceptible towards these events," Srivastava added. In the current scenario, FPIs have preferred to take a flight to safer investment options like gold.

Domestic, global cues negative for market

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MARCH 29

The market may see more selling pressure when it opens on Monday, factoring in the likely impact of an extended shutdown on the Indian economy. Marketmen have now started speculating about an extended shutdown, as the number of new coronavirus cases has started rising.

The global cues so far are negative with the US market benchmark Dow Jones Industrial Average closing 4.06 per cent down on Friday.

Though coronavirus cases in India are still low compared to the European countries and the US, but the large-scale migration of daily wage earners to their homes from big cities posed risks of rapid contagion.

"The government and the Reserve Bank have announced huge stimulus packages. Analysts said given the size of problem, the scale of the stimulus is small."

Also global situation has turned out to be much worse than expected. Analysts said that the global economy is close to 7 lakh people affected.

Analysts from Emkay Global Financial Services said, "Based on our estimates, the lockdown of the nature we are seeing through 30,000 could shave off Rs 2.3 trillion from GDP every week it is continued. Although



the government's Rs.1.7 trillion package (0.83 per cent of GDP) addresses some of the most basic issues, it pales in comparison with both the scale of the problem and what is being done by other countries.

"We believe the RBI's measures may somewhat ease the pain on the economy at the hands of lenders, but will require further economic stimulus from the government, and above all needs to contain the virus outbreak to tide over the current financial crisis in medium-long run."

Japanese investment consulting firm Nomura said, "We expect coordinated fiscal and monetary easing to continue."

We believe the next tranche of fiscal measures will address cash-flow challenges faced by SMEs and other hard-hit industries. "Even though policy responses are being stepped up, we believe they are unlikely to prevent the economy from contracting due to the virus shock. The Covid-19 outbreak amid a weak financial sector," Nomura said.

EMI moratorium doesn't come free, warn experts

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MARCH 29

Last week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) permitted lenders to provide three-month deferral on payments of equated monthly installments (EMI) for new instalments falling between March 1, and May 31. Individuals having a home loan, car loan, personal loan, credit card dues, education loan besides farm loan can avail of this benefit. The moratorium in no way will help per the terms of your loan contract or impact your credit score.

However, this is a temporary deferral and is not free of cost, as the interest amount shall continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loans even during the moratorium period and you will be expected to pay your outstanding amounts and the interest charges on the due date after May 31 to avoid late fees and impact on

credit score. Your dues will balloon after the moratorium period in the case of credit card spends. On credit card dues the interest charges range from 24 to 48 per cent at compounding annual interest rate. The finer details on the moratorium benefit, how it will apply will be known only after banks come out with their board approved policy, but financial experts and bankers advise against using the moratorium. Kunal Shah, founder of fintech startup, MD and founder of Mortgageworld, in a loan advisory firm, "It is recommended to pay EMIs regularly without availing the moratorium if your cash flows permit. In the event you avail the moratorium, it should be clearly understood that the loan tenor will get extended by three months and the interest holiday period will accrue and get added to the outstanding loan amount. For a moratorium offer and not EMI waiver."

For instance, if you have a loan of Rs 90 lakh booked at 9 per cent interest between January and March 2019, the balance loan term is 360 months and your EMI will work out to Rs 72,416. The interest payable during the loan tenor is Rs 1.70 crore. If your bank cuts the lending rate to be 7.25 per cent and your balance loan tenure would be 228 months and interest outflow is cut to Rs 83.32 lakh without using the three months moratorium offer. If you use the moratorium, the interest payable is Rs 89.58 lakh. So, not using the moratorium will mean a net savings of Rs 6.60 lakh, said Patel. Kunal Shah, founder of fintech startup, MD and founder of Mortgageworld, in a loan advisory firm, "It is recommended to pay EMIs regularly without availing the moratorium if your cash flows permit. In the event you avail the moratorium, it should be clearly understood that the loan tenor will get extended by three months and the interest holiday period will accrue and get added to the outstanding loan amount. For a moratorium offer and not EMI waiver."

