

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | 31 MARCH 2020

WEATHER

Max: 35.5°C
Min: 23.6°C
RH: 32%
Rain: Nil
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky.
Max/Min temp. 37/24°C

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
1251	32
TS: 77	06
AP: 23	00

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

7,27,080

DEATHS

34,610+

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 183

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Suddha Saptami till 3.49 pm (Wednesday)
Star: Mrigasira till 6.44 pm
Varjyam: 3.24 am to 5.03 am (Wednesday)
Durmuhurtam: 8.32 am to 9.21 am and 11 pm to 11.48 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
HURJI CALENDAR
Shabaaan 5,1441 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.12 am
Zohar: 12.30 pm
Asar: 4.41 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.42 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.28 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.11 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 10.55 AM
MOONSET TODAY NA

COUNTER POINT



Corona did what the lawyer couldn't do!

IN BRIEF

Prisoners get bail, parole

New Delhi/Bhopal: Thousands of prisoners in overcrowded jails across the country are being released on interim bail or parole in an unprecedented step to prevent the spread of coronavirus and also to avoid any clashes, as authorities scramble to stop the pandemic in its tracks. In Delhi's Tihar prison that is bursting at the seams, 1,500 inmates are likely to be released soon in the second batch, officials said. Over 400 inmates from the planned number of 3,000 have already come out in the first phase to decongest the jail complex, they said. The move by prison authorities followed a Supreme Court order on March 23 that all the states and union territories must consider releasing all convicts who have been jailed for up to seven years. —PTI



WORLD | 8

Some 1 lakh may die in US, says Trump



SPORTS | 10

Tokyo Olympics in July-August, 2021

TABLOID

The four-legged friends need your help



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SIX DIE OF COVID-19 IN TS

All the dead had gone to a Delhi mosque; TS asks people to tip-off about other attendees

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The death toll owing to the coronavirus pandemic in Telangana state took a grim turn for the worse on Monday, with the state government announcing late in the night that six persons have died from Covid-19 disease at different hospitals in the city since Saturday.

A news release from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said that all six patients, identified as Covid-19 positive, had attended a religious event at the Markaz mosque in Nizamuddin area in Delhi between March 13 and 15. The CMO said that two of the six patients died at the Gandhi Hospital, one at Apollo Hospitals, one in Global Hospital, one in Nizamabad and the sixth in Gadwal town. Special teams were urgently pressed into action to isolate members of the families of the six victims and any possible contact the deceased patients might have had. All these contacts were being shifted to hospitals to be kept under isolation and then tested for the disease.

The health department also issued an urgent appeal to anyone who has any information on people who visited the event in Nizamuddin, or on those who were in contact with these individuals, to immediately inform the nearest health department or other government office so these persons can be identified, isolated and tested for the disease, and if need be, provided immediate treatment. The department further said that it is understood that everyone who attended Markaz is believed to have contracted the disease. It is the public duty of everyone who attended the event to immediately report to the health department, which will provide free testing and treatment. The possibility of the

CENTRE SEALS OFF NIZAMUDDIN AREA IN DELHI

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Over 300 people in Delhi's Nizamuddin area are being tested for coronavirus in different hospitals amid worries that they might have been exposed to the infection at a gathering in a mosque with visitors from Malaysia, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.

This is the largest single group tested at the same time over suspicion of the Covid-19. The area has been sealed off and the police is patrolling to enforce the quarantine. Drones are also being used to monitor the movement of people. On March 10, several visitors from South Asia gathered at an event organised by Table-ehi Jamaat in a mosque.

Full report on Page 7

religious event at Markaz organised by Tablighi Jamaat as a hub for Coronavirus transmission within the country, first came to light when 10 Indonesian preachers who came to Karimnagar after attending the event, earlier this month, tested positive for the disease.

Subsequently, one contact person of the preachers tested positive and on Monday, this person's mother and sister too were tested positive. His entire family was shifted to Gandhi Hospital to be kept under observation and treatment. It is learnt that the Central health officials were in contact with state officials seeking details on how the state went about identifying contacts of the 10 Indonesians as well as the six others who have died from the disease.



A screen grab shows healthcare workers, in protective suits, spraying a disinfectant solution through hose pipe on migrant workers before allowing them to enter the town of Bareilly on Monday. Thousands of migrant workers left bigger cities after the nationwide lockdown was imposed to limit the spread of coronavirus in the country. —PTI

Kid in general ward tests +ve

16 docs, 26 others in quarantine, doctors' 'silent boycott' today

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Telangana Junior Doctors Association (T-JUDA) has called for a 'silent boycott' from duty from March 31 to protest the "irresponsible act" of the state government after 16 junior doctors and post-graduate doctors were exposed to a three-year-old child who tested positive for Covid-

19 at the Niloufer Hospital. A total of 42 people, who had come in contact with the young patient, including 18 children aged between 5 and 10 years, and eight attendants of patients, were sent to quarantine. All of them were sent to the Gandhi Hospital to take the Coronavirus test after the child was confirmed positive. The Covid-positive child

was being treated at the general ward in Niloufer. There is no clarity as to how the child got the virus as both parents are asymptomatic.

According to sources, the parents have either come in contact with a visitor from a Covid-affected country or it could have been a case of community transmission. The child was brought to hospital

four days ago, with symptoms of cough and high fever and was admitted to the general ward, where there were more than 20 patients. The T-JUDA said the government had exposed hundreds of doctors, who were working without personal protection equipment to coronavirus.

Page 4: Doctors seek full protective gear

SC TO HEAR PIL ON MIGRANT WORKERS

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Saying the prevailing "fear and panic is worse than coronavirus", the Supreme Court on Monday asked the Centre to file a status report on the steps taken to address the situation, with thousands of migrants workers leaving cities and going back to their villages after losing their livelihood following the nationwide lockdown.

Seeking a response from the Centre on the two PILs seeking immediate steps to provide shelter, food and medical care to thousands of migrant workers, a bench of Chief Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde and Justice L. Nageswara Rao sought the Centre's response by Tuesday and listed the matter on Tuesday for further hearing. It refused to pass any order without a status report from the Centre.

The court said the Centre's reply should address the issues raised in the two PILs — one by lawyer Alok Srivastava and the other by Rashmi Bansal — both raising issues concerning migrant workers who have left the cities for their native villages.

Mr Srivastava sought immediate steps, such as food and shelter for the migrants and to prevent them going to their villages as virus-afflicted persons among them have the potential of spreading the virus in rural areas. Ms Bansal's PIL focused on medical and safety steps to protect migrant labourers.

Covid-19 cases increase by a record 227 in a day

VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

The number of novel coronavirus cases in India has gone up by 227 from 1,024 on Sunday to touch 1,251 on Monday. Five deaths have been reported on Monday, taking the total toll to 32 from 27 a day before. So far, 111 persons have been cured of the disease.

Health ministry officials, however, claim the nationwide lockdown, which has now completed six days, is helping contain the fast rise of fresh cases. The government sees the recovery of 10 per cent of patients as a positive sign, and is keeping its fingers crossed as death rate remains 2.8 per cent of the total infected.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India had taken "unprecedented and early steps" in response to this pandemic from mid-January to reduce the risk of importing the infection,

Officials said the lockdown has given the government time to prepare for bigger challenges once the curbs are lifted. It has secured PPEs, ventilators and built dedicated Covid hospitals.

and thereafter to prevent a large outbreak.

"It took 12 days for cases to rise from 100 to 1,000 in India, whereas seven other developed nations with lesser population than us have seen multiple increase in positive cases. The lockdown has slowed down the virus spread, that is a positive result of the lockdown, but it is a daily battle," said Lav Agarwal, joint secretary in the health ministry, said amid speculation that the 21-day lockdown may be extended. The government is tak-

ing solace that out of 38,442 people tested so far, only 1,242 tested positive.

The Central government is, however, facing criticism for testing fewer people. Officials said with the private sector joining in, the screening will increase. The private sector has tested 1,334 so far, and no positive cases were detected. This makes the government believe the transmission is not at the community level. "So far we are managing it well. Of the total patients in hospitals, a substantial number is recovering well while the percentage of patients whose condition is serious is very little," he added.

Officials said the lockdown has given the government time to prepare for bigger challenges once the curbs are lifted. This includes making available PPEs, ventilators and dedicated Covid hospitals.

Page 7: Panel to speed up R&D decisions

6 MORE CASES, 13 DISCHARGED IN TELANGANA

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The total number of Coronavirus (Covid-19) positive cases in Telangana state took a jump on Monday with the state government announcing that six more persons have tested positive for the disease, taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases in the state to 77 so far.

Of these 77, the department said 13 persons were discharged on Monday. The number of discharged patients is 14 so far in the state, including the first Covid-19 patient.

The state government's brief Covid-19 bulletin was bereft of any details about the areas from where Monday's new patients come from, their travel histories, or whether they were contacts of patients diagnosed with the virus earlier.

Page 4: Don't believe rumours: TS to people

Centre denies reports about lockdown getting extended

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba on Monday described as "baseless" reports in sections of the media that the 21-day lockdown to check the spread of Covid-19 would be extended.

"I am surprised to see such reports, there is no such plan to extend the lockdown," said Mr Gauba, the top bureaucrat in the country. The 21-day lockdown is

due to continue till April 14. Earlier in the day, state broadcaster Prasar Bharati and the government's Press Information Bureau (PIB) had also tweeted that there was no plan to extend the lockdown beyond April 14. The denial came as certain media reports speculated that the government might extend the lockdown.

"There are rumours and media reports claiming that the government will extend the #Lockdown21 when it

expires. The Cabinet Secretary has denied these reports, and stated they are baseless," tweeted the PIB, using the hashtag #PIBFactCheck.

Initially, after announcing the lockdown, the Centre had stopped all public transport and non-essential goods. However, thousands of migrant workers started moving towards their native villages, the Centre revised its orders and allowed the transportation of all goods without the distinction.

FUND | CRUNCH MLAs, MLCs to get 25% pay, AIS officers 40%, pensioners 50%

State staff will get only half salary

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The Telangana state government has decided to pay only 50 per cent of salaries to state government employees for the month of March. This was decided keeping in view the financial crisis that has erupted after the lockdown was announced to arrest the spread of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Chief Minister K. Chand-

rashekar Rao on Monday took the decision to cut salaries of state government employees, All-India Service officers, ministers, MLAs, MLCs, chairpersons of government owned corporations, and pensioners after reviewing the economic situation of the state.

According to the Chief Minister's Office, a 75 per cent cut was imposed on the salaries of Ministers, MLAs, MLCs, chairper-

son of government-owned corporations and urban and rural local bodies. It was decided to cut by 60 per cent salaries of all officials belonging to All India services like IAS, IPS and IPS in the state.

The CMO informed that a 50 per cent salary cut will be imposed on salaries of all remaining categories and 10 per cent cut would be the salary cut for class IV employees, besides outsourcing and contract employees. It was informed that only 50 per cent of pension would be paid to all

pensioners and 10 per cent cut imposed in pensions of class IV employees.

Earlier, before the announcement came, it was found that employees of government and private sector are worrying about their salaries for the month of March with just a day left for payday. Due to the lockdown, there is a steep fall in collection of taxes.

Page 4: Shut liquor shops to hit state revenue

IN BRIEF

Sec'bad to Howrah special parcel train

Hyderabad: South Central Railway (SCR) will be running special parcel express trains between Secunderabad and Howrah on April 2 and April 9. From Howrah, the same train will begin the reverse journey on April 4 and April 11. Customers would be able to transport any kind of goods since movement of all commodities are exempt from the lockdown.

LIQUOR WORTH ₹6 LAKH SEIZED IN KHAMMAM

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, MARCH 30

Liquor is flowing through illegal outlets in many villages of Khammam and Bhadrachari-Kothagudem districts despite the lockdown declared by the state government following the outbreak of coronavirus. Excise officials have seized liquor worth of ₹6 lakh from 10 places in Khammam district alone during the last one week.

Officials fear that country liquor too is being brewed in rural areas due to non-availability of regular liquor.

There has been no supply of liquor from the Wyrva depot after declaration of the lockdown and it would remain so till April 14, when the coronavirus situation is to be reviewed and a decision taken accordingly.

According to an estimate, liquor worth ₹100 crore is lying with various wine shop dealers, who are reluctant about letting the stocks remain a dead investment. They have thus allowed people to buy liquor from them in bulk and sell the same in towns and villages.

They are keen on clearing off their beer stocks first because the bottles would get spoilt if left in unrefrigerated conditions for long.

People are clamouring for liquor, particularly the habituated among them. Illegal belt shops are finding sufficient market for their liquor.

They have also jacked up the prices because of the lockdown and risk involved. People too are willing to pay the upped price for their tipple.

A bottle of beer is selling for ₹200 against an MRP of ₹130. A Mansion House full bottle is available at ₹600, though the MRP is ₹350.

In raids conducted, excise officials seized liquor worth of ₹2 lakh from Kalava Oddu Centre in Khammam.

Shop No. 22 there has been sealed by the authorities. Liquor has also been recovered from Chandrugonda in Bhadrachari district, where officials have filed a case against Tirumala Wines.

Belt shops have been found to be functioning at Bethalpadu and Patamata Narasapuram in Julurpad mandal and many villages in Tekulapalli, Burgurpachad, Paloncha, Annareddyapalli and Dammappet mandals in Bhadrachari district, apart from Enkoor, Madhira, Bonakal, Konigerla, Tirumalayapalem, Kallur and Vemsoor mandals of Khammam district.

Excise officials are also being vigilant about brewing of country-made liquor in many rural areas, particularly after reports that the lockdown will continue till April 30.

It is for the first time in the state that liquor will not be available for such a long period without prohibition being there.

Withdrawal symptoms kick addicts

Many alcoholic patients admitted to mental hospital in Erragadda, doctors say the number may rise

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

On Monday, 45 patients suffering from withdrawal symptoms due to non-availability of alcohol were admitted and more than 100 treated in the outpatient department of the Institute of Mental Health at Erragadda.

Roadside toddy and wine shops have been closed for the past one week. The alcoholic patients came to the hospital in ambulances along with a family member, complaining of seizures, delirium, hallucinations and not being able to walk. The severe patients were hospitalised. The patients have emotional outbursts - of anger, depression and severe disorientation.

The mild ones have severe headache, are not able to see properly and are constantly chattering and begging for alcohol.

Distressed family members had to arrange for ambulances to convey

them as the police allows ambulances to move freely.

Doctors are expecting many more severe cases in the coming week. Dr Uma Shankar, superintendent of Institute of Mental Health hospital explained, "The cases which have come to the hospital are from the city and outskirts. Those from the districts have been told to go to government hospitals in their area. We are advising our doctors via tele-communication, and patients who need special help will be counselled and treated through these methods."

A detailed treating method for easy use by general physicians has also been prepared. This will allow private doctors in districts to treat patients. Due to restrictions in travel, the Indian Psychiatric Society of Telangana State felt it necessary to guide general practitioners to deal with the situation.

Doctors estimate that there will be more people

● **DOCTORS ESTIMATE** that there will be more people suffering from withdrawal symptoms who will be coming to hospitals next week. An estimated 500 to 1000 people are expected to visit government hospitals this week.

● **More affluent patients go to private hospitals and their numbers too are estimated to be above 500 statewide.** Patients are being asked to purchase medicines from outside.

suffering from withdrawal symptoms who will be coming to hospitals next week.

An estimated 500 to 1,000 people are expected to visit government hospitals this week.

More affluent patients go to private hospitals and their numbers too are estimated to be above 500 statewide.

Patients are being asked to purchase medicines from outside.

A senior doctor explained, "Stockists are not operating the depots as their staff is not coming to work. There is a shortage of medicines, and prescription drugs under schedule H are already hit. With the borders of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra closed, we are having problems procuring medicines. Drugs manufactured in Tamil Nadu are also stuck at inter-state borders. Those medicines which come by air cargo are not in supply. For this reason, we are ensuring that our hospital stocks are kept for use of severe cases. Whatever is available with pharmacy shops now is being prescribed to help them deal with their problem."

ANOTHER BATTLE TO FIGHT WITH

There are many psychological and withdrawal issues related to alcohol and tobacco addictions which may push some to attempt suicide. A cross-section of people have different view on this matter.

● If lockdown relaxation is given to wine shops, the crowds will be unmanageable. The disease will spread 100 times faster. Opening of shops possible only if government provides very good security.

— D. MADAN GOUD,
Shruthi Group of
Bars and Wines

● I feel government must exempt wine shops with so many cases of withdrawal effects coming to light everyday because of sudden stopping of alcohol and tobacco sales.

— Hemanth Kumar,
Social worker

I keep getting calls from some of my regular customers requesting us to open the shop, even for a short while. They say they are dying without cigarettes and some want tobacco to chew. But I feel we should stick to government decision on lockdown.

— Osman,
Pan shop owner

Individuals who are alcohol or substance dependent are likely to show withdrawal symptoms when access to alcohol or other substances is cut off suddenly. Symptoms can range from sleeplessness, irritability to psychotic presentations of hallucinations and delusions. Withdrawal symptoms can be distressing not only to the individual but to the whole family.

— Dr Anita Rego,
Social psychologist

Every day since lockdown, there have been attempts to break open wine shops. Addicts get desperate and can get violent during this stage.

— Excise Dept officials

(inputs by Sanjay Samuel Paul)

Lockdown defaulters



Police detain over 25 people on Monday as they were trying to go to their native places in Madhya Pradesh during lockdown. Later, the police took the detainees to the West Marredpally community hall and provided them food and shelter.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Cops use tech to push lockdown

DURGA PRASAD
SUNKU | DC
HYDERABAD MARCH 30

Telangana state police are using technology to enforce the lockdown imposed nationwide as a means of curtailing the spread of the coronavirus.

