

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | 7 APRIL 2020

## WEATHER

Max: 36.2°C  
Min: 26.6°C  
RH: 51%  
Rain: Nil  
Forecast: Cloudy sky, Rain or thundershowers likely  
Max/Min temp. 36/25°C

## CORONA COUNT

CASES (+596)  
DEATHS (+18)  
4,778 136  
covid19india.org  
covid19india.org

## STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+30)  
TS: 364 11  
(+51)  
AP: 303 03

## WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,328,150

## DEATHS

73,750

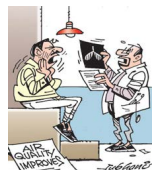
## COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

208  
worldometers.info

## ASTROGUIDE

Saravali: Uttarayana  
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Chaturdasi till 12 noon  
Star: Uttaraphalguni till 9.14 am and Hasta till 6.06 am (Wednesday)  
Varjyam: 4.32 pm to 5.56 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 8.37 am to 9.26 am and 11.07 pm to 11.54 pm  
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
Shubam: 12.44:14 AH  
PRAYERS  
Fajar: 5:05 am  
Zohar: 12:28 pm  
Asar: 4:39 pm  
Maghrib: 5:35 pm  
Isha: 7:44 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 6:30 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:05 AM  
MOONRISE TODAY 5:54 PM  
MOONSET TOMORROW 5:31 AM

## COUNTER POINT



Feeling of suffocation? Because your lungs are used to the polluted air!

## IN BRIEF

### PM: Prepare for lockdown easing

New Delhi: Indicating a phased opening of the ongoing lockdown, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday asked Union ministers to prepare a "graded plan" to slowly open departments in areas that have not emerged as hotspots of the pandemic. Modi made this suggestion while chairing a meeting of the council of ministers via video-conferencing.

### Central troops told to stay put

New Delhi: The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) have suspended all non-essential movement of its troops and staffers as they have extended their leaves by another 10 days, till April 15, in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, officials said on Monday.

## INSIDE

### CITY... P62

Street children beg for survival in lockdown

### NATION... P64

51 Kerala nurses tested positive in Mumbai



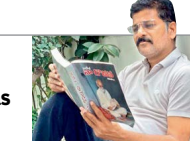
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**WORLD | 5**  
Japan proposes emergency over virus



**BUSINESS | 7**  
Ambani's net worth drops 28% due to pandemic

**TABLOID**  
Me-time for netas during lockdown



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# Curbs for lockdown extension

## KCR asks PM for 2 weeks; irked by SM reports that he extended curbs till June 3

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 6

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Monday requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to extend the nationwide lockdown beyond April 14, when the three-week, nation-wide lockdown comes to an end. While addressing a press conference at Pragati Bhavan, Mr Rao said, "I propose that the lockdown be extended by at least one or two weeks and then we can take a call on ending it."

Mr Rao said, "We can recover from a hit to our economy but we can't bring back lives of people. A civilised society could not bear pain, trauma and tragedy of a large-scale human loss. A lockdown is the only weapon that India has, given our weak infrastructure as a developing country."

He said, "The lockdown is impacting all sections of society and economy at large. But coronavirus is the biggest crisis faced by all of mankind and calls for unprecedented measures."

Mr Rao revealed that during his conversation with the Prime Minister on Sunday, he requested Mr Modi to ascertain opinions of all Chief Ministers regarding the lifting of the lockdown.

He said that even a partial lifting of lockdown on April 14 was not an easy and it will prove to be a gigantic task to control people.

The CM said that lockdown was the only weapon to contain the pandemic and he will request the PM to not hesitate in extending the lockdown. Mr Rao was irked with "misrepresentation" on social media and by certain news agencies in carrying his appeal to Mr Modi on extension of nationwide lockdown.

The CM was referring to recommendations by the Boston Consulting Group, wherein, in one possible scenario, it recommended that a lockdown was required till June, because India "does not have sufficient medical infrastructure and manpower."

However, certain news agencies flashed reports that the CM appealed for lockdown to be extended nationally till June 2.

When health minister Etala Rajender brought this to the CM's notice, Mr Rao, enraged, said, "I explained to mediapersons at the presser my statements in Hindi, English and Telugu for their understanding so they carry with true spirit my appeal to PM Modi. It is unfortunate the media is misquoting information without verifying the facts."

Mr Rao attacked social media harshly, which he alleged was "turning into anti-media". He said "some vernacular media are also carrying lumpen and ugly stories" in this crucial hour.



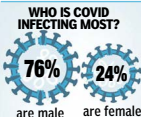
A cop questions visitors to Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad on Monday during the lockdown period. — S. SURENDER REDDY

## Centre plans to control clusters

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
WITH agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 6

Amid steep rise in fresh cases of novel coronavirus in India, the Central government has prepared a "containment plan for large outbreaks" that will see the "Bhiliwara Model" being replicated in the country's Covid-19 hotspots after lockdown ends. As per covid19india.org, a crowdsourced website that updates the numbers frequently, there were a total 4,778 cases out of which 4,281 are active cases and 361 have been discharged. So far 136 deaths have been reported.

After lockdown ends, certain virus hotspots will continue to be sealed. Officials have so far identified about 62 areas as hotspot though they say that places with even one case are under the scanner. As per government's "Cluster" Containment Strategy, states were asked to contain the disease in a defined geographic area by early detection and breaking the chain of transmission. The "aggressive and ruthless" measures include geographic quarantine, social distancing, enhanced surveillance, testing and isolation of all suspected cases, quarantine of contacts and risk communication to create awareness among public on preventive public health measures. The document also asks state and district agencies to enhance "passive surveillance" in the entire area under quarantine.



47% people are below 40 years age group, 34% between 40-50 years age group and 19% are 60 and above age group

86% death cases exhibited co-morbidity related to diabetes, chronic kidney issues, hypertension and heart related problems.

Young people with co-morbidities are also at high risk of Covid-19.

63% deaths observed among elderly, making them a high risk population.

— Union Health ministry

## Case doubling falls to 4.1 days

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 6

The doubling time for coronavirus (Covid-19) in India is 4.1 days, far from the ideal 7.1 days, as more asymptomatic carriers are coming to hospitals with symptoms.

The doubling time is calculated based on number of patients who come with symptoms and are confirmed for the disease.

Medical experts say that doubling time has increased as cluster cases have emerged in various parts of the country and are being reported now. The meeting organised by the Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin in New Delhi, an orthopaedic doctor contacts in Nellore and the Wockhardt Hospital personnel in Mumbai are examples of how there are groups of cases emerging from various parts of the country.

Dr K.K. Aggarwal, president, Confederation of Medical Association of Asia and Oceania, said, "The ideal time where there are no clusters or groups doubling time is 7.1 days."

The rising number of cases is anticipated by medical experts.

## DOCTORS, MEDICAL STAFF, SANITATION WORKERS TO GET INCENTIVES: KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 6

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Monday announced incentives for doctors, medical staff, safai karmcharis and sanitation staff fighting the coronavirus in municipal corporations, municipalities and gram panchayats across the state.

■ Report on Page 3

A senior doctor in Hyderabad explained the next two weeks will see rise in Covid-19 centres. After that, governments can allow them to go to private hospitals for containment. This is as an expected scenario as finally more tests are being carried out and contact tracing is happening as per guidelines. This means sporadic cases with no contact history and severe respiratory distress will also come to hospitals. Two deaths in OGH and one case of the immune-compromised child in Nelloer Hospital are examples.

■ Page 4: Antibody testing to show immunity

## 30 new Covid cases in TS, 308 still active out of 364

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 6

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Monday said that as on Monday evening, there were a total of 308 active cases of coronavirus (Covid-19) in Gandhi Hospital. The total number of cases stood at 364, up 334 from Monday. The death toll stood at 11.

Addressing a press conference at Pragati Bhavan, the Chief Minister said that the state had so far recorded 11 Covid-19 related deaths, all of them linked directly or as a primary contact to the returnees of the congregation organised by the Tablighi Jamaat at the Markaz mosque in Nizamuddin in Delhi a few weeks ago.

Mr Rao said, "A total of 1,089 returnees have been identified and tracked in the state. There are reports that another 30 to 35 people from TS may still be in Delhi. We believe they are quarantined."

He informed that among the 170 returnees, 170 have tested positive and another 93 persons, most of them primary contacts like family members, have also tested positive for Covid-19.

He said, "In the first phase, the government has quarantined 25,507 foreign returnees and during tests, 30 of them were found tested positive. Another 20 of their primary contacts also tested positive."

The CM said that in all 50 cases, no one has died and 35 of them have been discharged. The remaining 15 would also be discharged soon.

## HEAD CONSTABLE TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 6

A head constable working in Hyderabad police is learnt to have become the first coronavirus (Covid-19) positive case from among the Telangana state police. He is one of the new coronavirus patients, who tested positive on Monday.

He was posted on lockdown duties and during a senior cop told him to get a check done after seeing he was unwell.

He went to Nims for check-up and was directed to go to Gandhi Hospital.

## WATCH OUT FOR SYMPTOMS AMONG MONKEYS, LANGURS, OFFICIALS TOLD

Hyderabad: Forest department officials in Telangana were on Monday instructed to observe and watch out for coronavirus infection symptoms among monkeys and langurs that move about in forest areas.

Sanitary analysis should be collected from any dead wild animals found in the forests of the state with those collecting samples taking all recommended precautions and such samples should be sent for testing either to the National Institute of High Security Animal Disease in Bhopal, National Research Centre for Equines in Hissar, Haryana or to the Centre for Animal Disease Research and Diagnostics, Itanagar.

## Animal Planet | Telangana issues strict orders for regular health checks on wild animals in reserves, zoo park

# Zoos cautious after tiger in New York gets Covid-19

BALU PULIPAKA | DC  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 6

The discovery of coronavirus in a Malaysian tiger at New York's Bronx Zoo on Monday sent officials at World Zoos and the state scrambling to put in place a protocol to protect animals in zoos and big cats in tiger reserves.

In Telangana state, strict orders, accompanied by detailed guidelines, have been issued for regular health checks of tigers and other animals, including primates, in the Nehru Zoological Park, and for monitoring the health of wildlives in sanctuaries and two tiger reserves.

With the New York tigers' case causing alarm, zoo officials have been instructed to monitor tigers and other big cats for abnormal signs including coughing, nasal discharges, respiratory distress and diarrhoea, which are visible symptoms of possible coronavirus infection. All big cats in the zoos should be provided with

multivitamins, especially vitamin C, among other supplements and treated for any visible respiratory ailments symptomatically.

■ AMONG THE TJ returnees, 170 have tested positive and another 93 persons, most of them primary contacts like family members, have also tested positive for Covid-19.

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The CM said that in all 50 cases, no one has died and 35 of them have been discharged. The remaining 15 would also be discharged soon.

The Indian Veterinary Research Institute said that if such symptoms are observed, senior authorities must be informed and samples need to be collected from big cats for testing.

Meanwhile, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Telangana state, R. Shobha issued a set of instructions to zoos in the state and ordered that no sick animal keeper, staffer or official be allowed anywhere near the animals in zoos and deer parks. All animals in zoos and deer parks must be kept under CCTV surveillance and animal keepers or handlers should not be allowed close to any animal displaying signs of sickness.