Noida orders 28-day paid leave for staff

Noida (NCR), March 29: Any worker or employee infected with coronavirus and in isolation for treatment will get 28 days of paid leave from their employer across Noida and Greater Noida. The Gautam Buddha Nagar district administration has ordered.

In an order passed late last Saturday night, the administration also said that shops, industries and factories closed because of the lockdown will have to give daily wage along with leave to their workers and labourers during the closure period.

Gautam Buddha Nagar District Magistrate B. N. Singh said the government has already declared the pandemic as a national emergency. The lockdown has been called with an objective to contain the virus from spreading. —PTI

No relief on insurance premium

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

Though the Reserve Bank has allowed a three-month halt in loan repayments for a few categories of borrowers, insurance policy-holders are unlikely to receive any relief on their premium payment schedule.

Unlike banks, insurers have not offered any "extraordinary" relief to

their policy subscribers, other than extending the premium due dates by a few days under directives from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

For any deferment of premium payment for a non-life insurance policy, Section 64 (B) of the Insurance Act needs to be amended, which is not possible in the given circumstances. As per the

rule, all the non-life insurance payments have to be made in advance and in full, as an official of the General Insurance Council.

Soon after the nationwide lockdown, the Centre has announced several relief measures for the common man in various areas. However, any relief on the insurance front may be considered only if the coron-

avirus situation worsens. When contacted to IRDAI chairman Subhash Chandra Khuntia said, "At this juncture, it is very difficult to defer premium payments, like in bank loans where most government banks have closely followed in consultation with the central government, and necessary steps would be taken as when required if the Covid-19 situation further worsens."

A global consumer default wave is just getting started in China

March 29: Like millions of people around the world, Zhang Chunzi borrowed money from a company that was ravaging the economy for more than three months. As Covid-19 works its way through the rest of Asia, Europe and the Americas, forcing countries into lockdown, driving up unemployment and pummeling small-business owners, analysts say it's only a matter of time before stretched households globally start to default on their loans.

Her story is playing out in similar way across China, where the virus outbreak has been taking lives and ravaging the economy for more than three months. As Covid-19 works its way through the rest of Asia, Europe and the Americas, forcing countries into lockdown, driving up unemployment and pummeling small-business owners, analysts say it's only a matter of time before stretched households globally start to default on their loans.

debt swelled last month by about 50 per cent from a year earlier, according to executives at two banks. Qudian Inc, a Beijing-based online lender, said its delinquency rate jumped to 20 per cent in February from 15 per cent at the end of last year. China Merchants Bank Co said this month that it "pressed the pause button" on its credit-card business after a "significant" increase in past-due loans. An estimated 8 million people in China lost their jobs in February.

Washington. While the extent of the squeeze on consumers and their creditworthiness is not clear, the effectiveness of government efforts to contain the virus and the US, where credit-card balances swelled to an unprecedented \$30 billion last year and 3.28 million people filed for jobless benefits during the week ended March 21 - quadruple the previous record. "Consumer default rates at some Chinese banks have already increased to as high as 4 per cent before the outbreak, according to

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Atlantis Financial Research, who cited a survey of lenders. An executive at one major Chinese bank said his firm is taking steps to tighten credit or even drop loans as credit card balances swelled to an unprecedented \$30 billion last year and 3.28 million people filed for jobless benefits during the week ended March 21 - quadruple the previous record. "Consumer default rates at some Chinese banks have already increased to as high as 4 per cent before the outbreak, according to

BAD LOANS

"These issues in China are a preview of what we should expect throughout the world," said Martin Chorzempa, a research fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics

SHORT TAKES

Shastri shoots tracer bullet alert

New Delhi: India coach Ravi Shastri on Sunday said the "only thing flying around the world like a tracer bullet is this bloody Corona", using his famous cliché to convey his message of staying home at all costs.

The Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the world, claiming over 30,000 lives so far while infecting more than 6.5 lakh people.

Among other things, the unprecedented health crisis has also brought sports to a standstill after leading to cancellation and postponement of events, including the Tokyo Olympics and European Football Championships.

Smith's two-year captain ban ends

Sydney: Steve Smith's two-year leadership ban ended on Sunday, leaving him eligible again to captain Australia at a time of uncertainty over when international cricket will resume.