Video analytics software is coming in handy to control public gatherings and identify vehicles flouting the norms.

In addition, police are geo-tagging the homes of individuals who have a travel history and have been asked to stay in home quarantine.

A project to develop a mobile app to monitor the movement of quarantined individuals is in the pipeline. Using video analytics to restrict movement of vehicles and public gatherings.

In Hyderabad city alone there are around 246 cameras which are programmed to alert the command and control room if more than five people have gathered in an area.

If this happens, the control room will inform the patrolling staff or police personnel at a nearby junction who will disperse the crowd.

In addition, around 160 high-definition cameras have been installed to identify vehicles flouting

traffic rules in the city.

"These cameras are equipped with automatic number plate reading (ANPR) software which is programmed to detect a vehicle violating the three kilometre rule. After identifying the vehicle, the traffic police will impose a fine," said a Hyderabad traffic police officer.

AI and geo-tagging to keep tabs on movement of quarantined individuals:

"Throughout the state, in all the districts, every day, police visiting the geo-tagged homes and physically check the presence of quarantined individuals. Homes are geo-tagged to help the local police, health department and patrolling police identify those in quarantine. We have even asked the neighbours to keep a tab on the movement of these individuals," said a senior police official.

He added that a mobile app is being developed to monitor the movement of quarantined individuals. It should be in use in another two days. It can only be used with the consent of the individual so as not to infringe on privacy laws.

"The purpose of using such technology is to restrict the movement of people and curb the spread of Covid-19," said a senior police official.

Mother's plight



A woman who recently gave birth to a baby, though discharged from the hospital, waits at the Government Maternity Hospital in Old City in absence of any transport due to lockdown.

— P. SURENDRA

Move to turn Unani hosp as Covid unit draws flak

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The Government Nizamia General Hospital (Unani) at Charminar has been converted as a Covid-19 Level One treatment hospital by the Department of AYUSH and District Medical Education Department.

However, the move seems to be an unscientific one as one has come across several lacuna, which kill the very purpose of establishing such a facility.

It is found that even without sufficient paramedical staff and no upgrade of basic infrastructure and amenities, the hospital has been converted as level one treat-

ment hospital.

Even more appalling is that there is insufficient drinking water supply, poor lighting facility and laboratories that are in deplorable condition. The wards have only a few fans and most of them do not work.

Telangana AYUSH Commissioner, Ms Alagu Varshini and Charminar Legislator Mr Mumtaz Ahmed Khan on Monday visited the hospital and inspected the Covid-19 facilities.

It is pertinent to mention that the medical staff and people residing in the vicinity have raised objection and expressed apprehension that this will spread coronavirus in the

● **MEDICAL STAFF** and people residing in the vicinity have raised objection and expressed apprehension that this will spread coronavirus in the densely populated neighbourhood.

● **THE UNIT** also lack basic infrastructure facilities.

densely populated neighbourhood.

Mr Mumtaz Khan said that patients complaining of symptoms similar to Covid-19 would be admitted here. He said that required facilities have

been provided and the government has provided ₹7.5 lakh for necessary arrangements.

Patients will be provided breakfast and two meals at government cost every day.

He clarified that the patients' attendants will not be allowed to stay as a preventive measure. City police will post pickets to ensure security. He admitted that there was a need to provide more facilities and said that the Commissioner of AYUSH has given his nod for procurement of 200 fans and 200 tube-lights. Casual employees and labourers will be hired and everything would be orderly in the next two to three days.

Mr Khan clarified that neighbors should not worry as only suspected patients will be admitted here while those found positive would be shifted to Gandhi Hospital.

Additional Director AYUSH and Principal of Nizamia Tibbi College, Dr Ahsan Farooqui, said that patients with symptoms of pneumonia, flu, cold and cough, and breathing problems would be quarantined.

The hospital will take care of 250 suspected Covid-19 cases. He clarified that Level One means suspected cases and those who freshly travelled from abroad or have come in contact with Covid +ve patients.

HIGH SPIRIT

With no govt or police restrictions on booze sale, it is the most flourishing 'business' during lockdown

Despite lockdown liquor selling at double the price in black market

CORONA RATES (APPROX)

₹2,000 to ₹2,500
Old Monk: (full bottle)

₹3,000
Blenders Pride

₹3,500
100 Pipers

₹300 to ₹350
Kingfisher beer

₹400
Budweiser beer

₹5,000 to ₹6,000
Johnnie Walker
Black Label

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

This is not the new or revised price list of liquor in Telangana State. These are the "corona rates" at which liquor is being sold in black across Hyderabad ever since the lockdown commenced. The prices are double the original cost of each bottle, if not more. But money is not the only thing which will get you your quota of booze — you also need to have the right contacts. For Hyderabadis at least that is not a difficult task, or so it appears.

During the total prohibition days in undivided Andhra Pradesh in the 1990s, when people with the right contacts were able to get their daily dose of

liquor by paying double or triple the price for their favourite brands, Telangana state, particularly Hyderabad is witnessing something similar now, what with owners of some wine shops, bars, pubs, clubs and even some defence personnel making big bucks by selling liquor bottles to people 'known to them.'

With no one to keep a check on the trade, it is the most flourishing 'business' during this lockdown.

According to those involved in the hush-hush trade, a large number of wine shops and pubs still have huge stocks in their establishments which are now closed. Anyone who is able to tap the right contact — right from the owners of

pubs or wine shops to the managers or even staff — is able to get their quota of liquor. You name the brand and they have it. Only, the buyer should be willing to spend.

Like during prohibition, some of the sellers are offering to home deliver the liquor while others are demanding that the buyer come to them and pick up the parcel.

Interestingly, sources said many are choosing to execute the transactions very early in the morning, which is the time when policemen who are otherwise busy the whole day enforcing the lockdown are dead tired and take a nap.

Over the last one week, the state has witnessed suicide attempts by some alco-

UNEASY MOMENTS FOR MANY

● **Bollywood actor Rishi Kapoor** has said liquor shops should be opened during the lockdown, a move many have welcomed.

● **Quite a few hilarious videos** are doing rounds on WhatsApp urging government to consider opening liquor shops.

● **A couple of days ago,** there was a fake letter doing rounds which said liquor shops will be opened, which led to confusion. Later, it became known it was fake.

holics, attempts of breaking into wine shops and the situation only looks alarming what with many alcoholics turning paranoid due to withdrawal symptoms. But this may not be the case with the richie-rich who are easily able to get high on their favourite brands by paying extra bucks.

"The only good thing about the United States of America at the moment is that though the country has become the epicentre of coronavirus cases, the administration there has kept the liquor shops open. What else are people going to do locked up at home for 21 days here? The govern-

ment should consider making an arrangement for home delivery of liquor, just like it is being done in Kerala," reasons a businessman based in Jubilee Hills, who does not wish to be quoted.

Sources say that once anyone known to the owner or manager makes the purchase, he in turn is passing on the contact to his friends and relatives and the chain is getting longer with each passing hour, a situation which is getting difficult to handle.

Many people are also headed to Cantonment areas where the defence personnel, who stocked up bottles from their canteen, are making a killing selling liquor. Similarly, police men too

are using their clout with the owners of wine shops, bars and pubs in their areas as they too are flooded with requests for liquor.

"I have gone out to purchase liquor in black twice since the lockdown. I took all precautions like wearing a mask and using a sanitiser before and after taking the bottle. I also cleaned the bottle with Dettol before taking it inside my house. The government should make liquor available and there is nothing wrong in it in such times," a software engineer said on condition of anonymity.

But this is not the case with booze alone. Those selling cigarettes in the black market too are making good money selling them at double the rates.

SHORT TAKES

COVID-19 TAKES TOLL ON FISH INDUSTRY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The Covid-19 crisis has begun taking its toll on the aquaculture industry in the state with fishermen, fearing coronavirus, reluctant to catch fish in about 42,000 lakes, tanks and other water bodies in the state. As many as 4,264 fishermen's societies have appealed to the government to save them from a potential crisis.

The societies say that nearly ₹70 crore is on the line. With temperatures rising, fish will die as the water gets warmer, so the catch must be harvested in a couple of weeks to prevent these huge losses.

Aqua farmers point out that the fishing community has lent crores of rupees for growing fish in ponds. In 2019 the state government released over 64 crore fishlings into 20,000 lakes and ponds and 3.42 crore hatchery-reared prawns in 70 reservoirs.

The government has spent ₹52.95 crore for the well-being of the fishing community. However, the current crisis and increase in temperatures has proved a setback.

Ideally, fish has to be caught and sold from the second week of March, but the current lockdown has made the catching and transport of the catch impossible. With depleting water levels, fish and prawn would die of suffocation and decreasing oxygen levels.

L. Balakrishna of Telangana Matsyakarulu, Matsya Karmika Sangham said the state government must come to their rescue. Awareness campaigns for the coronavirus have spread panic. He said that the government should designate places where fish can be sold in cities, towns and villages which would ensure social distancing and sanitisation.

The sangham general secretary has requested that special passes be issued to allow the transport of fish. "Like dairy products, chicken and meat, fish and prawns will also boost the immune system. We urge the government to come to our rescue and enhance immune system of people in Telangana," he said.

Fisheries department officials were unavailable for comment.

COP THRASHES SINGARENI WORKER

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, MARCH 30

Though the police department is being lauded across the country for its services during the outbreak of coronavirus, some of its personnel are going overboard in the name of implementing the lockdown.

A constable manning a check post near Subash colony in Bhupalpally thrashed a worker of Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) when the latter was returning home from duty late on Saturday night. The state government has already announced that SCCL is an emergency service and those working with it come under essential service personnel.

The worker, Mukker Ravi, who works as a haulage operator in Kakatiya Khani (KTK) Incline-1 in Bhupalpally, says he was returning home after completing his second shift, which is from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. He was stopped by police officials while he was on his way home despite pointing out that he is a Singareni employee and showing his ID card.

"The constable started abusing and hitting me with his baton though I tried to reason with him. I told him I am a Singareni worker and produced the ID card given by SCCL, which clearly stated that I am a staff member engaged on emergency duty. But the constable threw the card away before beating me up again and again," Ravi said showing bruises on his waist and buttocks.

When other workers came to know about the incident on Monday, they boycotted duties across all the inclines. They also took out a protest march against police brutality. They said they do not want to work because of coronavirus pandemic and demanded that the period of lockdown be declared as paid holiday.

When asked about the incident, Bhupalpally DSP A. Sampath Rao said they received the complaint from the worker on Sunday morning. "Action will be initiated against the constable after due enquiry," he maintained.

Training under lockdown



Armed Reserve Force personnel seen at their headquarters in Hyderabad doing the armed parade on Monday.

— P. SURENDRA

People care two hoots for 'social distancing'

Indians lack concept of 'personal space': Psychologists

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The term "social distancing" doesn't seem to be working. Across the nation, law enforcement agencies are struggling to convince people to maintain even a foot's distance between each other.

Arm-chair psychologists believe this is because Indians have no concept of "personal space". Real psychologists, while not dismissing the idea altogether, said the subject was more complicated than that.

Dr Pragya Rashmi, a consultant psychologist from the city, said the concept of "body buffer zone" in psychology — the physical distance a person prefers to maintain from another — varies between cultures.

"Physical proximity is a

● **PSYCHOLOGISTS** as well as many Dalit and Adivasi activists have noted that the term "social distancing" might not be the most ideal one to use in India

● **Some have suggested it be replaced by "physical distancing"**

part of our culture. We easily touch other people through hugs and whatnot," she said.

Dr Rashmi noted that the idea of personal space differs even between those who live in urban spaces and those who live in rural, open spaces.

Clinical psychologist Aarthi Selvan, who runs a clinic in Begumpet, said the current behaviour of people at market yards

and supermarkets can be explained in another way as well. "During times like these, there is a component of fear and anxiety around the availability of resources. They aren't sure if essential goods will be available," she said. This nervousness could lead people to forget the risks of being in a crowd or not maintaining a distance from others. "There isn't a lot of information being given to the general public. Their anxiety is understandable," she added.

"In any case, the idea of social distancing is a privilege in our country. Most people can't afford to live in a place where they have any real personal space," she added.

Psychologists as well as many Dalit and Adivasi activists have noted that the term "social distancing"

might not be the most ideal one to use in India. Activists have noted that the term has caste undertones, and could allude to untouchability that was practised against certain communities in the country. Some have suggested it be replaced by "physical distancing".

Dr Rashmi said, "The term 'social distancing' doesn't clearly convey its purpose. People still don't know why they should maintain a distance from others." She suggested the use of "safe distance" instead.

Ms Selvan too said the word "social" was leading to the message being lost in transmission. "Indeed, 'safe distance' might work. It is less likely to elicit a threat response from people. It could also elicit a soothing response from them," she said.

MEDICAL SHOPS PENALISED FOR 'COSTLY' MASKS

PULI SHARAT KUMAR | DC
PEDDAPALLI, MARCH 30

District legal metrology officer Vishweshwar Rao, working on the orders of collector Sikha Patnaik, on Monday imposed ₹20,000 penalty separately on the owners of two medical shops for selling masks at prices way above the maximum retail price (MRP) in Peddapalli district.

On receiving complaints from customers in Peddapalli town that some chemists were selling masks at higher prices, Ms Patnaik ordered Mr Rao to inspect all medical shops. He noticed that owners of two medical shops were charging more and penalised them. Warning that they would seize the shops, he straightaway imposed ₹20,000 penalty on each shop and warned shopkeepers against creating scarcity and selling at higher prices.

Pvt isolation spaces pop up across cities

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Five thousand people can pay and use isolation facilities in Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Delhi if they find that they are infected, but are not in a serious condition, and isolation is required. This can be scaled up to meet a demand of up to 80,000 people.

This is an initiative of the private sector, though the government too has facilities to keep the less infected in quarantine.

The reason the private sector has stepped in is because many patients do not want to entrust themselves to government facilities. They have been calling up private hospitals to find out if they can be isolated there.

The Apollo Hospitals group, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India, Oyo Rooms, Lemon Tree, Ginger Hotels and Zomato have come together to provide this facility.

Dr Sangita Reddy, joint managing director, Apollo Hospitals, said, "Steps have been taken by the government of India in screening, testing and keeping high risk individuals in state quarantine facilities to prevent extensive spread of disease. However, with the increase in the scale and scope of testing, the number of positive cases is expected to increase. A significant number of these individuals will be positive but asymptomatic. There will also be a rise in the number of individuals requiring to be quarantined due to contact with Covid-19 patients. This will put a huge load on government quarantine facilities. This is the time for the private sector to step up to the challenge to aid, augment, and support the government."

Rooms for those who can pay will cost ₹1,200 and more per night. They will be neat and clean and there will be monitoring by health care workers to check on vital parameters of blood pressure and heart rate.

In cities where homes are small and people have to live in close proximity, one Covid-19 positive patient could infect many others.

With the lockdown,

● **THE IDEA** is to segregate asymptomatic, infected, mild and serious cases to ensure that there is no cross infection and no clusters

● **THIS MODEL** will be a case study on how to reduce the load of infectious diseases on the health care system. There will be a special team dealing with serious patients only at the hospital level

hotels are empty and they can be used for isolation purposes rather than creating new structures.

The idea is to segregate asymptomatic, infected, mild and serious cases to ensure that there is no cross infection and no clusters.

Serious cases will be in hospitals, either government or private according to the patient's choice.

The model is scalable and will use the technology of telemedicine effectively. Doctors in hospitals are currently monitoring mild symptomatic patients on camera and talking to them on the phone. This is done to ensure that protective gear of medical staff can be used resourcefully for when they attend to the serious patients. Wearing protective gear is time-consuming and a large medical protocol must followed. Its disposal is also a cause of worry as it just can't be thrown away.

This model will be a case study on how to reduce the load of infectious diseases on the health care system. It will also give inputs on how these facilities have worked in mild cases and how the resource management of healthcare professionals works. There will be a special team dealing with serious patients only at the hospital level.

A combination of self-paying and CSR has been modelled to ensure that all sections of society benefit. While government is providing treatment in its facilities free of cost, it will face challenges if the numbers increase drastically. A back-up plan will help deal with the problem.

Rachakonda police provide food, shelter to migrants

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Rachakonda Police came to the rescue of nearly 3,000 migrant labourers living or working in its limits by providing them with food and shelter.

Around 49 migrant workers, who set out to work 850kms from Rahmatnagar to their native Rampur in Uttar Pradesh were stopped at Kushaiguda and offered shelter at a training centre of Ankuram, an NGO run by Ms Sumitra at Bogaram.

Nearly 40 students of Agriculture College in Latur, who are proceeding to Macherla in Andhra Pradesh, were held up at Bongloor and provided food and shelter by SHO Adibatla, thanks to Good Samaritan Giri Bhopal Reddy.

● **OUT OF 2,163** suspects, 1,957 persons were verified on March 28. Three were found positive and 1,850 are home quarantined

Meanwhile, as regards the latest on the enforcement work during the lockdown period, out of a total of 2,163 suspects, 1,957 persons were verified on March 28. Three were found positive and 1,850 are home quarantined. So far, 1,065 passports have been seized and handed over to district authorities.

The Commissionerate has booked 29 violation cases and 130 e-petty cases. Of them, 191 persons violated regulations. Also 13 two-wheelers, one three-wheeler and a four-wheeler have been seized.