When isolating such animals, handlers must wear personal protection equipment. "Fortnightly samples of suspect cases are to be sent to designated animal health institutes in the country to initiate Covid-19 tests," she said.

■ Page 3: Guidelines issued to tiger reserves

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**BRIEF**

**Drones used to monitor lockdown**

**Hyderabad:** Rachakonda police has started using drones from Monday to mount real-time surveillance in Pabandhara, Lalabandhara and Moola Ali towards ensuring proper implementation of the lockdown. Working tirelessly officials and workers of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) have hardly been making themselves proud. Like its urban brethren

**TECHIE CITES MENTAL ISSUES, ENDS LIFE**

**JAYENDRA CHAITANYA T | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

A 35-year-old techie committed suicide by setting himself on fire in Madhapur on Monday. He had sent a text message to a relative saying he had mental problems and was taking his own life. According to the Madhapur police, K. Purinder Reddy, 35, a software engineer from D. U. toor district of Andhra Pradesh left home on Monday morning informing his wife that he would return shortly. When he did not return after several hours, she went in search of him. Purinder was finally found dead in some bushes close to the 100 Feet Road. He had set himself on fire, said the police.

**TECHIE LOSES IN GAMBLER GOES MISSING**

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

Added to online gambling and having lost all his savings and ₹80,000 borrowed from his mother, a 23-year-old software engineer from Malkajgiri went missing after leaving a message for his mother on WhatsApp. The Malkajgiri police said that G. Nagadharani Dutt, 23, a resident of Yadavnagar in Malkajgiri was addicted to online gambling. His father Venkat Subbarao, a businessman, thought of discussing the issue with his son the next morning. He was not in the petrol tank to die. His parents found the phone," said the police official.

**COPS HELP TWO PREGNANT WOMEN**

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

Two pregnant women who were in labour pain were shifted to hospitals by the Cyberabad police in a span of 24 hours. One woman delivered a boy and the other a girl. The police also shifted two other pregnant women, two cancer patients and a dialysis patient to hospital. On Monday, a pregnant woman from Quthbullapur in Perbasheerabad sought help through Dial 100 after her mobile was informed that the ambulance arrival might take time. Within minutes, a police patrol reached the house and shifted her to the Koti Maternity Hospital. In another instance at Medchal, the woman was taken to Niloufer Hospital, where she delivered a baby girl following surgery. In view of the large number of grievances reported during the lockdown, the emergency calls received at the control room are attended on priority. The public can call the police in any emergency and the police is working round the clock," said Cyberabad police commissioner V.C. Sajjanam. The control room can be reached on 9490617440, 9490617431 or via WhatsApp on the same numbers and by email (covidcontrolcyb@gmail.com), pregnant woman

**HMWS&SB ignoring sewage overflows**

In 2 days, water body has received over 2,500 complaints from citizens and it has not attended them

**MADHY DEKSHITHI DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

During the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, while the doctors, nurses, healthcare workers and police have been working tirelessly officials and workers of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) have hardly been making themselves proud. Like its urban brethren

agency, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), whose crews are not attending to stop volunteers and NGOs distributing free food for poor people and migrant workers, insisting everything must go through them citing social distancing norms, never mind its own Annapurna canteens have hardly been performing at role model levels, the HMWS&SB has hardly

been attending to sewer overflow complaints in residential areas. Within two days, water board has received over 2,500 complaints from citizens and it has not attended to even 20 per cent of them. Sharing his grievance, Mr Krishna Marri-ganti, a resident of HM Nagar in Nacharam, said, "The water board has not attending to sewer overflow complaints though we have been complaining on a daily basis since 20 days."

Mr Rizwan Bin Ahmed, another citizen, said, "We are residing at Wadi-e-Mahmood in Rajendranagar pillar no 230. We have been facing severe overflow problems since three weeks. Though the issue was brought to notice of higher authorities, none have attended it till date."

The HMWS&SB, which has been desludging choked manholes to use the lockdown window, has directly deposited faecal matter on roadsides with impunity at 2,856 locations in last one week.

2,856 locations in last one week. These location include Narayana, Secunderabad, Uppal, Charminar, Marredpally, Rajendranagar and others, not too far from places where corona suspected patients were being monitored and quarantined. When queried, a senior HMWS&SB official told Deccan Chronicle that contractors have made it clear that could not cart lump

removed from sewer-lines. He said that it would create further issues if the sludge is removed and deposited on wayside. The HMWS&SB official said that they do not have any alternative mechanism to shift silt from manholes, since it has to dry for at least 15 days before carting it to different locations.

**Cong: State slow with Covid tests**

**IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

State Congress treasurer G. Narayana Reddy has strongly condemned the state government for not allowing private laboratories to conduct diagnostic tests for the novel coronavirus disease. Mr Narayana Reddy, in a media statement on Monday, said that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approved nine private laboratories to conduct coronavirus tests. The ICMR has framed guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for collection of samples, packaging and transportation. Although approval was granted a week ago, the government had not framed the mandatory local guidelines to facilitate the private labs from testing.

home quarantine. She had said that 2,400 samples were tested. The Congress leader accused the government of not sharing details of the samples tested and the statistics were revealed only through the press release issued by the ICMR. "By going slow in conducting Covid-19 tests, the government is committing the same mistake committed by Italy, Spain and the United States which conducted tests only on people with symptoms and witnessed a huge number of cases and deaths. Some countries like South Korea conducted tests on a large scale and controlled the spread of coronavirus in an effective manner," he said. He said research done by the Chinese government in Wuhan revealed that nearly 30 per cent of people had no symptoms before they tested positive for coronavirus and the figure was 20 per cent in the US.

**Sanitisation spree**



Firefighters along with police spray disinfectant in Secunderabad railway station on Monday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

**ANTIBODY TESTING TO SHOW IMMUNITY**

**From Page 1**

The antibody testing for healthcare workers, who are frontline carriers of virus, will give an indication of level of antibody generated to fight virus and response of immune system towards it. While this is only going to be a sample, it will give an assessment of how those who are exposed to the virus and asymptomatic carriers are responding to the virus. A senior doctor at the ICMR explained, "presently, we are asking throat swabs for suspected cases which is time consuming. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is now set to start blood tests and this will lead to more numbers of tests. It will also give an idea of the spread. This will enable us to understand cluster spread in communities and mark those places where extension and treatment can be carried out."

**BJP leader's Covid black magic wastes 1L ltr of water**

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

While the whole world, country, state and city are facing the coronavirus crisis, a small-time political leader conducted Kshudra puja (black magic) on Sunday night. He even mixed by-products like lemons, turmeric and kumkum on an overhead tank of one lakh litre capacity of water at Risala Khurshid in Harinagar in Ramnagar division. Alerted locals took the local peta to task and handed over him to Musheerabad police. According to locals, Ravi Chary, a local BJP leader, performed the Kshudra puja in Ramnagar division at midnight on Sunday. After completing the ritual, he mixed the ingredients of the puja into the overhead water tank. Suspecting his actions, local took him to task and handed him over to



Water being released from the tank in Risala Khurshid in Harinagar where the BJP leader performed Kshudra puja.

Musheerabad police. He tried to manage the police, but public and local leaders from other political parties under pressure on police to book a case against Ravi Chary. T. Murali Krishna, station house officer, Musheerabad police station, said that police have registered a case and investigation is on. However, the cops did not reveal the sections under which he was booked. However local drained out a lakh litres of water from the overhead water tank Monday morning, saying drinking water will be supplied on Wednesday and they should survive for days without water because of Chary's actions. Water board officials could not be contacted over arrangements for drinking water.

**Mahavir Jayanti celebrated at homes**

**SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

Jains in the city celebrated the 2,619th Mahavir Jayanti on Monday. However, in view of the lockdown restrictions of congregations, most families prayed at their respective homes. There are more than 80 Jain families in the twin cities. In normal circumstances, Jains congregate for the celebration from different parts of the city after taking out a procession to the main venue, where special prayers are offered, according to Ms Kavita Jain, who runs an NGO. There were no usual festivities at Jain temples. She said "we are a family of six and we could not visit any temple this time. We prayed at home and sought healing of the world."

Mr Kamlesh Prakash Jain, an automobile financier, said, "Our family prayed to Lord Mahavir at home asking Him to grant us knowledge and character to attain salvation"

**Guidelines issued to tiger reserves**

**From Page 1**

In a separate set of guidelines issued for tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries, the Wildlife Division of Union Ministry of Environment and Forests instructed states that "it is felt that there are possibilities of spread of virus among animals in national parks, sanctuaries, tiger reserves and also transmission from humans to animals and vice-versa."

It called for a round-the-clock monitoring and reporting mechanism about any animal health issues noticed in protected areas and instructed officials to minimise human presence in such forests. These instructions will be applicable to the Amrabad and Kawal tiger reserves in Telangana state and the Nagarjuna-Srisailam tiger reserve in Andhra Pradesh and all wildlife sanctuaries in the two states as well as rest of the country. Director, zoo parks, Telangana, Dr Sishanand Kukrety told Deccan Chronicle that the Nehru Zoological Park in the city has probably one of the cleanest landscapes and has been fully sanitised thrice so far.

"We have twice a day animal health checks and all staff have masks, gloves and hand sanitizers. Most staff live in residential quarters by the zoo, so there are very few who need to commute and this means less exposure to possibility of contracting the disease. As of now, all animal keepers and others at the zoo are in good health. We are providing lunch for all so they do not have to go back home in the middle. They are working in batches and everything is under control," he said.

The CM announced ₹7,500 as Chief Minister's Special Incentive to each sanitation worker belonging to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and Metro Water Works and Sewerage Board. Applauding the safai karmacharis as "safai Anna - salaam Anna", the Chief Minister announced ₹5,000 incentive to each of the karmacharis working for municipalities and other bodies across the state.

The CM said that though the government is facing a severe financial crunch following the lockdown, incentives being extended to these staff in appreciation of their services. He stated that in fact a 10 per cent cut was imposed on salaries of sanitation workers. It has now been decided to pay them a 10 per cent deferment with immediate effect. The Chief Minister explained that generally the state gets ₹2,400 crore revenue in the first week of April. But, due to the lockdown, the government has received only ₹6 crore till date. The state government is making all possible efforts to ensure that there is no shortage of funds for combating Covid-19, he added.

**MEDICAL | CONCERN | PIL wants court direction to TS on providing PPEs, food for migrants**

**HC seeks state report on ventilators, PPEs**

**VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

The Telangana High Court directed the state government to submit an interim report by Thursday on the extent they have equipped hospitals with ventilators, supply and the availability of personal protective equipment (PPEs) to those dealing with Covid-19 patients and suspected cases. The court also sought a report on the steps being taken by the government

to ensure that consumables, food and medical items made available to the people every day, including migrant labourers during the lockdown period. The Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Ravendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy, through virtual court proceedings on Monday heard the PIL filed by Prof. PL. Vishveshwar Rao seeking a directive that the government to provide sufficient PPEs to the medical workforce and food to migrant

labourers stranded in the state. Chief Justice Chauhan expressed dismay over attacks on doctors and medical staff and told the

government to "first protect the medical staff". Advocate General B.S. Prasad said that the government was providing ample security to medical teams in hospitals. Sufficient PPEs had been provided and hospitals equipped with ventilators as per the Union health ministry's guidelines. The AG expressed concern that some persons, who are identified as probable Covid-19 affected persons were not coming forward for testing. Appreciating the govern-

ment efforts, Chief Justice Chauhan observed, "We are aware of the difficulties faced by the state government in dealing with the present situation and this court is grateful to it for taking steps to curtail further spread of coronavirus cases. Though the government is trying to tackle the crisis to the best of its abilities, at the same time, it should restrain religious congregations during the lockdown and necessary instructions have to be issued," the bench said. Keeping in view the

ensuing Easter festival, the bench asked the government to ensure that the celebrations are not held in churches. Justice A. Abhishek Reddy told the government to ensure that food items are distributed through a registered NGO or GHMC to avoid gatherings. On huge gatherings on the roads during distribution of food, Justice Reddy observed, "If such gatherings continue, then the very purpose of imposing a lockdown will be defeated."