Smith was stripped of the captaincy and banned from leading Australia's Test team over his involvement in the 2018 ball tampering scandal in South Africa. His sentence ended Sunday and he became captain Australia if called upon.

Knicks owner is Covid-19 positive

Los Angeles: American business tycoon and New York Knicks owner James Dolan has been diagnosed with Covid-19, becoming the first US major sports owner to test positive for the virus, the Knicks announced on Saturday night.

INDIAN BOXERS BEING TRAINED VIA THE WEB

New Delhi: Their training halted by the coronavirus-forced national lockdown, India's Olympic-bound boxers will be provided online classes by their coaches from Monday to ensure that aspects such as mental well-being and nutrition are taken care of.

Nine Indian boxers - M. C. Mary Kom (51kg), Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohani (69kg), Pooja Rani (75kg), Amit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Kumar (73kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg) - have qualified for the Tokyo Games, postponed to 2021 due to the global pandemic which has caused over thousands of deaths.

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Now we're the money! Tennis foot soldiers struggle in Corona crisis

Paris, March 29: With careers spent scratching around dusty outposts, sometimes with "just \$100" in their pockets, tennis' unheralded army of foot soldiers claim they are struggling to afford food after being made unemployed overnight by the coronavirus pandemic.

Now, Georgian player Sofia Shapatava is pleading with the International Tennis Federation (ITF) to dig deep and help one of the hundreds of players who lost their livelihoods when the men's and women's tours went on a three-month lockdown.

"Players lower ranked than 250 will not be able to buy food in two-three weeks' time," warned Shapatava, who is not optimistic the ITF will look favourably on her plea.

"I honestly don't think so," Shapatava said. "They replied that their plate is full and they will come back to me as soon as they can. But in the email they did not reply with anything," she added.

Shapatava, the world number 371, is a 16-year veteran of the tour. But she plays mostly secondary ITF events in a world away from the glitzy Grand Slam world inhabited by multi-millionaires.

Barely \$3,000 has come her way since the turn of the year after events in Andrezieux-Bouthion in France, Midland in Michigan, Nicholasville in Kentucky and the Californian venue of Rancho Santa Fe.

However, compared to many, the 31-year-old is well-off.

There are comfortably over 1,000 players in the WTA rankings. The men's ATP Tour has just as many. Amongst a batch of women currently locked in the lowest rank of 1,283 is 27-year-old Ksenia Kolenkova of Russia.

In 2020, she has officially made just \$68. Many players outside the lucrative top 100 traditionally supplement their meagre incomes by coaching.

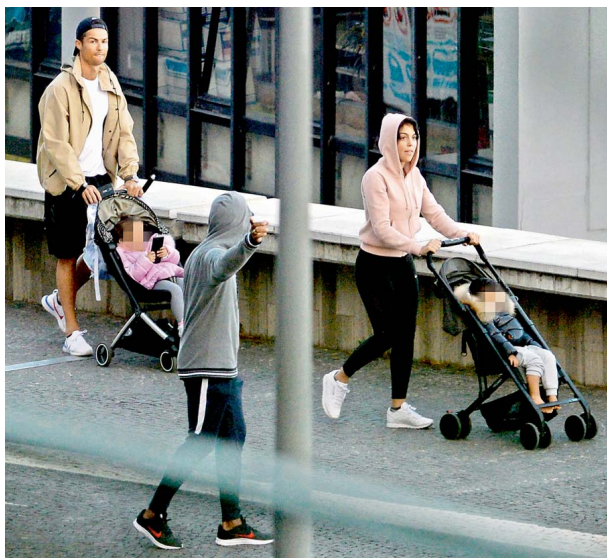
However, those reliable revenue streams dried up after governments worldwide banned large gatherings to combat the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

"I started the petition to help tennis players to be heard by ITF after I talked to many of the people I know and about various plans for the next three months and I realised that some people won't even be able to have their committed claimed Shapatava in her online blog.

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The entire claycourt season has been wiped out with the French Open shifted to September. October in tennis is a traditional May-June slot.

But today is not an ideal Sunday as it's not an ideal world where life doesn't have life anymore as people struggle for existence.



Cristiano Ronaldo (left) and his partner Georgina Rodriguez push strollers as they walk with their children in Funchal, Portugal, on Saturday.