Mahesh Bhagwat, Commissioner of Police, urged people under home quarantine to stay for 21 days and that neighbours can keep a watch and inform Corona control room or 100 in case of any deviation.

Meanwhile, in Cyberabad Commissionerate, out of a total of 3,635 suspect persons, 2,264 were verified up to Monday. Of these, 12 are positive cases and 2,136 were home quarantined. So far, 828 passports have been seized and handed over to district authorities.

Additionally, 38 violation and 39 black-marketing cases have been booked by the Commissionerate. In 59 cases, 77 persons have been found violating regulations. Around 177 two-wheelers, 23 three-wheelers and 31 four-wheelers have been seized.

Violators taken to task



Motorists walk on the road after their vehicles were seized by the police for riding without valid reasons during lockdown in Mettuguda on Monday.

— GANDHI

NO | ACTION

In the absence of guidelines, sanitation staff is exposed to deadly coronavirus

GHMC yet to take steps for disposable items

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) is yet to have a mechanism to dispose face masks, tissue papers and other precautionary materials being used during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

The civic body has passed back on to the state government for not giving guidelines for disposing such items. Authorities also made it clear that

those disposables would be treated like wet garbage, which the Corporation has been already segregating. Even the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which has issued guidelines, missed a key element about the disposal of masks, gloves or other disposables used by home quarantined individuals, especially foreign returnees.

Though the state government has already asked the municipal bodies and district authorities to follow Bio-Medical Waste

Management Rules-2016, they were restricted to hospitals. The CPCB guidelines were released to ensure that the waste generated specifically during tests and treatment of Covid-19 patients is disposed in a scientific manner.

Biomedical waste, according to the existing biomedical waste rules, is any waste that is generated during diagnosis, treatment of human beings, animals or for research activities. It could include human tis-

sues, items contaminated with blood, body fluids like dressings, plaster casts, cotton swabs, beddings contaminated with blood or body fluid, blood bags, needles, syringes, or any other contaminated sharp object. The guidelines state "Collect and store biomedical waste separately prior to handing over the same (to) Common Bio-medical Waste Treatment Facility (CBWTF). Use a dedicated collection bin labelled as Covid-19 waste and

keep separately in a temporary storage room prior to handing over to the authorised staff of the CBWTF. Biomedical waste collected in such isolation wards can also be lifted directly from ward into CBWTF collection van".

These have to be implemented by all state governments. However, the CPCB, including the state government, missed on disposal of masks, gloves and other disposables used by home quarantined individuals, especially foreign

returnees. In the absence of these vital guidelines, the sanitation staff, carrying such disposables, is exposed to the deadly coronavirus.

GHMC commissioner, D.S. Lokesh Kumar said that the civic body does not have any guidelines pertaining to disposal of face-masks, hand gloves and other material used by the city residents.

However, he said that they are wrapped in a plastic bag by residents prior to dumping them in bins.

IIT-H DIR CALLS FOR VENTILATOR ALTERNATIVES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

IIT-Hyderabad director B.S. Murthy has called upon the Centre to consider adopting "bag valve masks" as an alternative to ventilators, both within the country and elsewhere, to treat Covid-19 patients.

In a statement, Mr Murthy and V. Eswaran of the department of mechanical and aerospace engineering, IIT-H, said the bag valve masks, also known as ambu bags, are inexpensive, easy to produce and portable when compared to conventional ventilators. The two academics estimated the cost of manufacturing the bags at less than ₹5,000 each, roughly one-hundredth of the cost of a conventional machine.

They noted that the virus had varied effects on the people it infects. Some barely show any symptoms, while passing it on to others who are more seriously affected by it. Of the 15 per cent patients who may be hospitalised, around five per cent will likely develop respiratory difficulties for which assisted breathing will be necessary, they said. Mr Murthy and Mr Eswaran said the bags would have to be manufactured at an industrial scale, in millions, within a short time. IIT-H itself has a proposed design for the same.

They said the idea wasn't new and many countries have come up with the idea of manufacturing low-cost ventilators.

SHORT TAKES

DOCTORS SEEK FULL PROTECTIVE GEAR TO WORK

FROM PAGE 1

The incident at Niloufer Hospital has angered doctors, who have demanded full protection. They are angry that despite assurances from the government that their protection will be taken care, nothing has been done on that front.

"Exposing doctors will also expose thousands of patients who come to hospitals everyday," an association official said. This could lead to another spurt in cases.

Niloufer Hospital is always very crowded. This incident could mark the first cluster transmission in a healthcare set-up in the city. Testing for Coronavirus takes time, and two tests are mandated before a person is declared Covid-positive. This resulted in four days being wasted. It is estimated that there were 1,000 contacts during the course of the four days.



Congress legislators practice social distancing while addressing the media on Monday.

CONGRESS MLAs TO DONATE ONE MONTH SALARY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Telangana Congress legislators will donate their one month salary to the state government for the fight against Covid-19.

Stating this at a press conference here on Monday, Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and others pointed out that all CLP members must use the constituency development funds for providing sanitizers, masks and soaps to the poor in their respective constituencies.

He advised the government to send ration to households voluntarily and the people, on their part, have to follow instructions issued by the Union and State governments on combating the virus. Mr Bhatti demanded that the state government organise a meeting with manufacturers of masks and sanitizers and make them cost-effective. Regretting that farmers and migrant labourers do not have masks and sanitizers, he urged the government to ensure their supply besides providing shelters and meals for migrant labourers.

BJP ASKS PARTY WORKERS TO FEED THE NEEDY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Telangana state BJP president and MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar called on party workers to get themselves involved in the "Feed the Needy" programme during the lockdown.

Mr Sanjay held a teleconference with state office-bearers, district party presidents and state leaders and discussed on various measures on Covid-19. Mr Sanjay asked party workers to ensure that the poor including daily wage labourers should not face problems in getting meals.

He directed them that each worker should provide meals to five people and help to come out from this problem in this crucial juncture.

Mr Sanjay said the party leaders and workers should ensure that the poor and down-trodden and labourers should not face problems in getting essential commodities. He asked them to make arrangements for distribution of essential commodities and food at the district, constituency, town, mandal and village levels in an effective manner.

Mr Sanjay said every party-member should get himself involved in fighting against coronavirus in view of call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and make arrangements for providing meals to the needy. He asked party in-charges to send a report on the implementation of the programme.

Financial curbs in the offing

CM says PM hinted at this during his interactions

S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Facing its worst-ever financial crisis due to the nationwide lockdown, the Centre is likely to impose some financial restrictions. Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao who said he is touch with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in recent days has hinted at such a measure during his press conferences.

Though the Centre has denied that financial emergency is being imposed, it might bring in austerity measures. This includes non-payment or reduced payment of salaries to public representatives and state and Central employees.

Mr Rao has said that the state had to receive ₹12,000 crore from the Centre by March 15 but had not got anything.

Financial officials said that the monthly expenditure towards salaries to ministers, MLAs and MLCs is ₹4 crore, and salaries to government employees cost ₹3,000 crore.

The NDA government headed by the BJP in 2014 had imposed austerity measures to control expenditure and had asked for a 10 per cent non-plan expenditure. Salaries of government employees come under non Plan expenditure.

If the Centre imposes a similar measures again, the Telangana state government will save ₹1,000 crore in the form of salaries to government employees. It is reliably learnt that the Centre will impose financial restrictions for two to three months. In the present financial year, the revenue receipts of the Centre have reduced by ₹1,12,660 crore against the Budget projections. In the 2020-21 Budget, the Centre has projected ₹20,20,926 revenue receipts. That

● **THOUGH THE** Centre has denied that financial emergency is being imposed, it might bring in austerity measures. This includes non-payment or reduced payment of salaries to public representatives and state and Central employees.

● **IT IS** reliably learnt that the Centre will impose financial restrictions for two to three months.

● **THE REVENUE** receipts of the Centre had reduced by ₹1,12,660 crore against the Budget projections.

● **IF THE** lockdown continues for one month, the Centre will lose a large amount of money

● **IF THE** Centre imposes nationwide financial restrictions, the employees may not blame the state. The police, medical and health departments may be exempted from deferred payments.

means the Centre has to get ₹1.68 lakh crore per month on average. If the lockdown continues for one month, the Centre will lose this sum.

The Centre is not in a position to release grants to the states under tax devolutions. Apart from financial restrictions with regard to payment of salaries, the Centre's austerity measures include avoiding meetings in five-star hotels, discouraging departments from holding seminars abroad and barring government officials from first class air travel.

A state government official said that if the Centre imposes nationwide financial restrictions, the employees may not blame the state. The police, medical and health departments may be exempted from deferred payments.

Road to loot



The Sarojini Devi Road in Secunderabad which is in a relatively good condition being scraped in order to be relaid. A passerby alleged that the state government is trying to dole out road projects to contractors when the whole country is under lockdown due to coronavirus.

- S. SURENDER REDDY

Despite ventilator, 60-yr-old succumbs

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

A 60-year-old patient, who had tested positive for Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) on Saturday died in a private hospital on Monday morning in Hyderabad.

The elderly patient came to the hospital with severe respiratory distress. Later, the patient's condition deteriorated to breathlessness. This patient was subsequently confirmed as positive for Covid-19 in a second test conducted by the government and the private hospital got the confirmation of it so they could follow the isolation of the patient for further treatment. Despite being kept on ventilator support, the deterioration was very rapid and patient could not be saved. District medical and health officials have been alerted as per process as

● **THE PATIENT** had no contact with with any travellers from Covid-affected countries.

● **HIS WIFE HAD** died a week ago in another private hospital due to pneumonia of unknown origin.

the disposal of a body of Covid-19 positive patient is strict and requires that several special procedures be followed.

The body has to be placed in a ziplock bag and has to be treated with disinfectants. Family members are not allowed to come close and traditional rituals are not allowed.

The ceremony cannot have more than five people. There are police and health officials to ensure there is no breach of protocol. These have to be followed so that there is no spread of the virus from

the body. These are social ceremonies in Indian community and have a deep seated emotional and social impact on families. But with the virus around, restrictions have to be adhered to.

A senior health official, on condition of anonymity, said, "this is the most sensitive part of our duty. It requires a lot of patience in handling family members. We have to ensure the last ritual is carried out properly and there is no medical breach. In the first death in the state too, small such aspects were kept in mind."

This is one of the reasons why the government is not sharing data as it was earlier as the manner in which people are reacting is causing a major concern.

Those who are admitted in hospitals for infection are breaking down in hos-

pital wards. They are scared and not sure what was going to be done to them.

Earlier in hospitals, doctors and nurses would surround patients but now they are monitoring them on camera. A nurse comes once in four hours and treating doctor comes only if required. With samples collected by private hospitals, tests are not being done. This makes them wait for 24 hours for results. This wait for the patient's is often very difficult. A senior doctor explained, "With risk levels high proximity of doctors with patients is a challenge. We cannot wear a protective gear for all as it has to be used for severe and critical patients. For this reason, on camera monitoring, low contact with patients and checking of vitals at interval of four hours has been designed. But those who

are in the age group of 60 to 80 years are not able to understand this and are psychologically breaking down. They are away from family and want a family member around, which is not possible."

Psychological counselling or reassurance is not happening as there are only physicians around and their main priority is managing physical symptoms. The patient had no contact history with any travellers from Covid-affected countries. The patient's wife died a week ago in another private hospital due to pneumonia of unknown origin.

The treating doctors stated that it was a clear case of community transmission. But government officials were keen that only limited information must be recorded. Hence, the exact contact details or history was not being shared.

DON'T BELIEVE RUMOURS, TS TELLS PEOPLE

FROM PAGE 1

The government proclaimed that "public is requested to stay calm and not panic. The government is taking all measures to contain spread of the virus to protect and safeguard the public."

The bulletin further said that anyone who was in any contact with a confirmed coronavirus victim, "shall watch for symptoms pertaining to Covid-19 and access healthcare soon."

The government also urged people not to "believe rumours, fake news" on social media.

It is learnt the Central health officials were in touch with state counterparts on how they identified contacts of the 10 Indonesians.

Nizamabad Covid suspect died on way to Gandhi

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC NIZAMABAD MARCH 30

A 62-year-old coronavirus (Covid-19) suspect died in the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Nizamabad late on Sunday on night. The incident occurred while the hospital staff shifting him to Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad.

The family members of the deceased reportedly attacked the hospital staff, alleging that the patient died due to medical negligence. Doctors said that the victim had died due to a heart attack.

The deceased Covid suspect was one of the 30 persons who came in contact with a 63-year-old patient of Quilla crossroads in

Nizamabad who tested positive for coronavirus. The Covid-positive patient had tested positive after returning from a religious programme in New Delhi. He is currently in Gandhi Hospital at Hyderabad.

All the persons who the Covid-positive patient came into contact with were placed in the isolation ward at the GGH Nizamabad. Doctors said the Covid suspect who died on Sunday was being shifted to the Gandhi Hospitals as his symptoms had turned severe.

Doctors said fear and unbearable stress might have caused the heart attack. A post-mortem report is awaited regarding the cause of death.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, GGH

Nizamabad superintendent Dr M. Nageshwar Rao said that coronavirus suspect died due to cardiac arrest as he was suffering with high blood pressure and diabetes. "Due to his age and health problem, we tried to shift him to Gandhi Hospital but he collapsed," Dr Nageshwar Rao explained. He said the shocked family members questioned the doctors about the death, and denied reports that hospital staff had been attacked. All coronavirus suspects are being shifted for isolation ward, he said.

The 11 persons who came in contact with the body of the deceased suspect have been shifted to the GGH isolation ward.

Bumper paddy yield in TS, new plans for millers

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao said that a comprehensive Telangana State Paddy and Rice Policy would be prepared keeping in view of increase in the paddy yield in the state.

He has instructed officials concerned to formulate the policy after consulting rice millers and other stake-holders. He announced that the government would stand by the rice millers.

He said the draft policy will be discussed in the Cabinet and would be discussed in the Legislature before it is accepted.

The CM was speaking at a high-level review meeting on Monday at Pragathi Bhavan on paddy cultivation, yield, preparation of rice and exports, and the policy to be pursued and other related issues with authorities and ministers concerned and representatives of rice millers associations. Stating that after the formation of Telangana there was huge progress in irrigation with the construction the Kaleswaram lift irrigation scheme, Mr Rao hoped that Telangana state will produce 2.25 crore tonnes of paddy and the state will become the rice bowl of the country.

Mr Rao felt that under these circumstances, procuring paddy and sending it to mills to make rice and selling it will become a difficult task. He said that the existing policy was not

● **THE CM** promised rice millers there will not be any harassment from officials henceforth and the government will make policy changes to ensure they don't need many permissions

useful in the present changed scenario. "There are 2,200 rice mills all over the state. These mills can mill one crore tonnes of rice per year. In the past, these mills could not get paddy to meet their capacity. It was difficult to mill even 20 to 30 lakh tonnes. Now the situation has changed. There is supply of paddy in abundance. There is 24-hour uninterrupted power supply. Rice mills should take advantage of the situation and mill more rice."

Rice mills should become stake-holders in the state's development and progress, the CM urged.

While assuring the millers there will not be any harassment from officials henceforth, he said the government will make changes in the policy so that they will not need to secure many permissions.

He assumed that the government will consider allocating sites in the industrial estates in the state for the setting up of rice mills.

The Telangana Rice Millers Association donated ₹50 Lakh to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Association Leaders Nagender and Mohan Reddy handed over the cheque to the Chief Minister.

SHUT LIQUOR SHOPS TO HIT STATE REVENUES

FROM PAGE 1

With the closure of liquor shops, there is a severe adverse impact on the state revenues, leaving employees worried about salaries.

Every month, the Central tax share from Telangana through VAT, GST, stamp duty, and vehicle tax is ₹9,000 crore. Excluding the share of Central taxes, the remaining income to the state is ₹7,000 crore. According to commercial tax officials, due to Covid-19 lockdown, around ₹3,000 crore have not been collected in March. Traders could not file their GST returns in as businesses were stand still due to lockdown. The vehicle tax also stopped after lockdown.

Through sale of liquor, every month, the state gets ₹2,000 crore. Once wine shops were shut down, there is no possibility of getting that revenue, excise officials said. Government offices are now running with less than 20 per cent of workforce, making preparation of salary bills also difficult in all state departments.

According to finance department officials, ₹3,500 crore is required towards salaries and pensions of government employees. But government's tax revenue for the month of March was only ₹3,000 crore. However, finance department officials said that the salary for March should not be too big to pay by April 1. An official, who did not want to be named, said that if the lockdown persisted for long, the salaries of the employees will be in

POWER | CRISIS Big loss of revenue due to nationwide lockdown

Discoms credit made easy

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

In a great relief to debt-ridden power distribution companies (Discoms), the Union Power Ministry has relaxed making letter of credit payments to power producers. As per present rules, the Discoms have to pay the total amount for purchase of power to the producers.

Due to the nationwide lockdown, the Discoms are losing huge revenue as commercial establishments and industries have shutdown.

To give support to Discoms that are unable to collect bills from consumers, the Power Ministry has relaxed the

● **TO GIVE** support to Discoms that are unable to collect bills from consumers, the Power Ministry has relaxed the payment security mechanism of letter of credit (LC).

● **MANY CONSUMERS** are unable to pay their dues. This has critically affected the liquidity position of the Discoms, thereby impairing their ability to make timely payments to generating and transmission firms

payment security mechanism of letter of credit (LC). The Ministry's order

reads "Many consumers of the Discoms are unable to pay their dues. This has critically affected the liquidity position of the Discoms, thereby impairing their ability to make timely payments to generating and transmission companies and maintaining letter of credit.