**WHATSAPP CHATBOT FOR VIRUS UPDATES**

**ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

The state government on Monday launched an official WhatsApp chatbot to keep citizens informed on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Users can send a "Hi", "Hello" or "Covid" to the number 9000638638 to get started. On doing so, they will receive a message detailing various options which will allow them to access official data on Covid cases in the state and country, media bulletins, addresses of free-med centres, health facilities and isolation centres. IT minister K.T. Rama Rao said that the state government had partnered with WhatsApp to establish a dedicated chatbot. "We are doing everything we can to keep citizens safe. I urge everyone to rely on official channels of information," he said.

**CM ANNOUNCES INCENTIVES FOR COVID FIGHTERS**

**S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 6**

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Monday announced incentives for doctors, medical staff, safai karmacharis and sanitation staff fighting the coronavirus in municipal corporations, municipalities and gram panchayats across the state. Addressing a press conference at Pragathi Bhavan, he said an incentive amounting to 10 per cent of gross salary was to be given to Chief Minister's Special Incentive to doctors and medical staff in recognition of the hard work and service rendered by them towards saving lives of citizens. He said that their own lives in face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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SHORT TAKES

ARUNACHAL YOUTH ABDUCTED BY CHINA'S PLA

Itanagar, April 6: The Arunachal Pradesh Police on Monday confirmed that a 21-year-old man was abducted by China's People's Liberation Army on March 19 from Asapila sector near the McMahon line in Upper Subansiri district.

The whereabouts of the young man, however, are yet to be known, they said. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Chukhu Apa said district superintendent of police Taru Gusar had sent the Nacho police station officer in-charge to the spot. An inquiry has confirmed the incident.

"The state government will be apprised of it so as to act accordingly as the matter is under the purview of the external affairs ministry," Apa said.

MORE THAN 2,000 VEHICLES SEIZED IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 6

Thinking strong action against lockdown regulation violators, the Odisha Police on Monday seized close to 2,000 vehicles from the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had on Sunday evening warned motorists to maintain social distancing and adhere to the lockdown or face criminal action.

"So far, close to 2,000 vehicles have been seized in the state capital and nearly 250 in Cuttack," a senior police officer said.

Twin City Commissioner of Police Sudhanshu Sarangi said some people were entering onto the streets with their vehicles despite repeated requests to refrain from using private transport.

He said people can purchase essentials on foot from nearby shops, as sufficient number of shops and vegetable vendors are in operation.

"Though the total shutdown in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Bhadrak ended on Sunday night, the 21-day nationwide lockdown continues in full force. Out of the 39 coronavirus positive cases detected so far in the state, 32 are from Bhubaneswar."

THOSE WHO HID TRAVEL HISTORY TO FACE MISK

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 6

Apart from cancelling passports, the home ministry is likely to advise states to initiate action under several provisions of Indian Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure against those who have concealed their travel history and eventually tested positive for corona.

Sources said both the Centre and the states were more or less on the same page that there would be no compromise to ensure safety of the common people.

"We cannot allow any individual to play havoc with health of others and strictest possible action would be taken against such people who have concealed their travel history from the authorities and eventually turned out to be positive. We have already discussed the issue at length with the states since law and order is a state subject but there are some common provisions," a senior home ministry official said.

In fact, almost all states have fixed a deadline for their residents to inform the local police and health authorities if they have had any travel history. The state police have also issued stern warning that in case the information is concealed stringent action would be taken under relevant sections of the law.

Home ministry officials said the stern warning by the state police was having a positive impact and showing results on the ground.

Post-lockdown, Assam plans 'entry permit'

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 6

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Monday said that they have not found any positive case in last 48 hours but still some persons out of the total 801 people living outside Assam would like to come back, the minister said that they are planning to issue "entry permit" to regulate their return to the state. "We are going to create a website soon on which people interested

them under the Disaster Management Act and the IPC, the minister announced that they have already started working on a strategy to mitigate the crowd that may emerge on opening of the lockdown. Informing that a large number of state's people living outside Assam would like to come back, the minister said that they are planning to issue "entry permit" to regulate their return to the state. "We are going to create a website soon on which people interested

to come back will have to apply for the entry permit and authorities will allow only limited entries per day so that they could be checked and if required, quarantined," said the minister. The minister said that they have completed 2,000 sample testings out of which 1,809 were found negative. "We got 26 positive cases so far and result of 165 samples is awaited," said the minister while admitting that their 25 positive cases were linked to Markaz only.

He also pointed out that government of India had sent four lists of 556 people who attended the religious congregation of Tablighi Jamaat Markaz in Delhi but locally Assam police and administration identified another lot of 275 persons who attended the same religious congregation but were not the part of that list. "We have collected the sample of 491 who attended the religious congregation and 128 more samples are yet to be collected. We have set the dead-

line of Monday for them to cooperate with the administration by making themselves available for medical checkup," said the minister who admitted that they are yet to find the connection through which Manish Tibrewal was infected as his travel history doesn't have any recent link to any hotspot of Covid-19. Informing that they have quarantined the apartment the minister said that they have collected 98 samples of people who came in touch with

Manish Tibrewal but 85 have tested negative. "Even after testing negative we have kept 118 people in quarantine," said the minister revealing that they are going to free 75,981 people in next two days from home quarantine. About the preparedness of state health department, the minister said that they have the stock of 2841 PPE, 36487 N-65 mask and 728022 triple layer mask. "We are expecting to get 5000 PPE soon," the minister said.

SUPPLY LINES FOR PPEs FROM ABROAD OPENED UP: GOVT

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 6

Under criticism for shortage of Personal Protective Equipment for the healthcare workers and doctors, central government on Monday said the supply lines from abroad have opened up with 1.70 lakh PPE coveralls from China which have been donated to the Government of India. Officials said orders have been placed for 112.76 lakhs stand-alone N95 masks and 157.29 lakhs PPE coveralls. Out of these, 80 lakh PPE kits will include N95 masks. The orders are expected to start arriving this week.

"An order for 80 lakh complete PPE kits (including N95 masks) has been placed on a Singapore based platform earlier," official said.

DIDI ROPES IN ABHIJEET TO TACKLE COVID FISCAL FALLOUT

RAJIB CHOWHURI | DC KOLKATA, APRIL 6

The West Bengal government has roped in Nobel laureate Abhijeet Banerjee to head a universal panel of experts to tackle the economic crisis in the state in the ongoing total lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Announcing his name and role on Monday, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee informed that she would convey her decision to him personally. She has also agreed to entrust a Trinamul Congress MP to attend the April 9 all-party meeting by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a day after getting his approval.

On her government's future plan, Ms Banerjee said, "I am setting up a global advisory board for Covid-19 Response Policy in West Bengal. I am currently inviting people known for their talent and wisdom to be its members. It will be a policy decision which will help the CM."

We have selected five-five members for the board. Next is Dr Vinayak Banerjee, who he will head it. He is our prime minister. Next is Dr Swarn Sarkar who worked as the WHO Regional Director and worked with ICMR earlier. We will get more such experts on board."

"We are not like the Central government that centres of money would be donated. Covid-19 is new to us. It has caused a nationwide lockdown. Earlier it was notebandi (demonetization), now it is social lockout (lockdown) which has suspended all businesses and revenue earned. People are in peril. We don't know when this disease would end. It's totally uncertain. So a future plan needs to be made during a pandemic about how to revive the economy, health and other sectors," she added.

Referring to the all-party meeting, she said, "When the PM wanted to talk in a video conference, I attended it. On April 6, I went to talk to the MPs since it was not discussed in the parliament. Someone requested me to agree and said one would attend it as many are busy in their constituencies."



A woman distributes food items among needy people in Guwahati on Monday during a nationwide lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic.

51 nurses from Kerala test +ve

Nurses say they were forced to work without protective gear initially

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 6

Kerala which perhaps has the highest number of nursing professionals working in other parts of the country and abroad, is now faced with safety problems concerning Covid-19 nurses in the wake of Covid-19.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told mediapersons here that there are reports that 46 Malayali nurses had contracted Covid-19 and 150 nurses were under quarantine in a hospital in Mumbai. Similarly five nurses have been confirmed with Covid-19 in Delhi Cancer Institute.

There are allegations that the nurses got infected because they were forced to work without proper safety kits while treating patients in the first phase and that led to spread of infection. Meanwhile, 13 new cases of Covid-19 were reported in Kerala on Monday taking the total number of active cases under treatment to 266. Of the 13 reported cases on Monday, nine were from Kasargod including six who

returned from abroad, two from Malappuram and one each from Kollam and Pathanamthi districts respectively. Three cases are of those who returned after attending the Tablighi conference in Nizamuddin.

With the state not recording significantly high number of cases in the last four days, health authorities claim that the effective measures taken on the ground have started showing results.

However, nothing can be said conclusively about arresting community spread at this stage, they added.

Kerala had reported nine cases on Friday, eight on Saturday, eleven on Sunday and 13 on Monday. 152 lakh persons are under home quarantine, 795 persons in hospitals. So far 10,716 sample have been sent for testing of which 9607 have been found negative.

The Chief Minister said Kasargod medical college was converted into Covid-10 hospital within four days with 200 beds and 10 ICU beds and another 100 beds and 10 ICU bed will be added soon.

The chief minister said the state was prepared to meet any situation arising out of Covid-19. As many as 1.15 lakh beds are available in the government and private hospitals. A three-tier system has been put in place for Covid-19.

There are 10,183 isolation beds in hospitals besides 517 corona care centres have been established with 17, 477 isolation beds. 38 corona care hospitals are functioning in the state as of now.

Mr Vijayan said the Kerala government has permitted patients from Kerala to get treated in hospitals across the border. Nine persons had died in Kasargod district after Karnataka authorities issued permission to seek treatment in various hospitals in Mangalore.

Two private hospitals in Mumbai have been sealed after some of their medical staff, including doctors and nurses were tested positive.

In Pune, at least 92 staff members, including several doctors of the D.Y. Patil Hospital have been quarantined after an accident victim, who was being treated at the facility, tested positive.

(With inputs from Vrushali Parandare)

TWO WALK-IN SAMPLE KIOSKS SET UP IN KERALA

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 6

Kerala has installed two sample collection cabins, Walk-in Sample Kiosks (WISK) for collecting samples from people as part of community testing initiative for Covid-19. The kiosks were installed at the Government Medical College Ernakulam.