Ronaldo to give up \$11m

Rome, March 29: Cristiano Ronaldo and his Juventus teammates along with coach Maurizio Sarri agreed to forgo 90 million euros (\$100 million) in wages on Saturday to help the club during the coronavirus crisis.

The first agreement of the kind in Italian League since play was halted three weeks ago means Ronaldo, the highest-paid player in the Italian league, will give up 10 million euros (more than \$11 million).

Juventus captain Giorgio Chiellini, who has an economics degree, led the negotiations with the club and fellow players.

"Should the current season's matches be rescheduled, the club will negotiate in good faith with the players and the coach conditional increases of compensation, according to the actual resumption and finalization of official competitions," Juventus said.

Aiming for a record-extending ninth straight Serie A title, Juventus leads the standings by one point from Lazio.

"Juventus would like to thank the players and the coach for their commitment at a difficult time for everyone," the club added.

All sports in Italy have been suspended under a nationwide lockdown through April 3 but health experts have said the need to try to contain the Covid-19 will likely last weeks beyond that.

Given the ongoing pandemic and need for preparation time, the most likely plan would be for the games to begin on July 23, 2021, public broadcaster NHK said, citing sources within the organising panel.

The Tokyo 2020 team led by Yoshiro Mori is currently discussing possible dates with the IOC, according to the Asahi Shimbun newspaper.

The Olympics were scheduled to open on July 24 this year with the Paralympics on August 25, but Japan announced last week it had secured an agreement from the IOC to postpone the Olympic Games.



A supporter of FC Minsk wears a facemask for protective measures amid concerns over the spread of the Covid-19 as he attends the Belarus Championship football match between FC Minsk and FC Dinamo-Minsk in Minsk on Saturday, Belarus continuing its championship despite all the leagues in Europe cancelled to curb the spread of the Covid-19.

Organisers eye July 2021 slot for Tokyo Olympics

London, March 29: England women's cricket team captain Heather Knight has joined the National Health Service (NHS) as a volunteer to help the healthcare system fight the Covid-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom.

"I signed up to the NHS' volunteer to help the healthcare system fight the Covid-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom. I've donated my one month salary," Rijju wrote on his Facebook page.

HEATHER TURNS SHINING KNIGHT, HELPS VICTIMS

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CORONA CONTRIBUTION

Sporting heroes play ball, donate

New Delhi, March 29: The Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) and Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) on Sunday decided that they would donate ₹50 lakh each to the central government for fighting against the Covid-19 pandemic.

"As you are aware that World is going through tough time due to spread of Novel Covid-19 Corona Virus, in connection with it BCCI has asked every associated members to contribute at least ₹50 lakh towards Prime Minister's fund. And it will be directly deducted from the annual subsidy granted. The Hyderabad Cricket Association has welcomed the proposal and has decided to contribute the same for the Prime Minister's Fund to fight the pandemic," R. Vijayanand, HCA secretary, said in a press release.

"KSCA through BCCI wish to contribute ₹50 Lakhs to Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund and ₹50 Lacs toward CM Karnataka Government State relief fund," said a KSCA spokesperson.

Besides KSCA, the state associations who have come forward to help include cricket associations of Bengal, Mumbai and Saurashtra.

RAHANE GRANTS ₹10 LAKH

India's Test team vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane has donated ₹10 lakh to the Maharashtra Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

"This is just my tiny bit and a drop in the ocean. Will do my best to support in this difficult time. Meanwhile stay home stay safe," tweeted Rahane after Maharashtra minister Aadiya Thackrey thanked him for his gesture.

TEEN CRICKETER JOINS

Sixteen-year-old all-rounder Richa Ghosh, who represented India at the Women's T20 World Cup earlier this month, has donated ₹1 lakh to the Bengal Chief Minister's relief fund for the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Richa's father Manabendra Ghosh went to the Siliguri district magistrate Sumanta Saha's residence to hand over the

cheque on Saturday. Cricket Association of Bengal said.

"When everybody is fighting Covid-19 and the chief minister has appealed for a united battle against it, I thought of contributing a bit as a responsible citizen of the country," Richa said.