"Considering the unprecedented and force majeure situation it has been decided that power may be scheduled even if the payment security mechanism is established for 50% of the amount for which payment the security mechanism is to be otherwise established contractually and this order shall be in effect till June 30, 2020".

Meanwhile, demand for power has come down by 20 to 30 per cent and major sources of income for Discoms like railways, industrial and commercial customers have been blocked due to shut down. In Telangana, the two Discoms are losing ₹15 crore to ₹20 crore every day. Discoms are already in losses to the tune of ₹8,000 crore.

The All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) Chairman Shailendra Dubey demanded the Union Government to direct the Reserve Bank of India to allow state power utilities to defer payment of debts and interests by at least three months.

SHORT TAKES

CONG TO MEET THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING

SREEPARNA CHAKRABARTY | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Amid a nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of Coronavirus, a meeting of the Congress Working Committee would be held on Thursday possibly for the first time through video conferencing.

On Monday, Congress President Sonia Gandhi also set up a 'Central Control Room' at the AICC Headquarters in Delhi, led by Rajiv Satav to monitor the situation on Covid-19 outbreak.

The CWC — which is the party's highest decision making body — would discuss the crisis across the country due to the Covid-19 outbreak and how the party can help people.

"A meeting of Congress Working Committee will be held on Thursday, April 2. The meeting will be conducted through video conferencing," K. C. Venugopal, Congress general secretary (Organisation) said. The Congress Working Committee is chaired by the party chief and has more than 50 members, including state in-charges, general secretaries and permanent invitees.

UTTARA KANNADA BEGINS HEALTH SURVEY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARWAR, MARCH 29

The Uttara Kannada district administration on Sunday launched a massive door to door health survey in the district.

Uttara Kannada district already has six Covid-19 positive cases and all are from Bhatkal town.

The three-day survey is to collect all the details and help in controlling the Covid-19 spread. It would also provide a strong database which the district administration can keep as a reference in the future.

"Our teams comprising Asha, Anganavadi workers, revenue and RDPR employees will visit every house in the district. It will be a short survey but will have all the details we need. We want the cooperation from all the people," Deputy Commissioner Dr K. Harish Kumar told *Deccan Chronicle*.

The team would check if there was anyone suffering from fever or any other health issues, anybody in the house who has returned from abroad recently and also if there is anyone who has come recently from other parts of the state or country.

According to information available, people with fever would be shifted to fever clinic for preliminary screening and those who have returned from abroad would be screened daily. The recent entrants from other districts too would be screened.

MIGRANTS IN J&K TO GET ₹1,000 EACH

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, MARCH 30

As a large number of people particularly daily-wage labourers and those belonging to other weaker sections of the society have been rendered jobless due to the Covid-19 lockdown, on Monday the government has announced that each such registered out-of-work person would be given ₹1,000 immediately, mainly to buy essential commodities.

An official spokesman in Jammu said that measures to help the labourers from various parts of the country stranded in J&K are also under way. The government on Monday notified helpline numbers for these labourers and asked them to seek assistance and help by contacting the officials concerned in Srinagar and Jammu.

The spokesman said that as far as the dole for workers registered with the J&K Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board goes, the government has sanctioned ₹17.65 crore to provide them immediate financial assistance.

"Each such out-of-work person will get ₹1,000. The amount will reach the beneficiary through Direct Benefit Transfer mode for purchase of essential commodities out of the cess fund available with the Board," the spokesman said. The officials said that the district administrations are also distributing food packets among the poor across the Union Territory.



Dairy farmers throw away milk on a road as they claim to neither be able to sell nor store it during the nation-wide lockdown at Phulia in Nadia on Monday. - PTI

Bodies of all Covid patients to be cremated in Mumbai

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

In a major decision to prevent the spread of deadly coronavirus, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to cremate all bodies of Covid-19 patients irrespective of their religion.

In a circular issued on Monday, the BMC commissioner Praveen Pardeshi has directed that the ritual involving touching the body should be avoided.

"This is done in respect of a community leader, who has brought to my notice that existing burial grounds are in highly dense locality with high chances of contamination. Further procedure of packing the body in plastic bag and burying prevents early decomposition and increases the risk. Hence, all the Covid-19 bodies should be cremated to avoid transmission chances in the community. Burial should not be allowed," the circular stated.

CONGRESS MP FROM KERALA MOVES SC

New Delhi, March 30: The Congress MP from Kerala's Kasaragod, Rajmohan Unnithan, has moved the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Karnataka government to open its border with his state for smooth movement of ambulances and other emergency vehicles during the lockdown.

In his plea, Unnithan said that such a blockade is a clear violation of Articles 21 and 19(d) of the Constitution at a time when supply of commodities is itself hit hard and the entire country is fighting a medical emergency.

He said the blockade has claimed the life of a 70 year old woman who was denied entry into Karnataka for urgent medical treatment. - PTI

Now, docs allowed to 'prescribe' liquor in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 30

The Kerala government in a late evening development on Monday issued an order permitting supply of liquor based on doctors prescription to persons facing withdrawal symptoms and other alcohol related medical emergencies.

The order states that the person concerned or his attendant should approach the excise range officer concerned and submit the prescription along with a form carrying all details and personal identity proof Aadhaar/voters ID/driving license.

The excise officer will issue a liquor pass. The excise officer will intimate the state run be-

ed. It also stated that only five persons can attend the funeral of a Covid-19 patient.

However, the BMC has allowed the burial of bodies at burial grounds away from dense localities.

"If someone insists to bury the body, he will be permitted only if the burial grounds are large enough so as not to create possibility of spread of virus in the neighbouring areas," says Mr Pardeshi.

Mumbai city has been one of the worst-affected region by coronavirus in Maharashtra, with 170 infected patients and eight deaths so far in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Meanwhile, two colonies in Worli area in central Mumbai were sealed, disinfected and fumigated on Monday in view of novel coronavirus outbreak.

After positive Covid-19 cases were detected in these localities, the BMC started a sanitisation drive there. Koliwada is home to local fishing com-

munity in Worli.

Local resident Gaurav Waralikar said, "The entire area has been sealed and there is a lockdown on public movement. Police are not allowing people to leave or enter the area."

Local Shiv Sena MLA and Maharashtra minister Aaditya Thackeray tweeted, "Late last night since 2 am, Koliwada and Janta Colony have been sealed. Disinfection and fumigation is on along with contact tracing."

Man spreads 'Army' to be called' rumour

In the first arrest for spreading Covid-19 related rumours, the Mumbai police arrested a man for floating messages of army being called into minority pockets and locals to be shot by rubber bullets.

The message went viral on social messengers and it denoted Muslim pockets like Dongri, Null Bazar, Bhendi Bazar, Madanpura and Kala Pani among oth-

ers to be targeted for not following lockdown orders.

The police also held at least 130 migrants who were trying to leave Mumbai for Uttar Pradesh in goods carriers.

The accused, identified as Sohail Salim Punjabi (28), a resident of Pathan Wadi area near Bhendi Bazar was arrested after the cyber wing of Mumbai police tracked down his internet protocol address. The officials said that Punjabi's phone has been confiscated for forensic analysis and will be used as evidence in the case.

Ahead of the April fool's day, the Pune police has issued an order warning netizens to refrain from circulating any fake messages on Covid-19. An order issued by the police stated that anybody circulating such messages will face criminal prosecution. The police said action would be taken against the group administrator and all those who forward such misleading messages.

MAHA COUNT JUMPS TO 220; 17 MORE TEST +VE

VRUSHALI PURANDARE | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The number of Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra climbed to 220 on Monday as 17 more patients positive, while two patients succumbed to the disease, taking the death toll due to infection in Maharashtra to 10.

The new cases included, eight from Mumbai, five from Pune, two from Nagpur, one each from Kolhapur and Nashik. However, 39 patients were discharged on Monday.

The 80-year-old man deceased was down with acute respiratory distress. He was admitted to the privately-run Fortis Hospital on Friday and on Sunday evening he breathed last.

2,800 persons with travel history untraceable

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 30

Covid-19 situation in Odisha, though appears to be under control for now with the total number of infected persons remaining at 3 since March 26, is apprehended to assume serious proportions in the coming days as 2,856 persons with travel history to other states and abroad remain untraceable.

The disturbing fact has come to fore after state health and family welfare department communicated to the district collectors expressing its concern over state and foreign returnees, who are yet to be traced.

According to surveillance team report, out of the total 2,856 persons who have not registered themselves on Covid-19 website of state government included 400 from

Bhubaneswar, 450 from Khordha, 650 from Ganjam and 350 were from Cuttack.

Fearing possibility of community spread of Covid-19, state health secretary Nikunja Bihari Dhal has sought cooperation from the collectors of all the 300 districts in tracing out the missing persons.

According to state health department, as many as 370 samples were tested by Monday afternoon. Of the 367 tested negative for Covid-19.

As many as 56 persons were under hospital isolation in different hospitals while more than 78,000 migrant workers who returned from high risk Covid-19 states remained under home isolation.

Similarly, 4,269 people with travel history abroad and 4,601 persons with domestic travel history who got themselves regis-

tered with the state government's designated Covid-19 website and 104 helpline telephone number were kept under home quarantine.

On Monday afternoon, 58 passengers, including driver and helper of a bus, were sent to quarantine by Rourkela district administration here after they returned from a pilgrimage in Uttar Pradesh.

Sources said the passengers, residents of Bolangir and Sonepur districts, had gone on a pilgrimage to Mathura and Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh before announcement of the lockdown.

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the nationwide lockdown on March 25, the pilgrims got stranded.

Later, the administration there made special transport arrangements for their return to Odisha. They were returning via

Rourkela passing through the Jharkhand border. When they arrived in Rourkela in the morning, the local administration sent them to Ispat General Hospital for a primary health checkup. All of them were stated to be fit and had no symptoms for Covid-19.

However, all of them were sent to an isolation centre developed by Rourkela Municipal Corporation at Chhend for 14 days.

The RMC has also made necessary arrangements, including food for all of them, sources added.

Appropriation Bill passed

Amid Covid-19 scare, Odisha Legislative Assembly on Monday sat in the Convention Hall of state secretariat instead of the Bidhan Soudha building and passed

In UP, migrants 'sprayed' with disinfectants

Lucknow, March 30: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday targeted the Yogi Adityanath government over spraying a group of migrants on their back home with "chemicals" to sanitise them in Bareilly, prompting the district magistrate to admit the "mistake" and attribute it to the "over-active" civic bodies personnel.

The SP president attacked the government after a news report, which said the incident occurred in Bareilly where a group of people sitting on the road was sprayed with a liquid which the article claimed was a chemical.

After the incident, several migrants, including women and children, complained of burning sensation in their eyes.

"The spraying of chemicals on migrants to sanitise them has raised some questions. Has the World Health Organisation given any direction in this regard? How do you treat the burning sensation caused by the chemicals? What arrangements are there for people to change out of wet clothes? What alternatives are being provided for the food that gets wet due to the spraying?," Yadav tweeted.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister also tagged the news report with his tweet.

Admitting the mistake in a tweet, District Magistrate Nitish Kumar attributed it to "over-active" civic bodies personnel and said action is being taken erring officials.

"The affected persons are being treated under the supervision of Chief Medical Officer. Teams of Bareilly municipal corporation and fire brigade were asked to sanitise the bus but due to over-activeness they did that. Orders have been issued to take action against the concerned," DM said in a tweet.

The apex child rights body NCPCR has demanded disciplinary and penal action against officials responsible for forcefully sanitising a

The spraying of chemicals on migrants to sanitise them has raised some questions. Has the World Health Organisation given any direction in this regard? How do you treat the burning sensation caused by the chemicals?

— AKHILESH YADAV
Former UP CM

group of migrants with "chemicals" in Uttar Pradesh.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has asked the Bareilly District Magistrate to submit a report in the matter within three days.

"NCPCR has expressed serious view on this inhuman act. In view of the above incident, you are requested to get the matter inquired into urgently and issue necessary directions for immediate action thereby; ensuring adequate arrangements of basic essentials to the family members viz. provision of food, shelter and safety and wellbeing of these children of migrant workers during lockdown period," according to the letter issued by the NCPCR.

The body also demanded appropriate disciplinary and penal action against the officials who carried out the sanitising exercise.

As many as 24 people tested positive for coronavirus infection on Monday in Uttar Pradesh, raising the total count of Covid-19 cases in the state to 96, said officials.

As per the district-wise break-up of total coronavirus positive cases in the state, 38 are from Gautam Buddha Nagar, 19 from Meerut, 11 from Agra, nine from Lucknow, seven from Ghaziabad, two each from Pilibhit and Varanasi and one each from Lakhimpur-Khiri, Kanpur Nagar, Moradabad, Shamli, Jaunpur, Baghpat, Bareilly and Bulandshahr, a statement said.

As many as 35 persons have been put under quarantine in Meerut.

DO NOT HIDE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, WARNS ARMY

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

To prevent the spread of Coronavirus among its ranks, Indian Army has warned its personnel that hiding symptoms of the Covid-19 will invite action under Army Act.

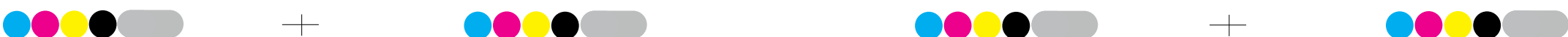
Army said that it is obligatory on all the ranks to disclose during roll call or while screening by the medical authorities symptoms like cough, throat pain, fever and breathing difficulty.

They will have to disclose contact with any Covid-19 patient, relative or friend while on leave. They will also have to disclose about any travel to Covid-19 areas identified by the government. "Non-disclosure of info... is likely to put other troops in harm and thus the act of not disclosing info will be treated as willful concealment and will be dealt with as a breach of discipline under the Army Act," said the advisory.

Till now there has been only three Covid-19 positive cases detected in the Indian Army. Indian Army has taken a series of steps to prevent it spread within its ranks and has restricted non-essential movements in cantonments and military stations.

Indian Army has issued instructions to its field commanders to identify additional infrastructure for setting up of quarantine centers in each station for its own personnel.

All conferences and seminars have been postponed till April 15.



DECCAN Chronicle

31 MARCH 2020

PM promotes himself, Opp. rises to occasion

During his Sunday "Mann ki Baat" radio address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked for forgiveness — not for his ad hoc policy-making, not for his nudge-wink to the periodic violence that keeps his brand undiluted, not for his disdain for experts, and certainly not for his exclusionary politics — but for his "tough" lockdown decision. One, begging for mercy from everyone in general and no one in particular is disingenuous. "I strongly feel you will forgive me," he commanded the hapless citizenry. Two, the decision was hardly tough considering societies across the planet are locking down against the deadly microbial coronavirus. Three, he should have thought of the trouble he says he put us through before abruptly announcing the lockdown — he could have primed his administration for measures to alleviate the suffering of economic migrants. But no; around a score have died in the mass return-migration. His response is almost as incoherent as was his decision to demonetise. The lockdown should have been announced on March 1 and not four hours prior; and Mr Modi only realised the second-order consequences as an afterthought, two days later.

Instead, he announced a relief fund, PM-CARES, though there already exists a PM's National Relief Fund (an audited account), giving rise to suspicion that it is solely meant to enhance his cult of personality. His MPs announce they are "donating" from their Local Area Development funds, though that money is not their personal savings or charity, but belongs to citizens. An American had famously said, "Never let a serious crisis go to waste", and the BJP has taken this advice to heart by relentlessly pursuing self-promotion instead of self-quarantine.

Contrast Mr Modi's words to those of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been warning the government for several weeks about the impending coronavirus crisis. Unlike the incessant nastiness from the ruling clique's cadre and trolls, the Opposition has supported the decision to lock down India; and former finance minister P. Chidambaram has even offered specific suggestions on mitigating the coming economic crunch — which will be crushing. Congress president Sonia Gandhi wrote to Mr Modi two days ago suggesting a one-time state transport arrangement so that migrants did not have to trudge home (a 38-year-old died of exhaustion walking to Madhya Pradesh over the weekend), and her advice was sensibly heeded.

In his letter to Mr Modi, Rahul Gandhi predicted that the 21-day lockdown will be extended. (The US has extended its till end-April.) Mr Gandhi feared the return-migrants would infect their elderly back home, resulting in a "catastrophic loss of life". He asked Mr Modi to strengthen the social safety net; called for the China-style erection of hospitals with thousands of beds and ventilators; asked that financial institutions be insulated from the "shock-wave"; and urged him to engage our "immense network of small and medium businesses and farmers" in a conversation to build their confidence and protect their interests.

The difference was clear. For Mr Gandhi, his letter was about India and Indians, especially its poor. For the PM, his speech was all about himself.

Save the doctors

Send the N95 masks and PPEs to our grave," said a placard shown on the Facebook page of Medicos United, highlighting the crippling shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical workers including doctors, nurses and paramedics who are in the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, Covid-19. Reports have come in from every state on the frightening scenario. In Bihar, 83 junior doctors of the Nalanda Hospital in Patna, a designated Covid-19 hospital, have sought home quarantine as they fear falling ill after attending patients with no protective gear. More than 800 Delhi residents have been asked to go on home quarantine after the doctor whom they consulted tested positive for the disease. Doctors in a Bengaluru hospital say they have been asked to wear the face mask for up to 15 hours, nullifying the very purpose of it.