The healthcare professionals deployed at the kiosks will collect throat swabs of people and send it for testing.

The kiosks are modeled on the lines of South Korea which had first introduced the facility for large scale sample collection. Each kiosk costs Rs 40,000.

One of the biggest advantages of WISK is that it does not require the use of Personal Protective Equipment in big numbers. The person collecting the samples from inside the kiosk does not need PPE.

There has to be risk profiling and those above 60 or with comorbidities have to be placed in designated quarantine facility. "This will help identify early development of symptoms among them, their testing and shifting to isolation facility," the document said.

All schools, colleges and work places in contact with the kiosk will remain close during this time and people have to stay indoors for an initial period of 28 days, which may be extended based on the risk assessment. Once under control, staggered working and market hours may be allowed.

This containment plan first implemented in Bhiwari, is now being adopted in several places including Haryana where five villages, where foreign nationals related to Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) had stayed, have been sealed and its residents quarantined.

In Gujarat, ten localities have been placed under quarantine after some attendees of the Tablighi Jamaat event tested positive.

Cong LS, RS MPs not on same page over suspension of MPLAD funds

SREEPARNA CHAKRABARTY | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 6

Opposition parties largely welcomed the 30 per cent cut in salaries of members of Parliament to fight Covid-19 outbreak, but Congress strongly opposed the decision to suspend the MPLADs fund, which is used for development work in constituencies.

In the Congress, a war of words broke out between Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha members over the decision to cut MPs' salaries and suspension of MPLADs. "Now please mobilise all resources to fight Covid-19. Identify non-urgent expenses like the example of Vistara. Cut petrol taxes too."

However, most Lok Sabha MPs differed. Congress Rajya Sabha MPs Jairam Ramesh and Rajeev Gowda, welcomed the cut in salaries and suspension of MPLADs for the next two

years. "I welcome the decision on MPLADs. I have been arguing for long that approximately Rs 7,000 crore annually to MPs and MLAs given for development work should be used as a corpus for state funding of elections," Jainendra Kumar said.

Rajeev Gowda, a Rajya Sabha member from Karnataka said, "I welcome the government decision to cut MPs' salaries and suspension of MPLADs. Now please mobilise all resources to fight Covid-19. Identify non-urgent expenses like the example of Vistara. Cut petrol taxes too."

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Rajya Sabha MPs and ground realities. "It's sad that how Rajya Sabha MPs are completely disconnected with the ground reality," he tweeted.

Another MP from Tamil Nadu, Karti P Chidambaram echoed his views and said, "All those who welcome the MPLAD fund suspension and who tweet against my opposition to this government decision to cut MPs' salaries, visit Sivaganga and see how useful the funds are for local communities and see the demand for such projects from the constituency."

"This can only be saved by someone who has never faced a direct election and has no connection to answer to," he added.

Senior Congress MPs in the Lok Sabha Manish

Tewari and Shashi Tharoor too criticised the MPLADs suspension. Tewari said, "As an MP who represents a predominantly rural constituency I fully support the 30 per cent cut in my salary. However, the suspension of MPLADs is a bit of an overstretch. At this time of grave humanitarian distress that will get only worse if the government goes ahead, MPLADs is a targeted and noble instrument to customise micro level interventions to alleviate distress."

Whereas Tharoor said, "MPLADs for members means for an MP to direct development resources to his constituency. An order to curtail all MPLAD spending for Covid-19 related measures would have been ok."

From Page 1

All hospitalised patients with influenza like illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) will be tested for Covid-19.

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1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY Smt. K. VISALAKSHY W/o Late P. Narayanan D.O.B. 7.4.2019 Loving Daughter & Sons

15th DEATH ANNIVERSARY K. MANJULA WANI D.O.B. 27.09.1933 D.O.D. 07.04.2008 It is fifteen years since you passed away. But your memories are still fresh in our mind.

1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY SHRI SATYANARAYAN SHIGIRI D.O.B. 19.01.1951 D.O.D. 19.01.2019

16th DEATH ANNIVERSARY Smt. BOLLAM SUKRUTHA BAI W/o Mukli Laku Prasada Rao D.O.B: 03-10-1936 D.O.D: 07-04-2004

OBITUARY We have lost a great soul. Most Humble, Extremely helpful and the finest of People. May his Soul be rewarded with eternal peace.

11th ANNIVERSARY Smt. BALKI MALLANMA GARI W/o Late Dr. S. Sanyasurayana Rao

IN BRIEF

Boko Haram kills 7 in Cameroon

Younde: Seven people were killed when two suicide bombers, suspected to be members of Nigeria's Boko Haram jihadist group, attacked a village in northern Cameroon on Sunday, police and a local official said on Monday. Two Boko Haram bombers blew themselves up at around 8pm in the attack on Amchide, on the border with Nigeria, a policeman said, while a local official said a village chief and two teenagers were killed among the dead.

Jihadists kill 20 Mali soldiers

Bamako: Some 20 Malian soldiers were killed in a militant jihadist attack Monday, local politicians and a military official said, in the latest bout of violence in the war-torn West African state. Militants attacked a military base in the northern town of Bamba early on Monday morning, according to a local government official, who called the assault "a terrorist attack." He said at least 20 soldiers had died. Another local official gave a similar account, but suggested the death toll was likely higher than 20, while a leading army official also confirmed an attack had taken place, with losses on both sides.

Indonesia cops to guard burials

Jakarta: Indonesia's capital Jakarta has launched a 120-team special police unit to guard the burials of COVID-19 victims over concerns that scared residents could try to block funerals. The move comes after angry mobs, and rallies on Sulawesi island and in Central Java blocked streets to prevent ambulances from transporting victims to cemeteries. The team will watch over victims' bodies as they are taken from hospitals to cemeteries, where they are wrapped in plastic and buried. "We've seen cases in other cities and we don't want such a thing to happen in Jakarta so that's why we formed the team as a preventive measure," said Mohammad Ngajib, the unit head.

Imported cases in China at 951

Beijing: China stepped up border control measures on Monday as the number of imported COVID-19 cases rose sharply to 951 while the asymptomatic cases also surged, raising fears of a second wave of the virus. Infections, mainly from Chinese returning home from abroad despite drastic containment efforts. A health official in Beijing warned that the Chinese capital, Beijing, will probably remain under long-term epidemic control. Mi Feng, a spokesperson for the National Health Commission told the media that 951 imported cases have been reported till Sunday as China airlifted more of its nationals from overseas countries currently struggling to cope up with COVID-19 spread. Mi said the number is slight but by imported cases in China continues to increase, especially those from neighbouring countries.

COVID-19 CAN LAST ON MASKS FOR A WEEK

Beijing, April 6: The novel COVID-19 can remain infectious on face masks for up to a week, and last on banknotes, stainless steel and plastic surfaces for days, according to a study. However, the virus can be killed by household disinfectants, bleach or frequent hand washing with soap and water, said researchers from the University of Hong Kong (HKU). The study found that the COVID-19 virus can stick to stainless steel and plastic surfaces for up to four days, and to the outer layer of a face mask for a week. The report, published in *The Lancet*, adds to a growing body of research about the stability of SARS-CoV-2 — as the novel COVID-19 is formally known — and what can be done to prevent its transmission. "SARS-CoV-2 can be highly stable in a favourable environment, but it is also susceptible to standard disinfection methods," said the research, strengthening the case for measures including Leo Poon Litman and Malik Peiris, both from HKU's School of Public Health. The researchers tested how long the virus could remain infectious at room temperature on a variety of surfaces.

US braces for 9/11 moment: Top doc

Surgeon Gen. Jerome Adams' remarks a day after Prez Trump said next week will be 'very difficult'

Washington, April 6: Americans are bracing for the "hardest and saddest" week of their lives with tragedies similar to the 9/11 attacks and the Pearl Harbor bombing, the country's top doctor has warned while the death toll approached the 10,000 mark as President Donald Trump expressed hope that Covid-19 cases were "levelling off" in major US hotspots. Surgeon General Vice Admiral Jerome Adams' remarks came a day after President Trump said that the next week is going to be a "very very difficult" time for the country. He said the Covid-19 territorial wars are some of the darkest moments in the US history, including the two worst foreign attacks on American soil: The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the September 11 terrorist attacks.



The empty Prater amusement park is pictured during the COVID-19 pandemic in Vienna on Monday. Austria could start easing lockdown measures from next week, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said, but warned that this depended on citizens abiding by social distancing rules. — AFP

"The next week is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment. It's going to be our 9/11 moment; it's going to be the hardest moment for many Americans in their entire lives. And we really need to understand that if we want to flatten that curve and bring it through to the other side, everyone needs to do their part," Adams said. The death toll in the US due to Covid-19 on Sunday crossed 9,500, which is three times more than the number of people who died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. A total of 2,977 people besides hijackers were killed in the September 11, 2001, attacks. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and America officially entered World War II, more than 2,400 casualties had occurred as a result of the attack. More than 3.3 lakh Americans have been infected by Covid-19. —PTI

3 in 4 hospitals have patients; worst to come

Washington, April 6: Three out of four US hospitals surveyed are already treating patients with confirmed or suspected Covid-19, according to a federal report that finds hospitals expect to be overwhelmed as cases rocket toward their projected peak. A report due out Monday from a federal watchdog agency warns that differ-

ently, widely reported problems are feeding off each other in a vicious cycle. Such problems include insufficient tests, slow results, scarcity of protective gear, the shortage of breathing machines for seriously ill patients and burned-out staffs anxious for their own safety. "There's this sort of domino effect," said Ann Ma-

xwell, an assistant inspector general at the Department of Health and Human Services. "These challenges play off each other and exacerbate the situation. There's a cascade effect." The inspector general's report is based on a telephone survey of 623 hospitals around the country, from March 23-27. With hundreds of new Covid-19

cases daily, the situation is becoming more dire for many of the nation's 6,000 hospitals. Others can still scramble to prepare. "Hospitals reported that their most significant challenges centred on testing and caring for patients with known or suspected Covid-19, and keeping staff safe," the report concluded. "It's likely that every

hospital in America is going to have to deal with this," Maxwell said. In most people, the Covid-19 causes mild to moderate symptoms. Others, particularly older people and those with underlying health issues, can develop life-threatening breathing problems. The US has more diagnosed cases than any other country. —AFP

FEMALE TIGER IN NEW YORK ZOO TESTS POSITIVE

New York, April 6: Nadia, a 4-year-old female Malayan tiger at the popular Bronx Zoo here has tested positive for the novel Covid-19, probably infected by an asymptomatic employee, in what is believed to be the first known case of an animal infected with Covid-19 in the US, raising new questions about human-to-animal transmission and the reverse. The tigress, her sister Azul, two Amur tigers and three African lions had developed a dry cough late last month with decrease in appetite, said the Wildlife Conservation Society, which manages the zoo. Nadia, along with other big cats, is thought to have been infected by the zoo keeper who has not been identified, it said on Sunday, adding that all animals are expected to recover. "Though they have experienced some decrease in appetite, they are otherwise doing well under veterinary care and are bright, alert, and interacting with their keepers," the zoo said. "It is not known how this disease will spread in big cats since different species can react differently to novel infections, but we will continue to monitor them closely," it said. "I couldn't believe it," zoo director Jim Breheyny said. The Covid-19 pandemic in humans in Wuhan late last year, is believed to have spread from animals to humans, including two dogs, tested positive in Hong Kong. —PTI

Pak for regional effort

SHAFQAT ALI JDC ISLAMABAD, APRIL 6

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Monday called for pooling of region-wide research capabilities to combat Covid-19 for effective coordination in relief and containment efforts. In a telephone conversation with Secretary General of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Vladimir Norov, Foreign Minister Qureshi said in order to strengthen regional cooperation in South Asia in the wake of the pandemic, Pakistan had proposed a video conference of SAARC Health Ministers to learn from each other.