"66 CAB match observers have pooled in ₹1.5 lakh, while 82 scorers contributed their day's pay aggregating to an amount of ₹74.20 LAC stated.

Representative of Mohammed Sporting Club at the CAB, Dipak Shrivastava donated ₹2 lakh to the Relief Fund.

ESHA DONATES ₹30K

Teenaged shooter Esha Singh of Hyderabad on Sunday pledged to donate ₹30,000 to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, becoming, at 15, the country's youngest person to make a monetary contribution.

"I pledge to contribute ₹30,000 from my savings to PM CARE FUND to Fight Covid-19. I will do my best to support in this difficult time. Meanwhile stay home stay safe," tweeted Esha on her Twitter handle.

Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijju donated his one month salary over and above Prime Minister Narendra Modi's directive to all BJP MPs to contribute ₹1 crore from MPLAD funds in the country's fight against Covid-19 pandemic.

PARA CHAMPS ₹1 LAKH

Double Asian Para Games high jump champion Shradha Kumar has donated ₹1 lakh to the Prime Minister's relief fund for the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I have donated ₹1 lakhs and one to PM CARE FUND to tackle Covid-19. I am donating 1 per cent of my net," the 29-year-old from Bihar tweeted.

RIJJU GIVES UP SALARY

"PM Narendra Modi ji announced #PMcares Fund to strengthen disaster management capacities and to encourage research on protecting citizens. It accepts the contributions too. Let us contribute to make India healthier and more prosperous for our future generations. I've donated my one month salary," Rijju wrote on his Facebook page.

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How IPL that could have been wasn't

New Delhi, March 29: In an ideal world, the millennials in Mumbai would have trudged out of a busy Churchgate station, mostly in Blues with a liberal sprinkling of canary yellow between them making their presence felt.

The slightly elder ones, enjoying their cosy Sundays across India and few who are facing mid-life crisis would be happy that late evenings during next seven weeks are taken care of even though the cricket prelude of Spanish song 'En El Mundo' with Pepe El Trompeta" will be irksome.

There wouldn't be jostling for remote control during this lockdown. So next will settle for Netflix to watch rerun of 'Friends' and some may like to revisit their teens watching Byomkesh Bakshi on DD National.

This IPL would have been Dholi's comeback tournament after eight and a half months. He would have again led the side, face not giving away anything but unbridled joy when Chennai Super Kings does something.

This would have perhaps been the last year with Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma (left) and Chennai Super Kings captain M. S. Dhoni in this file photo.

CSK's 'Dad's Army' with a lot of players like Suresh Raina, Harbhajan Singh, Shane Watson unlikely to feature in yellow jersey next year.

This was probably Dholi's chance to get back into the groove and show the world why Rishabh Pant and K. L. Rahul can still be asked to wait for one last global tournament.

If IPL doesn't happen and World T20 is held this year (subject to normalcy), we will see Dhoni in India blues again? His fans won't like that but likes of Sunil Gavaskar, Virender Sehwag and Kapil Dev have felt otherwise and not without valid reasons.

The 14 and 14 may be we were assured of watching him in action that we be twice or thrice more if CSK would have made the finals, might not happen. You would miss Virat Kohli's agony and ecstasy as the challengers Bangalore with their kind of players' roster, which majority believe, would have flattered to deceive.

The capacity crowd at the Eden Gardens, which nowadays gives dormant response to even quality Test matches would have shouted their lungs out. Some for the players and some for Shah Rukh Khan when he sits on the lower tier of Club House balcony.

They won't shout as it's the lungs that everyone needs to protect now.

Airborne David Warner's flight against the mutton biryani and Hyderabad's own double ka meetha.

We probably won't get to know how good Anil Kumble's first stint as a mentor coach (after Mumbai Indians and India) would have gone with a passionate owner like Prafulla Mehta watching every performance of Kings XI Punjab.

Pant on his part would have liked to rock the IPL stage - something that he had made his own in past few years, with those astute looks like a hook when he is off balance.

How well would have Steve Smith captained Rajasthan Royals? Good enough to force Cricket Australia selectors to hand the captaincy to him from Aaron Finch? We might never know.

It's 8pm today and IPL will start. Deal with it folks.