Every medical person is very precious for India which has only 7.77 doctors for 10,000 people against China's 17.85, Italy's 40.93 and Spain's 40.69, the last three being the worst impacted by the pandemic. If the two European countries have not been able to even attend to their sick, leave alone treat, despite their medical might, India stands little chance in the deadly fight. The sad fact is that the Indian government which asked all Indians to clap their hands and plates to honour the medical professionals has done little to equip them for the war. It did little planning for the war and woke too late and floated a global tender last week for one million coveralls and goggles, four million N-95 masks, two million nitrile gloves, 6,00,000 face shields and two million triple-layer surgical masks when the World Health Organisation has already issued a warning about shortage. The government should not leave it to the bureaucratic wisdom to procure the essential tools for this decisive battle but relax the procedure and procure them at the earliest instead.

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ADITYA SINHA
Editor

T. VENKATESWARLU
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-255284/255287; Telefax: 0866-255234

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalpalay Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTIC Commercial Complex, 80 Feet Road, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560 095 Ph: 080-43460500; Fax: 080-22960552

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255

Kochi: No.3-B, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycaud (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014

Kozhikode: Door No 6/1002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax : 0495 4019 018

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Subhani

Covid-19 century's new global inflection point



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

With reported global Covid-19 infections now touching 7,20,217 with 33,903 confirmed deaths across 196 Westphalian entities at the time of writing, this pandemic is truly global in every sense of the word. However, ultimately there would be a post-Covid-19 world. What would it be like? Is the current pandemic be the first inflection point of the 21st century?

The 20th century had five major geostrategic breakpoints. The First World War (1914-18), the Second World War (1939-1945), the Cold War (1945-1991) and the division of the world into the East and West blocs with some professing non-alignment, the demise of imperialism and colonialism, and the rise of newly liberated nations across much of the world. The end of the Cold War in 1991 and the rise of unipolarity and globalisation was underpinned by the Washington Consensus.

It is not that there have not been influenza pandemics earlier after the maturation of modern medicine. There was the Spanish Flu from 1918-20, Asian Flu 1957, Hong Kong Flu 1968, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) 2002 and the West African Ebola Virus Epidemic some years back. However, each of these never got elevated to the level of a geostrategic event. Why then is Covid-19 different even though less people may ultimately succumb to the disease than what is anticipated?

Covid-19 is different because it is universal with known cases in 196 countries and territories around the world. The previous five had a more localised influence. Currently three billion out of the eight billion people on Planet Earth

are in the throes of an unprecedented lockdown. More than one hundred nations around the world have put their people under some form of punitive restrictions or the other. Global Travel has all but stopped, supply chains stand disrupted and the most primitive form of disease prevention — stay away from each other — under the chic sounding *nom de guerre* — social distancing — seems to be the only weapon in the toolkits of governments. Medical practitioners have been experimenting with what is colloquially called "hit and trial" to save the most critical.

However the biggest failure has been the lack of any substantive global leadership to pre-empt or prevent the proliferation of the virus. What are the "known knowns" at the moment? The World Economic Forum Website on March 20, 2020, has this to say — sometime in December 2019, 27 of the first 41 people hospitalised (66 per cent) passed through a market located in the heart of Wuhan city in Hubei province.

However, it was only on December 31, 2019, China notified the World Health Organisation (WHO) of several cases of an unusual pneumonia in Wuhan. Even as late as even between January 9 and January 11, 2020, WHO put out bizarre tweets either downplaying the situation or trying to undercut travel advisories that were anticipated.

It was only on the 20th and 21st of January, 2020, that WHO conducted its first field visit to Wuhan. It is apparent from a perusal of the summary of the report that the full impact of the epidemic was not grasped even three weeks after China had

notified the WHO. It took another five weeks before the director general of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared Covid-19 as a pandemic on March 11 2020.

It also calls into question as to why WHO did not question China about the whistleblower doctor Li Wenliang who in early December 2019 had posted in medical chat groups that a new SARS-type illness had started manifesting itself in Wuhan a full month before China grudgingly informed the WHO. It is another matter that this brave whistleblower is ostensibly dead because of the same Covid-19 that he exposed.

It is, therefore, clear that there has been gross failure of the WHO leadership. It was both negligent, if not complicit, in the initial coverup and thereby needs to be investigated by an international group of medical jurists under the joint supervision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Criminal Court (ICC) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). If the bureaucratically top heavy United Nations Security was to argue that these bodies do not have the mandate to carry out such an exercise then the UN General Assembly should amend their remit.

The second is the failure of the United Nations Leadership itself. The UN secretary general has been extremely slow in coordinating a global response to the situation while the rest of the UN has all but abdicated its responsibility. The UN Security Council no longer meets and most

missions have either shut shop or pared down their presence to the bare minimal because of the situation in New York. Perhaps the UNSC needs to physically move to somewhere safe to continue functioning effectively.

Even the G-20 that was created in the wake of the global economic meltdown in 2008 had its first virtual summit only on March 26, 2020. A full 11 weeks after the initial report to the WHO. What they come up with and how it would be implemented remains to be seen. So far all responses have been national if not nationalistic. Most countries and cities have tried to isolate themselves to insulate their populations. This is also the result of sustained assaults by right wing bigots on globalisation and the neo-liberal global order at whose heart lies the United Nations system. It seems to have been severely weakened by this continuing rampage.

In post-Covid-19 world the institutions of global governance would have to be revisited and remodelled so that they have the nimbleness to respond swiftly to emerging global challenges. Moreover, countries and institutions would have to be held accountable for practices, either deliberate or inadvertent, that has put humanity at risk and is testing the resilience of national health-care systems around the world. Both in the developed and the developing world, healthcare paradigms and national economic priorities, especially social safety nets for the most vulnerable sections of society, would have to be reimagined and re-budgeted because what would follow Covid-19 is a deep economic recession that would ravage the poorest.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcast minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari

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LETTERS

CORONAVIRUS

There is no regular sanitisation being done in West Marredpally even after several Covid-19 cases surfaced in Hyderabad. Can't the government not afford to spray antiseptic in this area? I request the SCB authorities to do it.

Venkat Secunderabad

We spotted many rare animals and some rare birds and pigeons during lockdown in Hyderabad. In some states packs of wild dogs, jackals, wild deer, etc., were spotted. We also found pigeons tipping for food. In Hyderabad (Gulshan Colony) near seven tombs forest area, there used to be monkeys, peacocks, wild rabbits and snakes that vanished. However, this morning a monkey was spotted surprising vendors who were supplying essential goods. Animals love silence in lockdown as they feel safe and roam on streets.

Raheem Hyderabad

India generously brought back NRIs due to coronavirus. However, this generosity has endangered 130 crore Indians. India could have asked its embassies to take care of them. That would have made India safer and there would not have been any need for daily janata curfews. These NRIs who are avoiding quarantine after returning can be potential virus spreaders. The respective authorities must take all measures to ensure that these returnees stick to home quarantine.

T. Kailash Ditya Hyderabad

India — a veritable paradise on earth

GAYA, March 30
The world today needs a creative synthesis of atom and Gandhi, of science and ahimsa Dr. D.S. Kothari, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, said while addressing the seventh convocation of the Magadha University here today.



Only that could lead the present society, based on power and exploitation, to a 'fulfilment society' based on true co-operation and dignity of man, he observed. Towards this great end, India with its unique heritage and potentialities had a special obligation.

He said if one were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature could bestow — in some parts a veritable paradise on earth — he would have to point out to India. It is under the Indian skies that the human mind had most fully developed some of its choicest gifts.



Kishwar Desai
London Diary

Atlas shrugged: All it takes is a zombie virus to stop our world

The Modi virus is catching. Learning from the banging of drums and clapping at the end of the curfew in India last Sunday, not just London and the young royals George, Charlotte and Louis but all of UK cheered and banged the drums and set off fire-crackers at 8 pm last Thursday to pay tribute to the healthcare workers who are at the frontline of the battle against the new coronavirus. We are finding out that even our wonderful NHS doesn't have enough protective equipment, or testing kits or ventilators. But six lakh people have volunteered to help out in the health service that says something about who is really loved by the people. All the homeless who sleep rough on the pavements have been promised that they will be rehoused by their local authority over the weekend. That's the true charitable spirit that binds the British in the face of all crisis.

We are under lockdown or curfew, social isolation or whatever you call it. The law is harsher than it used to be during the World War. Never before, as Boris

said, have pubs been shut robbing the free born Brit of his birthright to have a pint. Streets are deserted and cinemas and theatres have been shut. (Some theatres are streaming the films of their performances.) Police have the power to fine people found loitering outdoors and drones are flying above to detect any wholesale flouting of the order to stay indoors.

When the news broke that Prince Charles has tested positive for the virus, it came home to people that no one is immune. (Though they complain that how come he can get tested and NHS workers cannot.) The Queen has decided to go to Windsor along with her husband to socially isolate themselves. No one is above the law. Not even the VIP... Of course, there were jokes that finally Prince Charles has been "corona" ted.

And now the news is that Boris Johnson has tested positive and Matt Hancock (the health secretary) as well as the chief medical officer! Whatever next? One can

only hope that the people who were with him — Cabinet colleagues, civil servants, his pregnant girlfriend — all test negative.

As it is, the Cabinet meetings are online with video equipment. Even the daily 5 pm press briefing is online for journalists who want to put questions to the government. Most civil servants are working from home. Even those parliamentarians who were technologically challenged are telling each other about Zoom and other devices to take part in remotely conducted debates. On Mother's Day last week, many grannies said hello to their dear ones online. It has been the fastest rate of modernising for the Baby Boomers generation. Rumours are that when we reconvene the Parliament, they may facilitate participation from a distance. How will the Speaker know anyone is listening when he says Order Order? The only problem is that an online parliament may get hacked into, and suddenly everyone will be speaking Chinese or Russian...

Our TV screens have been occupied by (just labelled "Dishy Rishi" by the Times) Rishi Sunak, our young new chancellor of the exchequer, prominently. He has unveiled a new package of financial goodies every other day and still he faces demands to do more. He comes across as decent, concerned with the problems of the people and in control of the situation. Add Priti Patel as home secretary guarding the borders and telling the police to keep people off the streets and Alok Sharma the business secretary reassuring people about their jobs and their companies and you have to say that 50 years since the Uganda Indians arrived on England's shores they have done their bit to integrate and contribute to their new home country.

But these are strange times. It is eerie seeing TV pictures of deserted streets. No one knows who has got it but have not been tested. Nor do we know how long the lockdown will be. If the numbers of people who have it and the number of deaths go up as they are doing (even more so in Italy) there is no telling what tomorrow will bring.

But as we all self-isolate and find books we have to read, and friends we need to talk to, and connect with our families (who have become more precious than ever), one wonders if there was ever another way to deal with this virus? Many believe both Boris Johnson and Donald Trump took too long to announce the lockdown. And jeopardised thousands of lives. Certainly as we see hospitals popping up in unexpected places today, it seems just the other day when we were astonished to see how fast the Chinese were creating these pop up facilities. It is also just the other day when we were watching the lockdown in Wuhan and other places and were appalled that people could be quarantined in their own country. Surely rich, free nations would never be subject to it. Now we realise that all it takes is a zombie virus to stall our "powerful" world. The very thought is humbling. (On the plus side, writers like me are actually grateful for the lockdown so we can complete our books!)

Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author

IN BRIEFS

Mysuru: 4 booked for racial abuse

Mysuru: Mysuru city police have booked a case of racial discrimination against four persons of a supermarket at Chamundipuram here, for preventing two men of Nagaland, who were standing in queue, from entering the outlet and also for refusing to provide groceries to them. According to police, the incident has been confirmed with the assessment of CCTV footages of the outlet. The case of racial discrimination has been booked in Krishna Raja police station, under column 153 A(1)(B), 341, 188, 268, read with 290 of IPC. The case has been registered against accused Avinash, manager of the More outlet Manjunath, a customer service associate, Naveen IT maintenance, and Revanna, another staff of the outlet.

Couple marries wearing masks

Mysuru: A couple entered wedlock at a simple wedding which lasted for hardly five minutes amidst just 10 family members on Monday at their residence at DoddagarudanaHalli, in Mandya district which is known for lavish weddings. The couple, Pooja and Nandeesh, got married wearing masks by restricting the ceremony to just tying mangaloothra. All the family members in attendance maintained social distance during the wedding ceremony. Even after the wedding, instead of shaking hands, both the family members and the couple greeted each other with folded hands (namaskara). As a result of lockdown due to coronavirus, their family members had cancelled the lavish wedding.

MP CONSTABLE WALKS 450 KMS TO JOIN DUTY

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 30

A young cop of Madhya Pradesh has braved sickness, hunger and 60-hour arduous journey to join his duty to 'serve' the people through the coronavirus pandemic. Digvijay Sharma, 22, a constable posted in Pachori police station in Rajgarh district, had travelled 450 km by foot and as a pillion rider on two wheelers, alternately to report to his duty late in the night of March 29, amid nationwide lockdown in view of Covid-19 outbreak. "I set out from my village of Besolighat in Etawa district in Uttar Pradesh in the early hours of March 25. I had to walk nearly 40 km before being given a lift on a bike to reach a village situated in the Uttar Pradesh-Madhya Pradesh border in the afternoon. I then resumed my journey in a dumper to reach another village where I spent the first night of my journey under open sky", Sharma told this newspaper on Monday. Sharma, who had taken leave to visit his village to appear for BA final year exams, continued his journey over next two days in a similar manner.

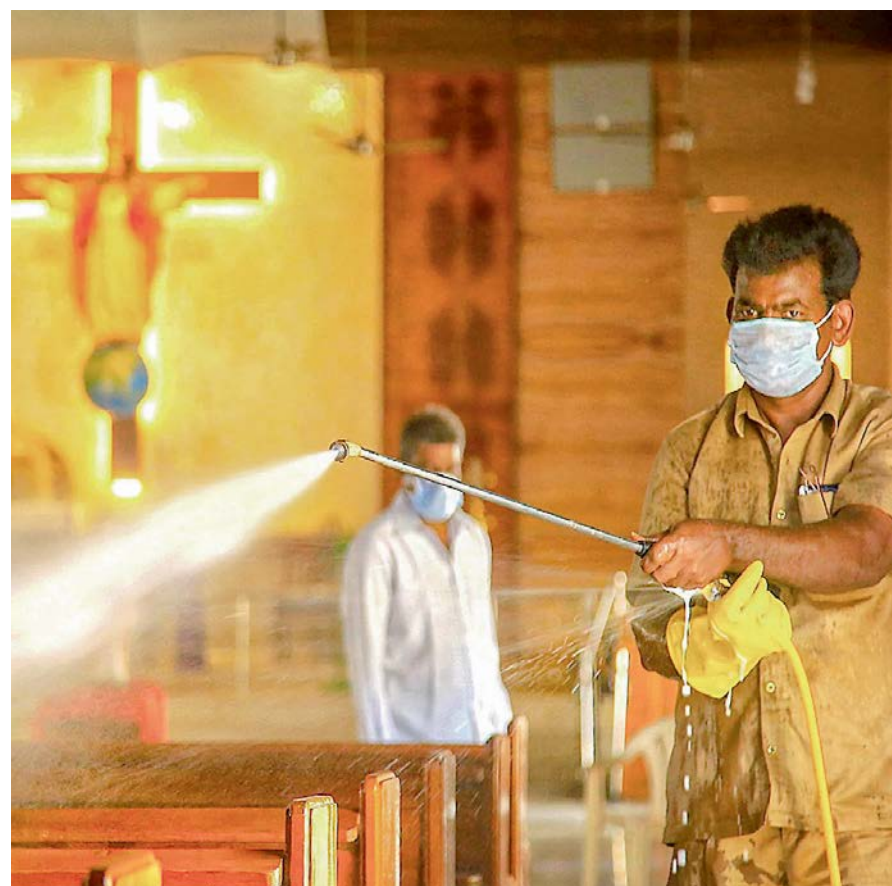
ODISHA CM ASKS MEN TO HELP WOMEN IN CHORES

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 30

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Monday delivered a special message for the male population and asked them not to be tasking on women folks while staying in home isolation. "State home, stay safe...but please don't be burden on your Maa (mother), stree (wife), bhabhi (elder brother's wife) and jhia (daughter) of your family by asking them to prepare more and special dishes for you during this 21-day lockdown," read the Chief Minister's message. The message was read out by Subrato Bagchi, Odisha government's chief spokesperson on Covid-19 at the daily press briefing here at Jayadev Bhawan. "Normally, when we remain at home, we ask women members of our family to prepare several food items like *Bada*, *Pakoda* and other special dishes. This 21-day lockdown is not period of vacation to relax, but to observe austerity to keep Covid-19 away. Please don't put the women members under unnecessary burden. Let them relax also. Help them in doing some household chores if you can," Bagchi explained.