PAKISTAN ON Monday reported 50 deaths from novel covid-19 while the total number of cases has surged to 327.

PAK TEMPORARILY OPENS BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN

Islamabad, April 6: Pakistan Monday opened its Turkhan and Chaman border crossings until April 9 to allow the exit of Afghan nationals in Pakistan, wishing to go back to their country. The Foreign Office spokesperson said in a statement that the step has been taken on a special request of the Afghan government based on humanitarian considerations and to facilitate the Afghan nationals.



JAPANESE PM PROPOSES EMERGENCY

Tokyo, April 6: Japan's prime minister on Monday proposed a state of emergency for several major regions seeing a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases, as well as a stimulus package worth \$1 trillion to cushion the impact on the world's third-biggest economy.

The official declaration of the state of emergency would likely come as soon as Tuesday, Shinzo Abe told reporters as the country grapples with a recent spike in Covid-19 cases, especially in the capital Tokyo. "Currently, we are seeing rapid rise of new infections particularly in urban areas like Tokyo and Osaka," he said. The declaration halves regional governors the right to ask residents to stay inside, seek closure of businesses and commandeer land and buildings for medical purposes. But it falls far short of the sort of lockdown measures imposed in parts of Europe. —AFP

"Across the Commonwealth and around the world, we have seen heart-warming stories of people coming together to help others, be it through delivering food parcels and medicines, checking on neighbours, or converting businesses to help the relief effort," she said during her speech, re-recorded at Windsor Castle and broadcast on television and radio on Sunday evening. "And though self-isolation may at times be hard, many people of all faiths, and of none, are discovering that it presents an opportunity to slow down, pause and reflect, in prayer or meditation," she said.

C'wealth's heart-warming stories praised by Queen

Govt: Boris doing well in hospital

London, April 6: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II made a special reference to heart-warming stories coming out of different parts of the world, including the Commonwealth, during her historic address as a rallying call for resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic which has killed nearly 70,000 people worldwide. The 93-year-old monarch, who is also Head of the 54-nation Commonwealth, referred to the very British "attributes of self-discipline, of quiet good-humoured resolve and of fellow-feeling" as she made a wider global appeal to say that in the years to come, everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to the Covid-19 challenge.

The Queen went down memory lane as she recalled the very first broadcast of the kind she had made as a young princess at the time in 1940 alongside her sister, Princess Margaret, during World War II. "We, as children, spoke from here at Windsor to children who had been evacuated from their homes and sent away for their own safety. Today, once again, many will feel a painful sense of separation from their loved ones. But now as then, we know, deep down, that it is the right thing to do," she said. "We have faced challenges before, this one is different. This time we join with all nations across the globe in a common endeavour, using the great advances of science and our instinctive compassion to heal. We will succeed — and that success will belong to every one of us," she said. —PTI

GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE CONTAGION

637 fatalities in Spain saw a fourth consecutive daily drop recorded over the past 24 hours.

Measures taken by Sri Lanka over Covid-19 will continue until the Sinhala and Tamil New Year on April 14.

215,000 people have signed a plea urging French officials to let more doctors prescribe the anti-malaria drug chloroquine for Covid patients, a proposal that has earned the support of health experts of the world.

20,000 foreign workers placed under quarantine in Singapore after an increasing number in the community were found to be infected with Covid-19.

200 crew members of a cruise ship that has accounted for a quarter of all Covid-19 deaths in Australia was allowed to dock near Sydney on Monday after they began exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms.

Monster storm lashes Vanuatu

Port Vila, April 6: A deadly Pacific cyclone intensified to a Category 5 hit Vanuatu on Monday, threatening a natural disaster that experts fear will undermine its momentum in the country's battle to remain Covid-19-free. Tropical Cyclone Harold, which claimed 27 lives when it swept through the Solomon Islands last week, strengthened to a super-topping Category 5 scalestorm overnight. Vanuatu's meteorology service said it is now picking winds of up to 235 kilometres per hour, prompting red alerts across several provinces. It made landfall on Espiritu Santo island on Monday morning and was heading for Vanuatu's second-largest town Luganville with a population of 16,500. It is expected to pass north of the capital Port Vila early Tuesday. "For now, we don't have any reports of injury, but lots of damage," Red Cross Vanuatu secretary general Jacqueline de Gaillette said. Another concern is the impact a natural disaster could have on Vanuatu's attempts to remain one of the few countries without any Covid-19 case. —AFP

Measuring has been difficult because they lack bony structures

Cold War N-test reveals whale shark age

Melbourne, April 6: Scientists have used data from atomic bomb tests conducted during the Cold War to correctly determine the age of whale sharks for the first time. The research, published in the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science*, will help ensure the survival of the species which is classified as endangered. Measuring the age of whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) has been difficult because, like all sharks and rays, they lack bony structures called otoliths that are used to assess the age of other fish. Whale shark vertebrae feature distinct bands — a little like the rings of a tree trunk — and it was known that these increased in number as the animal grew older. However, scientists suggested that a new ring was formed every year, while others concluded that it happened every six months. The researchers, including Mark Meekhan from the Australian Institute of Marine Science, turned to the radioactive legacy of the Cold War's nuclear arms race. During the 1950s and 1960s, the US, Soviet Union, Great Britain, France and China conducted tests of nuclear weapons. Many of these were

explosions detonated several kilometres in the air. One powerful result of the blasts was temporary atmospheric doubling of an isotope called carbon-14, a naturally occurring radioactive element that is often used by archaeologists and historians to date ancient bones and artefacts. Its rate of decay is constant and easily measured. One powerful result of the blasts was temporary atmospheric doubling of an isotope called carbon-14, a naturally occurring radioactive element that is often used by archaeologists and historians to date ancient bones and artefacts. Its rate of decay is constant and easily measured. One powerful result of the blasts was temporary atmospheric doubling of an isotope called carbon-14, a naturally occurring radioactive element that is often used by archaeologists and historians to date ancient bones and artefacts. Its rate of decay is constant and easily measured. 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# Mini-Deccan 7 APRIL 2020 ‘Mini-Diwali’ premature, be ready for long haul

**O**n the night that Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the global Covid-19 pandemic to exercise another lesson in obedience training from a comatose Indian middle-class, India's positive cases of the coronavirus crossed by 4,000 and the daily increase by 12 — the highest single-day increase so far. Mr Modi had asked citizens to turn off their lights and light lamps (or use the torches on their mobile phones) for nine minutes starting at 9 pm, and the sheep complied, without wondering what switching off the lights had to do with social distancing or other population-wide measures adopted to contain the spread of the coronavirus. There was no power shortage; this was just another *maha-aarti* ordered by the boss to show everyone who was in charge. Prominently among after, a list from the resident doctors association of Safdarjung Hospital in the heart of New Delhi, asking the public for donations so that they could buy 50,000 PPEs (hazmat suits), 50,000 N95 masks, three lakh triple-layer masks, and 10,000 500-ml bottles of hand sanitizer. The government itself estimates India will need 1.5 crore PPEs, 2.7 crore N95 masks, 16 lakh diagnostic kits and 50,000 ventilators in the next two months. One supposes that lighting a lamp is cheaper than donating to those in the trenches against the coronavirus.

It is clear that the crisis is not abating, whatever the crackpot astrologers may tell us about the significance of the dates that have passed. For example, a Mumbai hospital has become a containment area after two-dozen nurses and three doctors tested positive. It seems unlikely that the lockdown will be lifted on April 15, despite the plans being made by airlines and railways. The government may float news stories that 80 per cent of the cases are in 82 districts — but as the example of the Tablighi Jamaat showed us, we have to worry just as much for the remaining 20 per cent. And Indians should note that while they were lighting lamps, China registered an uptick in positive cases, after a period of declining Covid-19 case growth. The microbe is dangerous and unpredictable, which makes this Mini-Diwali ordered by the PM not just premature but also dangerously shortsighted. People reported that the nine minutes were also marked by fireworks. A BJP leader from UP filed her petition in the Supreme Court to challenge the BJP devotion to the Great Leader, processions, banging pots and pans, and lighting lamps — a BJP MLA led a crowd in chanting “China virus go back” — these are the bottomised middle-class’ answer to a pandemic.

Mr Modi is unlikely to inoculate scientific temper in Indians, for that would be too Nehruvian a thing to do. However, we urge him to give up announcing these self-serving image-building exercises. Instead, his government ought to be giving people not a false assurance that their lives will resume at a time around the corner, but preparing them to grit their teeth for a long haul.

## PM’s reach-out moment

**I**n one fell swoop, the Prime Minister seems to have closed the communication gap that featured a major part of his six years in office. His Sunday *Pravasi* conversations with leaders of various political parties, as well as former Presidents and Prime Ministers, in a touching gesture to protocol, was an uncharacteristic outreach to the whole spectrum of Indian politics outside of his ruling BJP. Call it the Covid-19 effect but it is true that the virus crisis has propelled the Prime Minister into bipartisan mode as seen first in his videoconference with CMs of states, including those not ruled by the BJP. Often denied for selective comments on pressing national matters and a reticent silence on burning issues like lynching, Narendra Modi has been a paradoxical Prime Minister, as well-captured by Shashi Tharoor in his purple prose. “We should forget about the *prakash* (government and Opposition) and think about issues with *nispakash* (impartial) spirit,” Mr Modi would implore in the customary all-party meetings before Parliament sessions. The deep divide in Indian politics would quickly surface in acrimonious debates.

It would again be contradictory if the worst existential crisis man has faced in the new millennium should have brought about this change of heart in the leader of an illiberal party whose retrograde elements have bristled against every principle that brought their Prime Minister to power twice. His public appearances tending more to show than substance, his selective appearances in Parliament and hermit-like shunning of media conferences as opposed to his eloquence in public speaking at chosen fora have made this image of a Prime Minister reluctant to speak except in controlled settings.

The sceptics may fear this new nationalistic and regional approach in reaching out to Saarc nations in the face of the pandemic is likely insurance against a backlash in the event of failure. But if Covid-19 has indeed driven the leader into an empathetic mode capable of understanding differing points of view, some good would have come even out of catastrophe.