Homeless people rest, seated at a safe distance, during a nationwide lockdown, in New Delhi on Monday. —PTI



A worker sprays disinfectant inside a church in Kanyakumari on Monday. —PTI

Despite claims, several areas in Delhi face shortage of food

Two dozen daily wagers at night shelters say they have not got even a single meal

SHASHI BHUSHAN | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Despite the Arvind Kejriwal government's tall claims of providing a cooked meal every day to over four lakh people at 800 centres across Delhi, there are reports of a severe food shortage in several areas. Two dozen daily wagers staying at night shelters in Greater Kailash claimed that they have not got even a single meal from the Delhi government since the lockdown began. A Congress councillor in the North Delhi Municipal Corporation demanded that mid-meals must be delivered to students at their homes in the lockdown period. A resident of Sriram Colony, Khajuri Khas, Mukesh Ahmed, in a social media post with local residents claimed there was a severe shortage of food and alleged that the government distributed food for only 200 people in place of 2,400 people in the area. "For a family of seven, the government gave 250 grams of food," a woman said. Similarly, a daily wager staying at a night shelter near Mount Kailash Apartments said 24 people,

including two security guards, are staying in the shelter, but have not got any help or food from the government. Delhi BJP spokesman Pravin Shankar Kapoor has taken care of the shelter home's occupants and got food from the first day of the lockdown. "Food has been arranged for the occupants, which will last till the first week of April," said Kapoor. Kejriwal said last week that arrangements were in place for providing food to four lakh people across the city. Government sources denied any shortage of food for the needy. "There is no shortage, but may be in some places the administration has failed to get the real estimate of people who need food," a senior official said. Meanwhile, the home ministry has asked the states to ensure that all district magistrates and superintendent of police strictly regulate movement of migrant labourers on national and state highways and instead direct them towards the nearest temporary shelters which are being set up by respective States specially along the main highways. The states have also been

directed to provide all possible facilities at these temporary shelters for the migrants labourers like food, clothing, proper medical care, testing for corona and if possible even quarantine. Home ministry has reiterated to the states that movement of migrant workers has to be stopped as this could lead to a major health crisis leading to a possible spread of corona. All DMs and SPs of their respective area will be responsible for movement of such people in their districts. These issues were discussed at length during a review meeting on Monday chaired by Home secretary Ajay Bhalla with chief secretary and director generals of police. Sources said the states were once again asked to strictly enforce the lockdown while asking the police to adopt a 'human approach' particularly in case of essential services. Top home ministry sources said the feedback from the states and even centre's own assessment was that if the lockdown was properly enforced then the April 14 deadline for the same will not have to be extended.

PM shares 3D yoga videos on twitter

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

During his monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' on Sunday, the Prime Minister was asked by a caller as how he remains fit and also his fitness routine. While adhering to social distancing as appealed by the government and most people working from home, the Prime Minister had asked people to remain fit and healthy and suggested practicing yoga during the lockdown. "During yesterday's #MannKiBaat, someone asked me about my fitness routine during this time. Hence, thought of sharing these Yoga videos...I hope you also begin practicing Yoga regularly," Modi tweeted. It could be recalled that in the run-up to International Yoga Day in June last year, Modi had shared similar videos to encourage people to practise yoga. However, Modi had clarified that he was not a fitness expert and also not a yoga teacher but a practitioner.

Panel to speed up R&D decisions

From Page 1

The efficacy of the 100-year old vaccine for tuberculosis is also being tested as a Covid-19 vaccine. The Centre has constituted a committee to look into speedy decisions on research and development on the Covid-19 disease. All government institutes and many private labs have been asked to prepare for research and testing. They have also been asked to be ready for testing large volumes of patients. "The government is working proactively with private sector labs for large scale Covid-19 testing. This will allow surveillance and clinical research to manage and control the spread of the virus," officials said. Questions are also being raised over the efficacy of hydroxychloroquine as an effective drug against Covid-19 after a 44-year-old doctor in Assam died of cardiac arrest. The doctor had taken the medicines as a prophylactic.

However, the head of epidemiology and communicable diseases at ICMR, Dr Raman R. Gangakhedkar, said the possibility of the doctor dying due to the medicines is little less. But an article in the Mayo Clinic Proceedings said the drug could induce cardiac arrest. Meanwhile, the central government officials on Monday said bulk orders for Personal Protection Equipment, masks and ventilators have been placed with domestic and foreign suppliers in view of Covid-19 pandemic. Officials said so far orders for 21 lakh PPE coveralls have been placed with 11 Indian manufacturers and they have started supplying 6-7,000 coveralls per day. The supply is expected to go up to 15,000 per day by next week. Officials added 3.34 lakh PPEs are available in various hospitals and about 60,000 PPE kits have already been procured and supplied by government of India.

MP toll rises to four; +ve cases spike to 47

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 30

One more Covid-19 patient died in Madhya Pradesh on Monday taking the death toll due to infection of the virus in the state to four. A 41-year-old man in Indore succumbed to the virus in a government hospital in Indore in Madhya Pradesh on Monday. Earlier, a 55-year-old man died of Covid-19 in Indore. Two people including a 65-year-old woman succumbed to the virus in Ujjain in the state a couple of days ago. Meanwhile, eight fresh cases of Covid-19 positive were reported in Indore and Ujjain on Monday, taking the tally of confirmed cases in the state

to 47 in the state. Five cities in MP have so far recorded coronavirus positive cases. While Indore recorded 27 Covid positive cases, Jabalpur, Ujjain, and Bhopal witnessed eight, five, and three cases respectively. Gwalior and Shivpuri have recorded two each confirmed cases. Meanwhile, MP has sealed its borders with neighbouring states, turning a two-km-long road in the MP-Rajasthan border as a no-man's land, after Rajasthan also sealed its border. Scores of migrant workers were seen stranded in the "no-man's land". The summer heat coupled with lack of shelter has compounded the misery of the workers who included women and children.

300+ Nizamuddin mosque visitors being tested

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Over 300 people in Delhi's Nizamuddin are being tested for coronavirus in different hospitals amid worries that they might have been exposed to the infection at a gathering in a mosque with visitors from Malaysia, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. One man died and two others tested positive after the event earlier this month. This is the largest

single group tested at the same time over suspicion of the highly contagious Covid-19, which is transmitted easily from person to person. Though it hasn't been established that the man who died (from Tamil Nadu) had coronavirus, the area has been sealed off and the police is patrolling to enforce the quarantine. Drones are also being used to monitor the movement of people. On March 10, several visitors, including from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia,

Kyrgyzstan and Indonesia, gathered at Nizamuddin Markaz mosque in the densely populated area, at an event organised by Tableehi Jamaat. There were around 500 people, including foreigners, at the March 10 event. "Several were told to go back to their native places and were dropped at IGI Airport. Many managed to dodge the police and came back to the area, and now cite the lockdown as the reason for not going back," said a source.



People who showed coronavirus symptoms being taken to various hospitals from Nizamuddin area in New Delhi on Monday. —PTI

Death toll rises to 2 in WB; total cases 23

RAJIB CHOWDHURY | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 30

A woman from Kalimpong in Darjeeling, with no history of foreign travel, became the second Covid-19 victim in West Bengal amidst rise in the statewide total number of cases to 23. At around 2 am on Monday the 44-year-old, originally from Nepal, died at North Bengal Medical College and Hospital in Siliguri where she had been admitted in an isolation ward since March 26 after symptoms of the deadly virus were found during a screening in her. On March 7 accompanied by her daughter the woman visited a hospital in Chennai after flying

from Bagdogra Airport in Siliguri. Next day she visited a relative's house before visiting an eye hospital on March 17 and another hospital on March 18. On March 19 morning the woman and her daughter flew back to the state and had lunch at a relative's house at Jyotinarayan in Siliguri. Later they returned home. On March 25, the woman however fell ill. On Monday afternoon another woman, a Covid-19 suspect, died at Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. A resident of Bongaon, who also visited Chennai was admitted there at around 10.30 pm on Sunday with fever and respiratory distress.

COVID-19 | BATTLE Premier institute set to prepare 5,000 sanitiser bottles for civic body

IIT Guwahati extends scientific support

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MARCH 30

The Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati has also joined the ongoing fight against novel coronavirus by providing scientific support, extension of sophisticated instrument facilities as well as involved in the immediate development of life-saving equipment for Guwahati Medical College and Hospital in Assam. Pointing out that since the initial days of this outbreak, IIT Guwahati has prepared hand sanitisers at its various departments and academic centres and is in the process of preparing at least 5,000 sanitiser bottles and provide them to the GMCH, the Director

IIT Guwahati Prof T.G. Sitharam in a statement said, "The Institute has provided two real-time PCR machines to GMCH for the diagnosis of Coronavirus. These machines would help in ramping the testing process by analysing 1,000 samples if run for 12 hours continuously and 2,000 samples in 24 hours." On the research front, multiple efforts are being made for vaccine development at the Department of Bioengineering and Biotechnology. Various other departments are involved in developing multiple routes to have a diagnostic and therapeutic approach for the early detection of various viral infections.

The faculty members of Bioscience and Bioengineering and Chemistry Departments and Centre for Nanotechnology have also initiated research proposals to combat Covid-19 against the urgent calls of the Government of India. Talking about setting up a research centre for Covid-19 analysis, Prof Sitharam said, "Our idea is to make this a state-of-the-art facility for the entire North-East region. This centre in future would help to develop highly competent manpower for diagnosis of different infectious diseases in the early stage of infection and thus its prevention too". As there are no approved

drugs presently for this disease, the faculty members are in the process of developing small molecules inhibitors for the treatment of Covid-19 using modern biotechnological tools. The overall idea is to develop safe, efficacious and affordable drugs for this disease and other dreadful viral infections, he said. The Institute has also been working tirelessly to educate the community at large on practicing social distancing and hygiene to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The institute hospital and Center for Nanotechnology have also initiated training of health center doctors and nurses and healthcare workers — for

handling and necessary precautions to be followed during Covid-19 breakout on campus. The academic activity of the Institute remains suspended presently and based on the overall situation, the Institute is likely to announce the revised academic calendar. In the meantime, disinfection of hostels and guesthouses including academic and residential areas is being carried out. In addition, the Departments of Mechanical Engineering and Electronics and Electrical Engineering are making efforts to develop several state-of-the-art technologies which include, robot-based drug/food carrying unit to work in isolation wards.

IN BRIEF

Putin 'may ask' to lift curbs: US

Washington: President Donald Trump said Monday he expects his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to request the lifting of US sanctions during an upcoming phone call. "Yeah, he'll probably ask for that," Trump said. He did not say what his response would be, noting that he had put sanctions on Russia but added: "They don't like that. Frankly we should be able to get along." The two were due to talk "shortly", he said. Last Thursday, Putin told G20 leaders during a conference call that he wanted a moratorium on sanctions.

US doesn't want N-talks: N. Korea

Seoul: North Korea said Monday that "reckless remarks" by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made it clear that Washington has no intention of resuming nuclear talks, and warned that it is now compelled to pay back "the pains the US has imposed on our people". After a teleconference of foreign ministers of the Group of Seven leading industrial nations last week, Pompeo told reporters the international community must remain united in urging North Korea to return to nuclear talks and in continuing to apply pressure on its nuclear and missile programmes.

Taliban attacks kill 11 troops

Kabul: Taliban attacks in Afghanistan's north and south have killed at least 11 Afghan soldiers and policemen, the country's Defence Ministry and a provincial official said on Monday. The Taliban have not claimed responsibility for the latest attacks. According to the Defence Ministry, the insurgents targeted a military checkpoint in a multi-pronged attack in the district of Argandab in southern Zabul province on Sunday night, killing at least six troops. In northern Baghlan province, at least five members of the security forces were killed and six others were wounded when their checkpoint came under a Taliban attack on the outskirts of the provincial capital, Pulikhothri, also on Sunday, said Mabbullah Ghafari, a provincial council member.

IS militants riot in Syrian prison

Beirut: Islamic State militants rioted inside a prison in northeastern Syria, wresting control from guards on an entire floor in the facility while a number of prisoners managed to escape, a Syrian Kurdish official said Sunday. Mustafa Bali, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, said anti-terrorist forces were working to regain control of the prison in the eastern Hassakeh province, adding that more forces were on their way. The prison is believed to house foreign IS militants. It is not clear what nationalities were held there. The US-led coalition said it was assisting the SDF with aerial surveillance as they quell the riot.

GLEZOS, GREEK RESISTANCE HERO, DIES

Athens, March 30: Greece's foremost anti-Nazi resistance hero Manolis Glezos died in a hospital Monday at the age of 97, state TV ERT said. ERT said the wartime icon, who had been hospitalised earlier this month with gastroenteritis and a urinary infection, had died of heart failure. Glezos had been placed in emergency care in November with respiratory problems, news reports said. Glezos was just 18 on May 30, 1941, when during Greece's occupation by Nazi Germany he and friend Apostolos Santas, a 19-year-old law student, climbed onto the Acropolis in the middle of the night and tore down the flag bearing the swastika unnoticed. After the war he was repeatedly elected to Greece's parliament with communist, socialist and leftist parties over a 60-year period. In 2014 Glezos was elected to the European Parliament with the leftist Syriza party, becoming its oldest deputy at the age of 91. During Greece's economic crisis, Glezos opposed his government's austerity measures and campaigned to force Germany to repay money it was forcibly loaned by Greece during the war.

Some 1 lakh may die in US: Trump

President says peak death rate due to Covid-19 pandemic is likely to hit the country in two weeks

Washington, March 30: Some one lakh people in the US may die from the Covid-19 pandemic and the peak death rate was likely to hit the country in two weeks, President Donald Trump has warned, citing his health experts as he extended the "social distancing" guidelines until April 30.

His statement came as the death toll in New York state, America's epicentre of Covid-19, crossed the 1,000 mark, with Governor Andrew Cuomo warning that thousands of people may die before the crisis ends. The total number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in the US stood at 143,025 and 2,509 people have died in the country, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Assuring his countrymen that he expects the US to be on its way to recovery by June 1, Trump told reporters at a televised White House news conference that he had to extend the social distancing measures till April 30, based on the advice from his two top public health advisors and members of the White House Task Force on Covid-19: Dr Deborah Bix and Dr Anthony Fauci.

"They demonstrate that the mitigation measures we are putting in place may significantly reduce the number of new infections and ultimately the number of fatalities. I want the American people to know that your selfless and valiant efforts are saving countless lives. You are making a difference. The modelling estimates that the peak and death rate is likely to hit in two weeks," Trump said during his second Rose Garden press conference on the Covid-19 outbreak.

Trump predicted his decision would save hundreds of thousands of lives, in an apparent move of the political goalposts to account for the fast worsening US pandemic. "2.2 million people would have died if we didn't do what we are doing," the President said. "If we can hold that number down ... to 100,000, it's a horrible number, maybe even less ... we all, all together have done a very good job," Trump said.

The new April 30 date marks yet another reversal of position on the pandemic by the President, who last week made it clear he did not pick the Easter date, April 12, based on data but because it was a "beautiful timeline". Shrugging off his row back, Trump claimed Sunday that Easter (on April 12) had only been an "aspirational date". "We can expect that by June 1 we will be well on our way to recovery," he said. The pandemic is expanding in neighbouring New Jersey, where more than 13,000 cases have been reported, with 161 deaths. —PTI

68 bed hospital in NYC's Central Park

New York, March 30: A 68-bed field hospital will be constructed by Tuesday in the city's iconic Central Park to help enhance New York City's medical capacity to treat the rapidly increasing Covid-19 cases.

Mayor Bill de Blasio told reporters on Sunday that Mount Sinai Hospital, working with a relief organisation named Samaritan's Purse, is creating the 68-bed field hospital in the sprawling Central Park. "Very important, in Central Park, we're going to be using every place we need to use to help people... So, this is the kind of thing that you will see now as this crisis develops and deepens," he said that the Central Park Conservancy, the city's Parks Department and the Mayor's Office "all worked together to get this done" with Mount Sinai and Samaritan's Purse.

The hospital should be operational by Tuesday, he said. Crews started construction of the long, white medical tents in the park's East Meadow lawn. The field hospital has been specially designed as a respiratory care unit. New York has become the epi-

SPAIN REPORTS 812 DEATHS IN 24 HRS, TOTAL 7,340

Madrid, March 30: Spain confirmed another 812 deaths in 24 hours from the Covid-19 on Monday, bringing the total number of deaths to 7,340, according to health ministry figures. It is the first decline in the number of deaths in a 24-hour period since Thursday in Spain, which has the world's second most deadly outbreak after Italy. Spain recorded 838 deaths on Sunday.

The number of confirmed cases in Spain has now reached 85,195 — after the one-day increase of 8.0 per cent. However, officials have pointed to a slower growth rate for both deaths and confirmed cases and expressed hope that the peak of the outbreak was approaching. —AFP

centre of the Covid-19 outbreak in the US and the state passed a grim milestone of recording 1,000 deaths due to the pandemic on Sunday. —PTI

Prez: US won't foot Royals' security bill

Washington, March 30: President Donald Trump has said that the US will not foot the bill for Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle's security amid reports that the royal couple have moved to Los Angeles. Last week, *The Sun*, a British tabloid, reported that the royal couple and their 10-month-old son Archie moved to Los Angeles, where Markle was raised. However, the report was not confirmed.

President Trump tweeted in response to such a report on Sunday: "I am a great friend and admirer of

the Queen & the United Kingdom. It was reported that Harry and Meghan, who left the Kingdom, would reside permanently in Canada. Now they have left Canada for the US however, the US will not pay for their security protection. They must pay!" he tweeted.

In January, 35-year-old Prince Harry and Markle, 38, announced that they would step back from their Royal duties. They said they planned to split time between North America and the United Kingdom. —PTI

City at centre of outbreak opens slowly

Wuhan, March 30: Shopkeepers in the city at the centre of the virus outbreak in China were reopening Monday but customers were scarce after authorities lifted more of the anti-virus controls that kept tens of millions of people at home for two months. "I'm so excited, I want to cry," said a woman on the Chuhu Hanjie pedestrian mall who would give only

the English name Kat. She said she was a teacher in the eastern city of Nanjing visiting her family in Wuhan when the government locked down the city in late January to stem the spread of the Covid-19.

Some 70 per cent to 80 per cent of shops were open Monday but many imposed limits on how many people could enter. Shopkeepers set up dispe-

No 'horsing around'



The entrance to Horse Guards patrolled by two members of the Blues and Royals of the Household Cavalry and armed police which normally would have throngs of tourists posing around the mounted soldiers, but is now deserted as the lockdown for the coronavirus continues in London, on Monday. —AP

UK to be shut '6 months': Official

London, March 30: Britons may be subject to some form of lockdown measures for six months or longer, England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jenny Harries said on Sunday, warning the country faces a second wave of Covid-19 if they are lifted too quickly.

The government has said it will review in three weeks the lockdown steps it put in place last Monday. Harries said it is too soon to know if they have had the desired effect of reducing the peak of the spread of the virus in Britain.

"We must not then suddenly revert to our normal way of living, that would be quite dangerous. If we stop then all of our efforts will be wasted and we could potentially see a second peak," Harries told a news conference. "Over time, probably over the next six months, we will have a three-week review, we will see where we are going. We need to keep that lid on and then gradually we will be able to hopefully adjust." —Agencies

'TSUNAMI' OF PATIENTS TO FLOOD HOSPITALS: INDIAN-ORIGIN DOCTOR

London, March 30: The UK's government-run hospitals are about to be flooded with a "tsunami" of really sick Covid-19 patients, an Indian-origin doctor here has said, sounding alarm that mistakes at the highest levels will result in a disaster.

Dr Guddi Singh, a paediatrician who has been dra-

fted in to help adult patients of Covid-19, said there is huge anxiety in the National Health Service (NHS), over Covid-19 and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), *BBC* reported. She said that the NHS, the UK's publicly-funded healthcare system, is about to be flooded with patients. —PTI

WITH MILD SYMPTOMS, UK PM'S TOP AIDE CUMMINGS IN SELF-ISOLATION

London, March 30: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's top aide, Dominic Cummings, has gone into self-isolation after developing mild symptoms of Covid-19 over the weekend, according to UK media reports.

Cummings, the UK PM's senior-most adviser, is the latest among the top rung in government to be hit by

Covid-19 after Johnson himself was tested and went into self-isolation last week, followed soon after by UK health secretary Matt Hancock. It remains unconfirmed whether Cummings has been tested for the virus yet but, according to reports, he is working from home and remains in contact with the Downing Street team. —PTI

PRINCE CHARLES RECOVERS, OUT OF ISOLATION

London, March 30: Britain's Prince Charles came out of self-isolation on Monday, seven days after it was confirmed that he had tested positive for Covid-19, a royal spokesperson said. The 71-year-old heir to the British throne had been self-isolating on the Queen's Balmoral estate in Scotland after being tested by the National Health Service (NHS) in Aberdeenshire last week.

"Clarence House has confirmed today (Monday) that, having consulted with his doctor, The Prince of Wales is now out of self-isolation," his spokesperson said. His Clarence House royal office said the prince was in "good health" and was following the government's restrictions as he carries on working from home. —PTI

Wuhan's shrimp seller 'patient zero'

Beijing, March 30: A 57-year-old female shrimp seller in China's Wuhan city, the originating point of the Covid-19, has been identified as one of the first victims of Covid-19, which has claimed nearly 28,000 lives around the world so far, according to media reports. The Covid-19 "patient zero", who made a full recovery in January after month-long treatment, believes the Chinese government could have checked the spread of the disease had it acted sooner.

Wei Guixian, as identified by *The Wall Street Journal*, was selling shrimps at the Huanan Seafood Market on December 10 when she developed a cold. Believing she had the common flu, Wei went to a local clinic for treatment where she was given an injection, the *Mirror UK* reported. However, Wei continued to feel weak and visited Eleventh Hospital in Wuhan a day later.

The feeling of lethargy persisted and Wei visited one of the biggest medical facilities in the region — Wuhan Union Hospital — on December 16. At the Union Hospital, Wei was told her sickness was "ruthless" and that many from Huanan Market had visited the hospital with matching symptoms.

At the end of December, she was quarantined when doctors related the emergence of the Covid-19 with the seafood market, the *Mirror* quoted Chinese news outlet *The Paper*. The article in *The Paper* concluded that the new Covid-19 is likely to become the fifth endemic coronavirus in humans. "Coronaviruses clearly have the ability to cross species boundaries and adapt to new hosts, which allows us to predict more coronaviruses." So humans need more research to help formulate policies to deal with similar viruses. —Agencies

CONTAGION SPREAD ACROSS GLOBE

3,304 is the death toll in China after the country reported 31 new cases of the pandemic, including 30 imported ones.

800 Germans on a cruise ship are flying home as 41 remain in Australia quarantine.

749 lockdown violators have been taken to task by the Nepal Police.

1,664 are the number of cases in Pakistan while the death toll due to Covid-19 stood at 18.

3 Indians among 42 new Covid-19 cases in Singapore

Moscow, with more than 12 million people, went into lockdown on Monday while other parts of Russia moved to introduce similar steps to curb the Covid-19 outbreak.

China is building a makeshift hospital for Pakistan to treat Covid-19 patients.

New Zealanders have become so keen to report their neighbours for breaking Covid-19 lockdown rules that police on Monday said a website dedicated to addressing the issue crashed soon after going live.

Bangladesh garment manufacturers says fashion retailers have cancelled or put on hold more than \$3 billion in orders due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Bibi in quarantine after aide tests +ve

Jerusalem, March 30: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his close advisers have been placed under quarantine after an aide on Parliament affairs tested positive for Covid-19, his office said on Monday.

The step was a precaution and is being taken even before the epidemiological investigation has been concluded, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office. "Even before the epidemiological investigation is over and to remove all doubt, the Prime Minister has decided that

NOBLE DEED It can accommodate up to 400 people, to be used for quarantine

Indian bizman in Dubai gifts building

Dubai, March 30: A Dubai-based Indian businessman has donated a fully-equipped building owned by him to the country's health authorities for the purpose of quarantining Covid-19 affected patients, according to media reports. Ajay Sobhraj, Founder and Chairman of Dubai-based Finja Jewellery, has donated the building in Jumeirah Lake Towers in Dubai, that can accommodate up to 400 people, to be used as a quarantine centre, the *Gulf News* reported on Sunday.

In a letter addressed to the Dubai Health Authority titled 'To Support and Give Back to the City That Cares', the Indian businessman who has called Dubai his home for 25 years, has donated a fully-equipped building in Jumeirah Lake Towers to be used in the country's fully integrated strategy against the Covid-19 crisis, the report said. "I believe that in such challenging times, it is imperative for the community to come together and support the country we reside in to overcome this pandemic. I am extremely pleased to offer my assistance to the government during this critical pe-

riod and support the city that has continued to contribute to my success and growth for the past 25 years," Sobhraj said. The gesture reflects the support that the Dubai business community has extended to the authorities' measures to safeguard the health of the community, the report added. The building has undergone all necessary maintenance, including deep cleaning, sanitisation and air conditioning servicing, to ensure the facilities meet the required health and safety standards, the report quoted the Dubai Media Office as say-



Ajay Sobhraj

deaths. To limit the spread of the virus, the UAE will continue nationwide disinfection of streets and public transport until April 4. Residents have been told to stay at home between 8 pm and 6 am. *The National* reported. People are allowed to leave their homes during the day but trips must be restricted to essential shopping or medical appointments, it said. Dr Farida Al Hosani, from Abu Dhabi Centre for Public Health, said she hoped the public would stay at home during the disinfection programme, the report added. —PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS % Sensex 28,440.32 -4.61 Nifty 50 8,281.10 -4.38 S&P 500* 2,597.27 2.20 Dollar (₹) 75.65 -1.01 Pound Sterling (₹) 93.77 -2.54 Euro (₹) 83.56 -1.34 Gold (10gm)* (₹) 1,622.50 -0.15 Brent crude (\$/bbl)* 21.75 -12.76 IN 10-Yr bond yield 6.209 0.01 US 10-Yr T-bill yield* 0.637 -14.38

BoB, UBI cut lending rates by 75 bps

Bank of Baroda and Union Bank of India slashed lending rates by 75 basis points after State Bank of India and Bank of India made similar cut. BoB said it has cut interest rate on loans for retail, personal and MSMEs to 7.25 per cent from March 28. UBI said it reduced lending rates linked to external benchmark to 7.20 per cent. The new rates will be applicable for customers of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank as well.

Facebook offers \$100 mn to help news media



Facebook said it was donating \$100 million to support news organisations globally hurting from the pandemic, citing the need for reliable information about the crisis. "The news industry is working under extraordinary conditions to keep people informed during the Covid-19 pandemic," said FB's news partnerships director, C. Brown. "At a time when journalism is needed more than ever, ad revenues are declining," he said.

Amazon resumes services in some cities

Amazon India has resumed services in some cities, including Bengaluru, Noida, Gurugram, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Mumbai, but deliveries would continue to be delayed because of movement restrictions and extensive lockdowns. Amazon and other e-commerce companies have been facing delays in delivery of orders after the government ordered a 21-day lockdown.

Apollo to make isolation rooms in hotels

Apollo Hospitals said it has launched 'Project Stay I' with 500 rooms in select hotels across the country in the first phase with light medical supervision for quarantine. This effort is aimed at creating isolation and quarantine facilities and reducing the burden on hospitals providing acute care. Apollo Hospitals plans to scale this capacity to up to 5,000 rooms where patients can stay in isolation.

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Analysts worried about Covid-19 impact on economy Market plunges as FPIs step up selling

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MARCH 30

With no respite in coronavirus cases in India and negative global cues, market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50 declined by 4.5 per cent on heavy foreign investor selling. The Sensex fell by 1375 points, or 4.61 per cent, to 28,440.32 while the Nifty-50 fell 379.15 points, or 4.38 per cent, closing at 8,281.10. Foreign portfolio investors resumed selling in Indian equities after a brief pause last week. FPIs were net sellers of Indian equities worth Rs 4,363.61 crore on Monday. Investors sold stocks on gloomy projections being made by the world's leading think-tanks. As per the IMF chief, the globe has entered into a recession which would be worse than the financial crisis of 2008-2009.

Analysts said right now investors are more only focused on the economic impact of the coronavirus and it would be difficult for the market to bounce back in the absence of any positive news flow on Covid-19. Vinod Nair, head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said, "The market have set aside the stimulus measures announced by the RBI and the government, and focused on the rising virus infections and its impact on the Indian economy. With a global recession already declared by the IMF, the recessionary forces and the general uncertainty are forcing investors, especially the FIIs, to redeem their investments."

Germany, France want firms to suspend dividends

BIRGIT JENNEN MARCH 30

German listed companies will be asked to suspend dividend payments to qualify for government assistance designed to ease the impact of the coronavirus crisis. The government will be able to dictate conditions on dividends as part of an aid programme involving loans from state bank KfW and the goal is that credit does not end up being disbursed to shareholders, an economy ministry spokesman said in Berlin. Germany is in line with neighbour France in insisting firms forgo dividend payments. All companies that have delayed tax liabilities will have to reimburse the state and pay penalties if they proceed with dividends, finance minister Bruno Le Maire said. Any big corporations that flout the call to stop payouts will also cease to be eligible for 300 billion euros of loan guarantees. Chancellor Angela Merkel's government on Friday secured final parliamentary approval for a package of measures totaling more than 750 billion euros (\$826 billion) to address the impact of the virus on Europe's biggest economy. On top of that, the KfW has 500 billion euros available to boost the liquidity of companies struggling with a collapse in demand. German economy minister Peter Altmaier said at the weekend that Germany will also demand cuts in wages and bonuses for senior managers of companies that apply for financial aid. "It's important to me that management boards and senior executives contribute in emergencies, especially with respect to bonus payments," Altmaier said in an interview with the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper. The government's policy on dividends was evident in a 1.8 billion-euro credit line for TUI AG announced March 27. "One of the conditions of the KfW loan is that TUI de facto waives dividend payments for the term of the credit line," the tourism company said in a statement. —Bloomberg

Online games see surge in demand

CHANDRASHEKAR G BANGALURU, MARCH 30

The lockdown due to the dreaded coronavirus spread has raised the demand for online games. Kalaari-funded vernacular gaming platform WinZO has observed a quantum jump in online traffic, mainly contributed by tier-1 and metro cities, over the last three weeks. Saumya Singh Rathore, co-founder, WinZO Games, said, "With people staying indoors, there has been a greater demand for online games. Till last week there was a 30 per cent surge in online traffic. This has come mainly from tier-1 and metro cities over the last two weeks, with no marketing efforts being made in these cities, as WinZO was focusing on T2-T5 Bharat. WinZO saw the surge go up to 40% this week. Game Play on WinZO is up three times as

Rupee falls 76 paise on strong dollar demand

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The rupee on Monday closed 76 paise lower at 75.65 against the dollar on robust demand for dollars by bankers and importers and a strong dollar across the board. Foreign investors continued to sell emerging-market assets and swap the proceeds into the global reserve currency, the King Dollar. The dollar-rupee pair extended its bullish momentum, opening higher by 32 paise to 75.18 as emerging market currencies faced sell-offs against a strengthening

uncertainty are forcing investors, especially the FIIs, to redeem their investments." Shrikant Chouhan, executive vice president, Technical Research, Kotak Securities, said, "Investors are concerned about the rising number of cases across the globe and the

dollar. Forex traders said the dollar-rupee pair is likely to trade in the range of 74.30-76.30 and that either side breakout of this range would guide further direction for the Indian currency. "Exporters are advised to hold while importers are advised to go for back to back hedging. The three-month range for dollar-rupee is 73 to 77 and the six-month range is 72 to 78 considering the panic situation amid coronavirus spread," said Abhishek Goenka, chief executive officer and founder at IFA Global, a forex advisory firm.

The auto stocks started falling in anticipation of weaker March month sales numbers to be announced this week and report of Hero MotoCorp delaying payments to vendors. The top losers included Mahindra and Mahindra (-7.46 per cent), Maruti (-6.56 per cent), Hero MotoCorp (-6.53 per cent) and Bajaj Auto (-2.91 per cent).

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economic fallout due to complete lockdown in most parts of the world. It would be difficult for the market to bounce back in the absence of any positive news flow regarding Covid-19. Bank, financials and auto stock came under heavy selling pressure on Monday. The Nifty Bank index fell 5.94 per cent, far more than Sensex and Nifty-50. The only sectoral gainers on the BSE were healthcare (1.07 per cent) and fast moving consumer goods (0.67 per cent). HDFC twins HDFC Bank and HDFC fell by 7.96 per cent and 10.92 per cent, respectively, on the BSE. Other big losers included Bajaj Finance (-11.95 per cent), ICICI Bank (-7.67 per cent), Kotak Bank (-7.29 per cent), and SBI (-4.64 per cent).

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Payment cycle disruption comes as blow to MSMEs

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 30

Less than a week into lock-down, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have started witnessing payment cycle disruption, which can be a severe blow to their existence.

While some of the large companies have openly expressed their inability to make payments to their suppliers and component manufacturers, delayed payments by public sector undertakings (PSUs) and government departments have already put MSMEs into pressure.

"In the past couple of days we are hearing that even regular payments from large companies are getting delayed. Some of the auto companies have said that they would not be able to make payment to their component manufacturers. But the trend has started in several sectors, including automotive, textiles and garments. The payment cycles of thousands of MSMEs are getting affected," said Rajiv Chawla, chairman of IamSMEof India.

Public sector undertakings and government departments like the Railways usually make their payments with a lag of three to four months.



But this delay is now hitting MSMEs hard. In the case of PSUs, government has mandated that 26 per cent of their procurement should be from MSMEs. In the current fiscal itself central PSUs have procured goods and services worth over Rs 33,000 crore from MSMEs. "The government should take steps to expedite payment from these PSUs and government departments, and this could be a major help for the MSMEs," said Chawla.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier urged all private sector companies to honour payment commitment to employees. However, without receiving payments from buyers, MSMEs are finding it tough to honour salary commitments.

"The government has to hear both sides of the story. MSMEs do not have enough surpluses to pay salaries to their employees without receiving payments from their clients. Banks may also not be forthcoming as they too are stuck in the uncertainty. MSMEs do not have sufficient collateral for raising funds in such situations. The government will have to come out with some solution," said Pawan Gupta, founder of Connect2India.

According to industry insiders, MSMEs are starting at massive closure of businesses, salary defaults and retrenchment if the lock-down continues for more time. MSMEs account for 29 per cent of the country's GDP and provide more than 11 crore jobs.

Oil plunges to 2002 low but petrol still costly here

New Delhi, March 30: International oil prices on Monday plunged to a 17-year low but retail petrol and diesel prices in India remained on freeze, as oil companies continued to set off gains against the excise duty hiked by the government.



lockdowns dried up demand amid crude glut. Petrol and diesel prices in India, however, remained on freeze for the 14th day in a row. Rates were last revised on March 16 and since then oil firms continue to adjust the fall against the Rs 3 per litre hike in excise duty on two fuels done by the government.

In Delhi, petrol is priced at Rs 69.59 per litre while in Mumbai it comes for Rs 75.30. Diesel is priced at Rs 62.29 per litre in Delhi and Rs 65.21 in Mumbai. —PTI

GIC Re's London arm turns in profit

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

GIC 1947, the first syndicate at Lloyd's of London set up by Indian reinsurer GIC Re, has a recorded net profit of ₹1.326 million during its first full year of operation in 2019.