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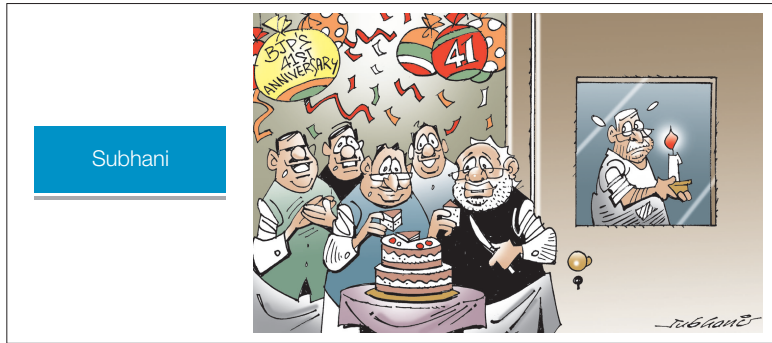
ABHYA SINHA  
Editor

T. VENKATESWARL  
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

- Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003. Ph: 040-2780390-4. Fax: 040-2780256
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Subhani

# Only doctors, nurses can save India now

Sunanda K. Datta-Ray  
Reflections

**I** still don't know quite what purpose Sunday night's nine-minute light-and-dark ritual — which I too observed — served, but I certainly hope it honoured the role of doctors. That was emphatically stressed in an old Calcutta Medical College joke about a “dom” and a “chamar” refusing to rescue someone who had collapsed in a public lavatory. One cleared faeces, the other removed the corpse, neither would touch both. Eventually, they brought a doctor from the college. He alone had no prejudices.

That has again been demonstrated in these fraught weeks as India's healthcare system — if a confusion of ill-equipped clinics, poorly staffed hospitals and expensive private nursing homes can be called that — grapples with waves of infection. That is why I was alarmed to read the headline in a national newspaper “US opening doors to Indian medical graduates under Covid-19 health emergency” — sure, adding to my dismay, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar reportedly raised the question of skilled Indian professionals on H-1B visas in the United States when secretary of state Michael R. Pompeo telephoned him to discuss coordinating response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

India desperately needs its doctors and nurses. Not all doctors may be equally dedicated, and not all nurses equally well trained. Some, in fact, are little better than ayas who have undergone a six-month course in minimal housekeeping. But with only 1.7 nurses per thousand people, well short of the World Health Organisation-recommended three-per-thousand, we can't do

without them. Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls medical workers our “frontline soldiers”.

If Covid-19 has revealed the courage and commitment, it has also exposed India's shocking indifference to the health and hygiene. Not just the present BJP-dominated National Democratic Alliance but all Indian governments right from 1947 onwards have concentrated on high-visibility prestige projects instead of welfare. Although the WHO congratulates India on limiting two “silent killers”, polio and small-pox, Indians have always found that going to the moon or sending a spacechip into orbit is far more dazzling than tackling malaria.

Any comparison between India and Western countries suffering from the pandemic is totally unrealistic because Italy, Spain, the United States and Britain all have a medicare infrastructure and a safety net for their citizens. Indian citizens are a suspect net for their citizens. The statistical data is arbitrary and unreliable. Even the doctor-to-population ratio of 0.77:1,000 lags far behind Germany's 4.125:1,000, the UK's 3.974:1,000 or Russia's 3.006:1,000. China, where it is still estimated 1.9 doctors per thousand, India's 2017 health budget spent only 1.28 per cent of the GDP on health.

The hospitals we do have, especially many that are run by the well-trained State Insurance Corporation, are often only bleak and empty bunkers. Some lack basic medicines at the best of times. They are woefully short of essentials like critical care beds. Despite the health ministry's bland assurances, supplies of personal protective

equipment (including gloves, masks, sanitizers and hazmat suits) are far from adequate. In consequence, medical staff are constantly exposed to infection, and many have already contracted the coronavirus.

Of course, that occupational hazard isn't unique to India. A general practitioner in a small English town became the UK's first doctor to die from the disease. What seems peculiarly Indian, however, is the hostility with which doctors and nurses are sometimes treated, not just by ignorant villagers but even by policemen and others charged with enforcing the lockdown.

Instances of such atrocious behaviour have been reported from Hyderabad in the south, Surat in the west, Indore in India's heartland, Delhi and Ghaziabad in the north. People have spat at medical personnel, pelted them with stones and chased them away from their homes and localities. Archaic sexism surfaces in the case of women doctors and nurses, who are sometimes treated to lewd and abusive language. When a patient died in a state-run hospital in Kolkata, the wife brother attacked the medical staff accusing them of negligence.

The Indian Medical Association reports that 75 per cent of doctors face verbal or physical abuse in hospitals. Fear of violence is the most common cause of stress for 48 per cent of doctors. The highest incidence of violence is reported at the point of emergency care, with 70

per cent of the violence being initiated by a patient's relatives. Such crimes have become more common since 2017 in Delhi, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

Some Indians are inherently lawless. Others are suspicious of the State and its instruments. Religious fanatics may object to modern medicine just as they oppose family planning. Yet others have learned from the Tablighi Jamaat what triggered Parivar's lynching spree that rough and ready methods go scot free in today's India.

US President Donald Trump, normally so unsympathetic to Afro-Asian immigration, now casts longing eyes at the doctors who are at the cutting edge of this pandemic. He also wants to buy Indian hydroxychloroquine, the malaria drug believed by some to work for coronavirus. Whether or not Mr Modi agrees to sell, he can without any qualms refuse to allow Indian doctors to respond to American blandishments. India's senior bureaucrats, diplomats and politicians may hanker for the American green card, regarding the supposed land of the brave and the land of the free as the nirvana for their children, but doctors in India has nurtured in every respect cannot abandon their country in its hour of need.

Mr Modi has taken some tough and timely decisions. Now he must protect his country from the WHO's coronavirus special envoy, who has insisted that hospitals and health workers “are on the front line”. Treating them well and protecting them is as important as making sure they are secure and safe — is perhaps the only way to safeguard our future.

Despite all their shortcomings, they alone can save India.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

## LETTERS COVID PANDEMIC

The TRS government must appoint dedicated IPS officers like C.V. Anand as in charge of Civil Supplies department. Many people depend on government schemes. Though the government says the ration shops are the common man's choice, it is not the reality on the ground. Ration shop dealers in Nagore are forcing people to make many trips to their shops.

G. Srinivasa Rao  
Kothapet, Hyderabad

While it is intriguing to know how the members of the Tablighi Jamaat who tested negative (Covid-19), were shifted to Malepally Badi Masjid. It is also sad to know that neither the district or state officials nor the Gandhi Hospital officials knew who gave the directions (On a first, Badi masjid turns into quarantine facility, DC April 5). If this is how both the Central and state government officials work, where no one wants to take ownership or take decisions, then what will happen to the fate of our country's ordinary citizens?

Sayed Nooruddin  
Hyderabad

The lighting of lamps on Sunday seemed like a government plan to divert attention from its failure to plan the lockdown. The shortage of medical equipment and breakdown of supply chain was not foreseen. The haphazard arrangement of ration to the people, food for the daily wagers and beggars exposed the government thoroughly. Even the problem of migrant labourers was not foreseen. We did not see the janata curfew or the lockdown if international travellers were monitored strictly. Even the Tablighi preacher in Nagore was criticised for the inefficient government machinery.

P.R. Ravinder  
Hyderabad

## Road development vital for economic growth

**D**ARJEELING, APRIL 6: Indian Road Congress President S.N. Sinha today warned that any further neglect of highways would be at the cost of integrated growth in the country's economic growth of the country. Delivering the presidential address at the 50th Annual Council Meeting of the Indian Road Congress which opened here, Mr. Sinha said inadequate and uncertain allocations was the main bottleneck in the development of the highway system to the required level both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

## Anita Katyal Political Gup-Shup

# C-virus optics; Javed's worries; Covid intensity & Nitish's gripe

**E**very political leader is using the present health crisis to enhance his or her image. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has done this by setting up a special public charitable trust, PM-Cares, to raise funds for containing the spread of coronavirus. Modi obviously wants his signature on the cheques to be handed to the beneficiaries. Even the food packets being distributed at the relief camps have his photographs on them. The BJP's ideological mentor, the Rashtriya Swamysavak Sangh, is also lending a helping hand to those in need of assistance but its foot soldiers make it a point to wear their trademark uniform and don the black cap so they can be easily identified. Coming to Modi's rescue, RSS *pracharak*s are telling mediapersons in private conversations that the Prime Minister cannot be blamed for the rush of migrant workers as this is an annual feature — they usually go to their villages at this time of the year for the harvest season. Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who has come in

praise for his handling of Covid-19, is hoping to put in a bill to acquire national stature. He is ensuring that the details of his government's work are disseminated wide and wide, even going to the extent of sending press releases in Hindi.

**L**yrical Javed Akhtar has been a worried man since a case was filed against him in a Bihar for his “seditious” comments on the relief camps. Akhtar called up Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar for help but despite several attempts got no response. The nervous Bollywood personality then rang up a friend in Delhi, who is known for his proximity to the Bihar chief minister, and asked him to put in a word with him. Nitish Kumar is said to have told his Delhi friend that Akhtar need not worry and that nothing would come of it. But he still did not take Akhtar's calls.

**W**ell before Prime Minister Modi conferred with chief ministers on the steps needed to deal with the coronavirus out-

break, he had dialled West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, praised the measures taken by her government to help to citizens during the lockdown. This was followed by phone calls from home minister and external affairs minister Amit Shah and S. Jaishankar. This sudden outreach to Banerjee had led considerable speculation in the capital, especially since the BJP and Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress are locked in an eyeball eyeball confrontation in the state keeping in view of next year's Assembly polls. The two parties may be battling each other but the BJP does not want to alienate Banerjee completely and push her to the top of the Congress in the coming state election. This is in line with the BJP's strategy of isolating the Congress and keeping it away from regional issues so that they can battle together to put up a united front against the saffron party.

**A**lthough the Bihar Assembly election is still several months away, there is talk in political

circles that it could be rescheduled for the next year in the event of a break. Apparently, Bihar chief minister and Janata Dal (United) chief Nitish Kumar, a Bharatiya Janata Party ally, is most unhappy with the Modi government for its failure to anticipate the exodus of migrant workers to their villages. State governments were worried that the deadly virus would spread to rural areas with the return of the migrant workers and they were ill-prepared to deal with such a health emergency. An angry Nitish Kumar publicly stated that he would not allow the migrants to enter Bihar. This statement has predictably blotted Nitish Kumar's copybook and it is felt that the current mess could dampen the electoral prospects of the ruling JD(U)-BJP alliance. Both parties need time to recover lost ground and sort out the whistles about the possible postponement of the Assembly polls.

**W**ell before former finance minister P. Chidambaram put out a detailed statement outlining a 10-point plan to

side over the economic crisis facing the country following the lockdown, mediapersons on the Congress beat were told in advance about this strategy. Janata Janata to its word, the statement was promptly circulated on the party's WhatsApp groups for the beat reporters. But to everyone's surprise, the release was subsequently withdrawn. Party insiders attribute this to Chidambaram's description of the Prime Minister as the commander in chief and the people as foot soldiers. He further said that “we owe everyone's trust and our total support” to him. This is odd since the Congress has officially extended all support to the Modi government as it battles to contain the spread of coronavirus. However, Chidambaram's subsequent tweets have been fairly critical of the government's financial package and its handling of the rush of migrant workers to their villages.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

## quick BITES

### INDICATORS

	%
Sensex	27,590.95 0.00
Nifty 50	8,063.80 0.00
S&P 500*	2,617.91 5.19
Dollar (₹)	76.13 0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	93.64 0.00
Euro (₹)	82.34 0.00
Gold (Oz) (₹)	1,672.00 2.34
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	32.45 -4.87
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.306 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.651 10.526

\*As of 9:30 pm IST

## Minister: France heading for worst recession

France is likely to see its deepest recession since the end of World War II this year because of the Covid-19 crisis, finance minister Bruno Le Maire said. "The worst growth figure in Europe since 1945 was -2.2 per cent in 2009, after the financial crisis of 2008. We will probably be very far beyond -2.2 per cent," Le Maire told a senate panel. Statistics office Insee said the lockdown has slowed economic activity by 35%.