"It is the first syndicate in the history of Lloyd's to clock a profit in the first full year of operation, said analysts in the London market. Set up in April 2018, the ₹GIC 1947 Syndicate had mobilised a total premium of ₹64.57 million in 2019. The syndicate had managed a combined ratio of 97.95 per cent during the year against a combined ratio of 102.1 per cent reported by the Lloyd's of London in 2019. A combined ratio below 100 per cent indicates that the re/insurer is making an underwriting profit, while a ratio above 100 means it is paying out more money in claims than it is receiving from premiums.

"In 2019, 50 per cent of our business was from the Indian market basically ceded by our promoter GIC Re and the rest were underwritten from the other international markets. The Indian business was mostly composed of property and agriculture portfolios. As part of getting the licence, we had agreed with Lloyds that 50 per cent of the syndicate business would be Indian business ceded through GIC Re. That is valid till 2020," said N. Ramaswamy, CEO, GIC Re, London.

GIC Re continues to harness the Lloyds of London's best practices, said GIC Re officials.

"In the current scenario, any financial statement prepared for April 2019 to March 2020 will not give true and fair view as it does not represent one complete business cycle of the entity. Hence, it is imperative to increase the given period to disclose the correct picture of business performances of a company," the Confederation of Indian Industry told the ministry in its submission. —PTI

Finding it hard to get labour, transport: FMCG firms

New Delhi, March 30: Availability of workers at factories and trucks for transportation remain key challenges to meet demand for essential items during the nationwide lockdown, according to FMCG majors ITC, Dabur India and Parle Products.

The companies, however, said the approvals for plant operations and transportation of goods have eased difficulties in movement of raw materials and finished products, assuring steady supply of essential items.

Addressing of local issues in many states that have hindered movement of goods would certainly help in kick-starting the functioning of the supply chain, they said.

"But, the key issue that still remains is the availability of manpower and workers to run these operations. With most workers either leaving for their hometowns or staying at home during the lockdown, it would be a challenge to ensure smooth functioning," Dabur India executive director (opera-



tions) Shahrukh Khan said. Sharing similar experience, an ITC spokesperson said, "While we have progressively obtained permissions in some states, availability of trucks continues to be the biggest challenge at the moment. Interstate and local truck movement has been severely impacted together with the challenge of shortage of manpower in factories." Expressing similar views, Parle Products' senior category head Manank Shah said, "The biggest challenge today is

manpower..The new challenge facing the companies now is how to continue running their plants in the absence of labour." Most of the labours in manufacturing plant are migrant workers. With their moving back to native places, there is going to be a huge challenge, he added. On the ability of companies to produce to meet demand, Shah said that with 50 per cent of workers allowed, production is being managed through shift systems. "Quantum of production would go down substan-

tially but the idea is to ensure that at least there is food available on the shelves and at no point in time there should be any panic in the market," he said adding that there would not be complete absence of food for 5-6 days, even if any shop runs out of stock it would be available the next day. Commenting on how soon the situation is likely to stabilise, the ITC spokesperson said, "We believe it will take a few more days for the entire ecosystem and processes to be streamlined for movement of essential goods."

On the movement of goods, Khan said the situation has eased a bit with approvals for plant operations and movement of trucks coming in. "These have eased some of the big bottlenecks that the industry was facing for movement of raw materials, packing materials and finished products. It would certainly help in kick-starting the functioning of the supply chain," Khan added. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Pak squash great dies of Covid-19

Karachi: Pakistani squash legend Azam Khan has died of coronavirus in London, his family said. Azam, who won the British Open title successively between 1959 and 1961, had tested positive for Covid-19 last week and died at London's Ealing Hospital on Saturday. He was 95.

Younger brother of the legendary Hashim Khan, Azam is widely regarded as one of the best squash players in the world. He left playing due to an Achilles tendon injury and the tragic death of his 14-year-old son in 1962. Even though he recovered from his injury two years later, Azam said he could not get over the death of his son. Born at Nawakille, a small village outside Peshawar, which is known for producing squash world champions like brothers Jahangir and Jansher Khan. Azam had settled in the UK in 1956. He had also won the most important hardball tournament, the US Open, for the first time in 1962 before injury struck him and his son died. — PTI

Turk World Cup hero hit by virus

Ankara: Former Turkish national team and ex-Barcelona goalkeeper Rustu Recber, 46, is in hospital after testing positive for coronavirus, his wife said. Recber took on hero status in Turkey as he kept goal at the 2002 World Cup, anchoring his team to the semifinals and ultimately third place, their greatest ever performance in the tournament. The powerfully built and poney-tailed goalkeeper was easily recognisable at the World Cup due to the black, anti-reflection product he smeared beneath his eyes like some NFL players. "Rustu is in hospital with a COVID-19 diagnosis," Isil Recber said on Instagram. "We are in a state of shock after the symptoms developed rapidly while everything was normal. These are critical times and it's very difficult." She added that she, as well as their son and daughter, had tested negative for the virus. — AFP

Merc help invent breathing aid

London: Formula One team Mercedes has helped to develop a breathing aid that could keep coronavirus patients out of intensive care and ease some pressure on Britain's strained health service. Mercedes worked with engineers at the University College London and clinicians at University College London Hospital to adapt and improve a device that bridges the gap between an oxygen mask and the need for full ventilation. The device, known as continuous positive airway pressure, has been used extensively in hospitals in Italy and China to deliver oxygen to the lungs of coronavirus patients. UCL said the adapted devices have been recommended for use in Britain and that 100 of them are being sent to its hospital for clinical trials. There is the potential for quick roll-out to hospitals across the country. — AP

PK'S SHRADDH CONFINED TO ONLY FAMILY

Kolkata: The bereaved family of Indian football legend P. K. Banerjee on Monday strictly followed the social distancing norms as his *shraddh* was performed at his Saltlake residence, amid a 21-day national lockdown to fight the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. Banerjee's two daughters Paula and Punra made a mass appeal to not attend the 10th day of the funeral ritual as only two of his four surviving brothers attended the ritual. "Nobody was invited. My uncle (Prasun Banerjee) and I performed the last rituals," Banerjee's elder daughter Paula said. "We have made a mass appeal not to come for the function because of the ongoing lockdown. When things get normal, we will hold a large scale memorial service," she added. Banerjee died at the age of 83 on March 20 after a prolonged illness. He was on life support for close to a month. — PTI

Tokyo date next July

Olympics to be held from July 23 to Aug. 8

Tokyo, March 30: The Tokyo Olympics will open next year in the same time slot scheduled for this year's games.

Tokyo organisers said Monday the opening ceremony will take place on July 23, 2021 — almost exactly one year after the Games were due to start this year.

Last week, the IOC and Japanese organisers postponed the Olympics until 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

This year's Games were scheduled to open on July 24 and close on August 9. But the near exact one-year delay will see the rescheduled closing ceremony on August 8.

There had been talk of switching the Olympics to spring, a move that would coincide with the blooming of Japan's famous cherry blossoms. But it would also clash with European football and North American sports leagues.

After holding out for weeks, local organisers and the IOC last week postponed the Tokyo Games under pressure from athletes, national Olympic bodies and sports federations. It's the first postponement in Olympic history, though there were several cancellations during wartime.

Both Tokyo organising committee president Yoshiro Mori and CEO Toshiro Muto have said the cost of rescheduling will be massive — local reports estimate billions of dollars — with most of the expenses borne by Japanese taxpayers.

Muto promised transparency in calculating the costs, and testing times deciding how they are divided up.

Since it (the Olympics) were scheduled for this summer, all the venues had given up hosting any other events during this time, so how do we approach that?" Muto asked.

"In addition, there will need to be guarantees when we book the new dates, and there is a possibility this will incur rent payments. So there will be costs incurred and we will need to consider them one by one. I think that will be the tougher process," he added.

Katsuhiko Miyamoto, an emeritus professor of sports economics at Kansai University, puts the costs as high as \$4 billion. That would cover the price of maintaining stadiums, refitting them, paying rentals, penalties and other expenses.

Japan is officially spending \$12.6 billion to organize the Olympics. However, an audit bureau of the Japanese government says the costs are twice that much. All of the spending is public money except \$5.6 billion from a privately funded operating budget.

The Switzerland-based International Olympic Committee is contributing \$1.3 billion, according to organising committee documents. The IOC's contribution goes into the operating budget.

Bach has repeatedly called the Tokyo Olympics the best prepared in history. However, Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso also termed them cursed. — AP



In this file photo taken on March 25, 2020 a woman wearing a traditional Japanese kimono poses next to the Olympic rings in front of the Japan National Stadium, the main venue for the Tokyo Olympic Games. — AFP

Dipa's hopes are rekindled

New Delhi, March 30: The postponement of Tokyo Olympics has come as a ray of hope for injury-ravaged Indian gymnast Dipa Karmakar, who is preparing for another shot at qualification after a niggling knee problem hampered her earlier bid to make the cut.

Karmakar, who finished fourth at the 2016 Rio Olympics, has been struggling with injuries ever since she underwent a surgery to treat an Anterior Cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in 2017. ACL is a key ligament that stabilises the knee joints.

Her comeback in 2018 was short-lived as the knee troubled her again at the Artistic Gymnastics World Cup in Baku last year. She was forced to withdraw from the Doha World Cup as well and failed to recover in time for the World Artistic Gymnastics Championship in October, 2019.

"There were eight World cups but now there are only two left, which were supposed to happen in March but got postponed to June due to coronavirus outbreak," Karmakar said in an interview. "Given the situation they perhaps will happen next year. So it gives me more time to recover and prepare for the two events," she added.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which has killed thousands and infected lakhs worldwide, forced the postponement of the Tokyo Games last week. Karmakar hoped the extra time to get back to form will come in handy for her.

"I will give my best to return to form and hopefully I can do well and qualify. But having said that, what is important right now is that we defeat this coronavirus, that is the priority," said the 26-year-old, the first Indian female gymnast to compete in the Olympics.

Karmakar's long-time coach Bishweshwar Nandi also said this postponement has renewed Karmakar's hopes. "She is fit now. She has completely recovered from the injury but in gymnastics, you have to slowly start the process of training and Dipa had started her basic practice late last month when this coronavirus outbreak happened," the Dronacharya awardee said. "She will be back to her best in 3-4 months and since there are still two events left, we can take another shot at the Olympics. See, in gymnastics, injuries happen a lot but I'm hopeful that she will take it as a challenge. "She will need two silver or one gold and a silver in the two tournaments. We will not leave any stone unturned and I hope she will be able to perform," he added.

Karmakar, who won a gold at the 2018 Artistic Gymnastics World Challenge Cup in Turkey, supported the postponement of the Olympics and urged people to stay home to fight the coronavirus outbreak. "...I appeal to the people to stay home and maintain hygiene, wash hands regularly. It is extremely important to follow the lockdown properly, so that we can win this fight," said Karmakar, who was conferred the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award in 2016. Nandi echoed the view. "There is a saying in hindi 'jaan hai toh jahaan hai' (If you have life, you have the world). So right now it is important to fight this, everything else is secondary. So let us all come together and do our best, which is to stay home," he said. — PTI



Gymnast Dipa Karmakar goes through her routine in this file photo.

I will give my best to return to form and hopefully I can do well and qualify. But having said that, what is important right now is that we defeat this coronavirus, that is the priority.

— **DIPA KARMAKAR**
Indian gymnast

Bhutia shelter to migrant workers

Kolkata, March 30: Indian football icon Bhaichung Bhutia on Monday offered shelter to migrant workers of Sikkim to tackle the ongoing crisis arising out of the 21-day nationwide lockdown in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Migrant workers of unorganised sectors, desperate to return home, have been badly hit after the lockdown was imposed from midnight on Tuesday.

"The people who are affected the most during the lockdown are migrant workers. There was a huge cue in Sikkim border yesterday. I've got a new unfinished building in Gangtok (Lumsey, Tadong). It should accommodate about 100 people," Bhutia said.

"I've offered any migrant worker who does not have any house to stay there. We will also provide them some basic ration. I'm also working with the local authorities to see how it can be done. We can support and work together."

Bhutia further said he's in touch with the local administration to arrange for medical services. "Not a single case of corona positive as of now. So that they (migrant workers) are safe from corona. Doctors can also check. We are trying to request the government. At least they will be safe from the coronavirus in the house when the borders have been shut and locked. They are badly hit they don't have anywhere to go," he said.

— **BHAICHUNG BHUTIA**
former Indian football captain



The people who are affected the most during the lockdown are migrant workers. There was a huge cue (sic) in Sikkim border yesterday. I've got a new unfinished building in Gangtok (Lumsey, Tadong). It should accommodate about 100 people. I've offered any migrant worker who does not have any house to stay there. We will also provide them some basic ration.

— **BHAICHUNG BHUTIA**
former Indian football captain

Cares fund !!," Sathiyam tweeted.

Teen shooting sensation Manu Bhaker donated ₹1 lakh to the Haryana government to help combat the rapidly-spreading pandemic. The 18-year-old, who is a Commonwealth Games and Youth Olympics champion, belongs to Jhajjar district in the state.

Elsewhere, Indian footballers Pritam Kotal, Pronay Halder and Prabir Das have pooled in around ₹4 lakh to help the needy in West Bengal. Kolkata's football heavy-weight club East Bengal also promised a donation of Rs 30 lakh to the state relief fund to help fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

MP MARY CONTRIBUTES ONE MONTH SALARY

Meanwhile, six-time world champion boxer M. C. Mary Kom said she will donate her one month's salary as Rajya Sabha MP, amounting to ₹1 lakh, to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. "In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, I wish to donate my one month's salary to the PM National Relief Fund. So, please debit an amount of ₹1,00,000 from my account," Mary Kom said in a letter to the bank where her salary account is maintained. — PTI

MANU BHAKER, SATHIYAN PITCH IN

India's ace table tennis player G. Sathiyam pledged to donate ₹1.25 lakh.

"These are testing times for all of us especially for the daily wage workers & migrant labourers. I hereby pledge to donate a total of ₹1,25,000 (₹1 lakh for Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's public relief fund & ₹25,000 for PM

DON'T MEASURE HELP IN NUMBERS: OJHA

New Delhi, March 30: Former India spinner Pragyan Ojha on Monday said financial help to fight the Covid-19 pandemic should not be measured in numbers and that it is strange to see those making contributions being questioned for the amounts they are pledging.

With the coronavirus outbreak leaving the world in disarray, sports persons across the globe have come forward and made donations to fight this rapidly-spreading disease. However, there have been instances where social media users have questioned their contributions and Ojha said it has left him quite bemused.

"It's very strange to see people who are coming forward to give a helping hand in this crisis by donating are being questioned (how much have they donated). A help is a help, it is not measured. We should be thankful to them. #JustAThought #COVID2019india," Ojha wrote on his Twitter handle. — PTI

Will veterans hold good when the Games begin?



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

Last Tuesday, the International Olympic Committee and the Japanese government finally pulled the plug on this year's Tokyo Olympics postponing it to 2021.

In the preceding few weeks — what with one major tournament after another being cancelled or suspended — the IOC and Japanese government had been holding out against hope that the situation

would improve in time for the Olympics to be staged.

Several dissenting voices — among member countries of the IOC, sports federations and influential athletes, former and current — were demanding suspension of the Games, citing lack of time to prepare as well as fear of the disease itself. The situation was fast reaching boiling point.

Given the consequences — financial, administrative, on athletes et al — it couldn't have been easy for Thomas Bach, president of the IOC and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to reach this decision. But with the Covid-19 pandemic showing no signs of abatement, there was no other recourse.

Except during the two World Wars of the 20th century, the four-year cycle of the Olympics has been followed diligently, and the Games have grown steadily in status and spectacle to become the most coveted sports event on the planet.

There have been hiccups. In 1980, the US led a boycott of the Moscow Olympics by the Western Bloc following USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. In 1984, the USSR paid back in kind by boycotting (along with the Eastern Bloc) the Los Angeles Olympics. But the Games were still staged.

From 1988, the IOC moved aggressively — with support of all member countries — to make the Olympics sacrosanct and above political conflicts.

In fact, the Olympics are seen as the best peace-broker between nations, and a platform for all humanity to interact, albeit competitively, by chasing sporting excellence.

Tokyo 2020 held out rich promise of all such expectations being fulfilled, before being hit for a six by

the Corona virus. The Olympics of 2020 will now be held in the summer of 2021. The relief that the Olympics have not been summarily cancelled, only postponed, must be seen in the perspective of the havoc Covid-19 has played with all major sports events. Already, everything scheduled till May end has been suspended. And nobody has a clue when things will improve.

The itineraries of all sports will have to be rejigged going ahead which, apart from the huge financial losses that are already being incurred, will be a daunting task for administrators and federations. I foresee a bitter battle between

sports for grabbing dates. Equally badly hit are others in the sports eco-system: coaches, fitness and sports medicine experts, sundry support staff, workers attached to infrastructure, those involved in travel, hospitality etc. Tournaments like the Olympics, tennis Grand Slams, IPL, NBA, NFL, are billion dollar enterprises and massive job losses are expected.

Athletes, the biggest stakeholders, will be hit harder. If there are no more Grand Slam events this year, have we seen the last of Federer and Serena Williams for instance? With the Olympics delayed by a year, will M. C. Mary Kom be able to sustain her

zest and form? And what of M. S. Dhoni, who was to gauge his own form for the T20 World Cup by playing the IPL?

Such concern is not restricted to veterans and old-timers only. There are a host of those wanting to participate in the Olympics for whom an extra year may spell doom to this ambition. So many might not be able to psychologically readjust to the new circumstances. And so on.

The ramifications of Covid-19 on sport are already monumental. One can only hope and pray that this enforced lay-off does not extend beyond a few months and action resumes at the earliest.

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