## Infosys' Pravin Rao appointed Nasscom chief



IT industry body Nasscom said it has appointed Infosys chief operating officer U.B. Pravin Rao as its chairman for 2020-21, succeeding WNS Global Services Group CEO Keshav Murugesh. Also, Rekha M. Menon, chairman and senior managing director of Accenture in India, has been named as the vice chairperson for 2020-21. The appointment was announced at Nasscom's Executive Council meeting.

## Pharma exports to miss \$22 bn target: Official

Pharma exports may see a dip in growth and fall below the government target of \$22 billion due to the lockdown and export restrictions, a top official of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council said. Udaya Bhaskar, director general of Pharmexcil, said exports were pegged at \$19.14 billion during the last fiscal. He said exports in March 2019 alone stood at \$2.1 bn, which prompted a high target for FY20.

## Cotton output pegged at 354.50 L bales

The Cotton Association of India has retained its cotton crop forecast for the 2019-20 season, beginning from October 1, 2019, at 354.50 lakh bales of 170 kgs each as in the previous season. The total cotton supply estimated by the CAI for October 2019 to March 2020 was 327.53 lakh bales (170 kgs each) which consists of the arrivals of 283.03 lakh bales up to March 31, imports of 12.50 lakh bales and opening stock estimates.

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# A quarter of retailers may shut shop without capital infusion: Experts

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, APRIL 6

Assuming the Covid-19 crisis will last through April-May and not beyond, modern retailers will take nine to 12 months to get back to their normal business volumes. However, almost 25 per cent of modern retailers will go out of business, if they do not receive additional capital during this crisis period. "Retailers expect that

they will take nine to 12 months for recovery if the crisis ends by April-May. However, they don't have any option on what could be the broader picture if the crisis continues beyond April-May," said Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO of the Retailers Association of India, addressing a webinar.

According to Rajagopalan, 25 to 30 per cent of the retailers need serious infusion of capital.

Else, at least 25 per cent of them will have to shut shop. Only 7 to 8 per cent of the modern retailers are now operating. To sell essential items, the remaining 92 to 93 per cent have zero income since the lockdown. Even before the lockdown, most of the retailers were operating with 80 to 90 per cent sales compared to regular days.

At most, 50 per cent of the retailers foresee that their revenues this year

will come down to as low as 15 per cent of what they had earned last year, Rajagopalan said.

The size of modern retail in India is around \$92 billion. Indian modern retail has 15 lakh stores and employs 60 lakh people. Lower revenues can also lead to job losses of up to 20 lakh in the retail sector.

Pinkarjanan Mishra, partner and national leader, consumer products

and retail, EY India, too believes modern retailers will have to be satisfied with 25 to 30 per cent revenues and demand. "There are no massive job losses across sectors. Retailers have already written off the June quarter. If jobs are secured, consumers can recover, and the recovery will be faster," he said.

Pinakinranjan Mishra, partner and national leader, consumer products

er, he said. "The government has to step in and bear a part of the pain. If the government is able to put more money in the hands of consumers, the outlook can be much better," Mishra said.

According to experts, India has committed only one per cent of the GDP for stimulus against 10 per cent by the US. "In terms of fiscal stimulus India is at the bottom

most. More has to be done on stimulus. The government has the capacity to do so. Oil prices are low and, in addition, inflation is both eroded as the fiscal deficit. The government should bring in more money and print more rupee. The dollar rates might go up. But we are living in India. At this point, we need not worry about it," said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Property Consultants.

## Rising virus cases in India may weigh on investors

# Global stocks rally as Covid-19 cases peak

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, APRIL 6

Global stock market rallied on Monday on first signs of coronavirus cases peaking in Europe and some US regions, but Indian stock market investors would still be weighing negative domestic cues of rising new cases of Covid-19 when the market opens on Tuesday after a three-day break.

Analysts said the domestic market has priced in most of the negatives and the extent of damage done by the lockdown is now getting assessed while both US and Europe were seeing negative growth in fresh pandemic cases. Major Asian stock market benchmarks gained on Monday led by Japan's

## SOME ASIAN MARKETS SURGE TO BULL TERRITORY

April 6: South Korean, Philippine and Indonesian stocks are the first in Asia Pacific to enter technical bull markets, rising over 20 per cent from lows reached just weeks ago, as investor sentiment was buoyed by a slowing death toll in some of the world's coronavirus hotspots. Asia's regional benchmark climbed 2.5 per cent. New York State fatalities fell for the first time, and the fewest deaths in more than two weeks. President Donald Trump said he sees signs the US outbreak is beginning to level off. Markets were also optimistic

about Saudi Arabia, Russia and other oil producers moving to negotiate a deal to stem a historic price crash.

In South Korea, the Kospi index gained 3.9 per cent to close 23 per cent above its March 19 low.

The Philippine Stock Exchange Index rose 4.2 per cent on Monday, 20.5 per cent above an eight-year low set on March 19.

In Jakarta, the Jakarta Composite Index jumped 4.1 per cent, pushing its gain from March 24 to 22 per cent, meeting the technical definition of a bull market. *Bloomberg*

India's dominant services sector, the lifeblood for economic growth, fell sharply as the coronavirus pandemic wreaked havoc globally, a private survey showed.

The Nikkei/HIS Markit Services Purchasing Managers' Index fell sharply to a five-month low of 49.3 in March from February's seven-year high of 55, below the 50 mark separating growth from contraction for the first time since October.

"Strong growth momentum seen so far in 2019 was halted in March as demand conditions deteriorated, particularly overseas, leading to a reduction in business activity," says Hayes, an economist at IHS Markit, said in a release. "That mirrors a sharp

# Services contract, PMI falls below 50 in March

VIVEK MISHRA  
BENGALURU, APRIL 6

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deceleration in global activity as the coronavirus pandemic spread across economies, with evidence mounting that the world is sliding into recession. A manufacturing survey last week showed a cooling in growth which combined with a contracting services sector dragged the composite PMI to a five-month low of 50.6 last month. The outlook looks grim, with an index tracking

overall demand for services fell to 49.3 in March, a 25-month low.

Adding to concerns, new export business—a proxy of foreign demand—fell at its fastest rate since the sub-index was introduced in September 2011. A strong service sector is crucial for Indian growth as it contributes over 50 per cent to the country's gross domestic product. If the current lockdown is extended, economists say it could drag Asia's third-largest economy to either no growth or a contraction this quarter.

"Clearly the worse is yet to come as nationwide strict closures and prohibitions to leave the house will weigh heavily on the services economy, as has been seen elsewhere in the world. Pressure now fully lies on the government to contain the economic challenges the lockdown will cause," Hayes added. *—Reuters*

# PE flows to realty may dry up; decline 78% in March quarter

ASHWIN J PUNNEN  
MUMBAI, APRIL 6

The government's move to implement a joint audit across different class of companies may not be suitable in the Indian context, say industry bodies. In its submission, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) said that "joint audit would not be suitable in the Indian context as it did not align with ease of doing business in India. A mandatory joint audit would bring severe hardship to the industry...it would mean additional expense, time and effort for a company without any tangible benefit and have adverse consequences especially for companies that need to publish quarterly results."

Some sectors like telecom and power that are highly regulated are subjected to multiple audits by different agencies for various purposes and a joint audit would be an additional imposition on such industries. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in its submission said that joint audit does not mean safer audits and there has been a number of audit failures over years with joint auditors. In joint audits, it becomes difficult to fix responsibility since there is a lack of clear accountability. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has proposed significant amendments to existing regulations to enhance the independence and accountability of auditors. The industry bodies have made their submissions in response to a consultation paper floated by the MCA.

This comes in the backdrop of several audits and investigations conducted by entities coming under the regulatory lens for alleged misdoings. The deadline for submission of comments on the consultation paper ended on March 15.

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, APRIL 6

In the wake of the global Covid-19 pandemic, private equity and venture capital inflows into the real estate sector has dropped 78 per cent in the March quarter and the deal numbers also declined 52 per cent. Going ahead, market watchers expect US-based PE firms, which were quite active in the Indian real estate market, to develop cold feet.

Real estate, especially commercial realty, has been witnessing significant drop in investments in the past few years. However, the sector received only \$318 million in the March quarter against \$1,490 million in the same quarter last year, a drop of 78.6 per cent,



according to the data provided by EY to *Financial Chronicle*. The number of deals too came down to 11 from 23 a year ago.

Among the top deals, Goldman Sachs invested \$85.54 million in Varika Group and Blackstone invested \$81.80 million in Golden Jubilee Hotels.

Going ahead, industry experts expect that even these investments will dry up, as US investors will hold back

their India investment portfolio due to the epidemic. US investors accounted for a significant 36 per cent share in 2019, pumping in \$1.5 billion into the large US investors like Blackstone, Hines, Warburg Pincus and Goldman Sachs have been active in the Indian realty market.

"Considering the rising pandemic in the US, there is high possibility that inflows will drop significantly in 2020, thus impacting overall inflows into the country," said Shobhit Agarwal, MD and CEO of Anarock Capital.

US-based firms pumped nearly \$5.7 billion into Indian real estate between 2015 and 2019. US inflows rose from a mere \$526 million in 2016 to over \$1.8 billion in 2019.

# Life insurers to process Covid-19 death claims

FALAKNAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, APRIL 6

With the total number of positive Covid-19 cases and death toll rising across India, life insurance companies stepped in on Monday to assure policyholders that they would not apply the clause of force majeure in case of Covid-19 death claims.

All life insurance companies, both public and private, are committed to process any death claim over Covid-19, the Life Insurance Council, an industry association, said, adding that the clause of 'force majeure' will not apply in case of Covid-19 going claims.

The force majeure clause in an insurance contract essentially

releases both parties from obligation or liability when a circumstance beyond the parties' control occurs, preventing fulfilment of the contract.

"This step was taken to reassure customers who had reacted out to individual life insurance companies seeking clarity on this clause in their contracts as well as to dispel rumours to the contrary," the Life Insurance Council said.

"The life insurance industry is taking every measure to ensure that the disruption caused to policyholders due to the lockdown is minimal, by providing them uninterrupted support digitally," said S.N. Bhattacharya, secretary, National Life Insurance Council.

# Gold imports down 73% in March, 55% in Q1

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, APRIL 6

Gold imports plunged more than 73 per cent in March to the lowest in six-and-a-half years amid the lockdown and high metal prices. Imports were down 55 per cent in the March quarter. The country imported 25 tonnes of gold in March and this was down from 93.24 tonnes in the year-ago month, despite higher prices. March imports in value terms dropped nearly 63 per cent to \$1.22 billion.

Jewellery stores have been hardly receiving footfalls since the beginning of the month as social distancing and Covid-19 fears have been keeping buyers away from the gold stores. "Customers have been keeping away from gold purchases as it is not an essential commodity. Even the wedding purchases have been low-key as there were restrictions on wedding functions," said Tom Jose, chief financial officer, Joyalukkas. Some of the retailers have also stopped their operations even before the government announced nation-

wide lockdown. Gold imports were down in February and January as well. For the March quarter, imports were down by 55 per cent to 107.26 tonnes against 240.39 tonnes in the same quarter in 2019. In fact, even before Covid-19 struck the globe, gold imports have been coming down due to rising prices. Imports were down since July, barring November when prices dipped from their all-time high levels.

Market analysts are sitting tight to see how the current crisis resolves before assessing the gold demand for the year. According to P. R. Somasundaram, managing director, World Gold Council India, all the asset classes are trekking a rough path as the current priority is fighting the disease. "We, the people of India, are generally optimistic. So once this is behind us and good news starts flowing in one after another, and fear recedes, we may see resurgence in positive sentiment and strong recovery of demand," Somasundaram said.

# Amrani's net worth drops 28% to \$48 bn in 2 months

Mumbai, April 6: The net worth of India's richest man Mukesh Ambani dropped 28 per cent, or \$300 million per day, for two months to \$48 billion as on March 31 due to the massive correction in stock markets, a report said on Monday.

The chairman and managing director of the Reliance Industries saw his wealth decline by \$19 billion in the past two months, while his net worth dipped from their all-time high levels.

Market analysts are sitting tight to see how the current crisis resolves before assessing the gold demand for the year. According to P. R. Somasundaram, managing director, World Gold Council India, all the asset classes are trekking a rough path as the current priority is fighting the disease. "We, the people of India, are generally optimistic. So once this is behind us and good news starts flowing in one after another, and fear recedes, we may see resurgence in positive sentiment and strong recovery of demand," Somasundaram said.



ambani on companies led to a sell-off across the world. HCL Technologies' Shiv Nadar (\$ 5 billion, or 26 per cent) and banker Uday Kotak (\$4 billion, or 28 per cent) it said. All the three have dropped off the top 100 list, leaving Ambani as the only Indian in the league. The Indian market has corrected by 25 per cent in the last two months as the economic costs and impact of the Covid-19

Berkshire Hathway's Warren Buffet also lost \$19 billion of wealth in the last two months, to \$83 billion, making it a smaller fall in percentage terms at 19 per cent.

With hospitality coming under intense pressure due to the pandemic, shared economy platform Oyo Rooms' Ritesh Agarwal is no more a billionaire, the rich list said.

Others in the top 10 list of wealth losers also include Carlos Slim and family, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Page, Sergey Brin and Michael Bloomberg, it said. Amazon's Jeff Bezos continues to be the richest man in the world with a net worth of \$131 billion, which has slid only by 9 per cent during the last two months and is followed by Bill Gates with a fortune of \$81 billion (down 14 per cent), Buffet and Arnault. Chinese billionaires were among the few gainers in the last two months, and included promoters of video conferencing and pork meat producing companies, it said. *—PTI*

# GERMANY TO GUARANTEE 100% LOANS TO SMALLER FIRMS

Berlin, April 6: Berlin will guarantee 100 per cent of loans made by banks to small- and medium-sized firms, in an extension to the 1.1-trillion-euro coronavirus crisis package in Germany, German government sources told AFP on Monday.

The federal government will stand fully behind 500,000 euros (\$540,000) of lending to companies with up to 50 employees and 800,000 euros for larger ones, upping its guarantee level from a previous 80 per cent for small- or medium-sized firms.

Berlin's economic aid so far totals over 1.1 trillion euros, the finance ministry said in an answer to an opposition parliamentary question seen by AFP Monday.

Ministers have agreed a 600-billion-euro "economic stabilisation fund" offering 400 billion euros of guarantees for companies' debts. 100 billion to lend directly to or buy stakes in troubled firms, and 100 billion euros to fund state investment bank KfW.

Meanwhile, the company borrowing KfW can guarantee has been boosted by 357 billion euros, to a total of 622 billion.

To keep their liquidity flowing, companies will also be able to delay tax payments. Berlin says it will offer 100 billion euros of support for small and one-man-band companies, like photographers, musicians or carers. Depending on the number of employees, individual companies will receive up to 15,000 euros each to keep the lights on over a period of three months. Freelancers applying for unemployment benefits will be forced to seek new work. *—AFP*

SHORT TAKES

Shooting World Cups cancelled

New Delhi: The shooting World Cup scheduled to be held in two parts in the national capital in May was on Monday cancelled owing to the Covid-19 pandemic that has not left any sphere of life untouched. The World Cup was postponed to May barely four days before the start of the event. "Due to Covid-19 pandemic the New Delhi Organising Committee has been forced to cancel Rifle/Pistol and Shotgun World Cups. Both of them were due to take place in New Delhi," the sport's world governing body - ISSF - said in a statement. After the postponement last month, it was decided to hold the tournament in a state - Rifle and Pistol competitions from May 5-13, while Shotgun competitions were set from June 2-9, later changed to May 20 to 29. However, considering the situation, the International Shooting Federation (ISSF) and the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) decided to cancel them. - PTI

Brown sees F1 season in the red

London: McLaren boss Zak Brown said that the coronavirus pandemic has plunged Formula One into "a very fragile state", warning that as many as four teams could even be out of business. The 2020 world championship has been unable to start with eight races of a scheduled 22 already either scrapped or postponed. "This is potentially devastating to teams, and if it is devastating to enough teams then it's very threatening to F1 as a whole," Brown told reporters on the eve of a meeting planned to discuss cost-cutting in the sport. Brown insisted that all the teams have agreed to lower the 2021 budget cap to \$150m (137.7 million euros) down from \$175 million. However, he said the ceiling needs to be reduced further to counter the financial fall-out from the virus-hit season. - AFP

Ex-Kiwi cricketer Edwards dead

Wellington: Jack Edwards, a big-hitting wicketkeeper-batsman who played six tests and eight one-day internationals for New Zealand and who would have been a natural at Twenty20 cricket, has died, aged 64. His death was confirmed Monday by the Central Districts province, for whom he played 67 first class matches between 1974 and 1985. A cause of death was not available. Edwards was a stocky and powerful batsman whose approach would have been ideally suited to the modern white-ball game but put him at odds with the more traditional style of his era. He told his local newspaper, the Nelson Mail, in 2011 that several coaches had tried to rein in his attacking style but he didn't listen. He agreed his bats would have suited world Twenty20 cricket. - AP

LESNAR FINDS TAMING OF DREW TUGH

Tampa, Florida (USA): Liv Morgan, Charlotte Flair, Aleister Black, Otis and Edge won their respective bouts in the WWE's WrestleMania 36 that was held behind closed doors at the Raymond James Stadium here. Morgan beat Natalya in the Kickoff Match; Charlotte ran past Rhea Ripley to become the new NXT women's champion; Aleister bashed up Bobby Lashley; Otis dumped Dolph Ziggler and Edge rapped Randy Orton in the Last Man Standing Match to take home the title. The Firefly Fun House Match saw "The Fiend" Bray Wyatt jostling John Cena out even as Drew McIntyre dumped Brock Lesnar to become the new WWE Champion. Cesaro def. Drew Gulak (Kickoff Match) Braun Strowman got past Goldberg to become the new Universal Champion while Undertaker defeated A.J. Styles in a Boneyard Match.

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CHAHAL IN CHESS

Yuzvendra back to 64-square-board to kill time

Chennai, April 5: Chess master-turned-cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal on Sunday went back to his old passion, headlining an online blitz event organised by chess.com, and said the sport taught him to be patient on the cricket field. A former national Under-12 chess champion, India cricketer Chahal has the distinction of having represented the country at the World Youth Chess Championships, and is listed on the World Chess Federation (FIDE) website. His Elo rating is 1556. In a freewheeling interaction with Grandmaster Abhijeet Gupta and International Master Rakesh Kulkarni before the event got underway, Chahal said, "Chess taught me patience. In cricket, you may be bowling well but you may not get wickets. Like in a Test match you may have bowled well in a day but not got wickets but you have to come back the next day so you need to be patient. Chess has helped me a lot in that way. I have learnt to be patient and get batsmen out." Asked about the decision to choose cricket over chess despite doing fairly well in the board game, Chahal, who has played 52 ODIs and 42 T20 Internationals, said he did so because he had more interest in cricket. "I had to choose between chess and cricket, I spoke to dad who said the choice was (yours). I had more interest in cricket and cricket is what I love to do. Blitz is one of the three formats in chess in which a player gets 10 minutes or less, with or without time increments. Chahal matched his wits against the likes of prodigy R. Praggnanandhaa, India's second youngest Grandmaster ever, GMs B. Adhiban, Nilhar Sauri, Karthikeyan Murali, among others. Chahal, who would have been the captain of the Virat Kohli-led Royal Challengers Bangalore if the IPL had gone ahead, said he had been spending time with family members. "I don't get to spend too much time with my family. After many years I am at home. I am spending a lot of time with my family.



Indian cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal plays chess in this file photo.

It is a good and new experience. I sleep late and wake up late and spend time with my family members in the evening." Chahal, who said he idolised legendary leg-spinner Shane Warne, said he does follow chess whenever possible and plays online games at times. He described the wicket of South Africa batsman Faf du Plessis in the 2019

World Cup in England as one of his best. "It was my first World Cup. I dismissed Faf. It was a big wicket in a big game," he added. Chahal said like in chess, there is a lot of planning a bowler does in cricket, adding he does discuss with the keeper about what he is going to bowl. "I do plan while bowling and discuss with the keeper

Like I used to tell Mahi bhai (M. S. Dhoni) what I am likely to bowl," he further said. He also appealed to the people to stay indoors and help fight the coronavirus pandemic. "Please remain at home, this is an opportunity for you to become a hero. We have to remain united to fight coronavirus. You can read, learn dance, cook, learn new things in the

time available," Chahal signed off. Adhiban recalled having played against Chahal during his junior days. "I have played him (Chahal) and also beaten him. He was a good player and won the national under-12 title. He changed sports and is now doing very well in cricket. Happy to see that. Hope to meet him some time later," he added. -PTI

CORONA | CAPSULE

French club doc commits suicide

Reims (France), April 6: French top division football league club Reims were in mourning for long-serving club doctor Bernard Gonzalez who committed suicide after being diagnosed with coronavirus, sources confirmed. "Devastated, Reims cries for Bernard Gonzalez," said a statement released by the Ligue 1 club. "Not just the club but also hundreds of men and women in Reims," it added. Reims mayor Arnaud Robinet said he had been made aware of the suicide of the 60-year-old, who had worked at the club for over 20 years, by the local prefecture. "I was told Doctor Gonzalez had left a note in which he mentioned that he had tested positive for Covid-19.



Bernard Gonzalez

GUARDIOLA'S MOTHER DIES OF COVID-19

London, April 6: Pep Guardiola's 82-year-old mother has died after contracting coronavirus, Manchester City announced on Monday. "The Manchester City family are devastated to report the death today of Pep's mother Dolores Sala Carrio in Manresa, Barcelona, after contracting coronavirus," the Premier League club said in a statement. "Everyone associated with the club sends their most heartfelt sympathy at this most distressing time to Pep, his family and all their friends," Guardiola, 49, last month donated one million euros to buy medical supplies for the fight against the coronavirus pandemic in his native Spain. He also issued a video as part of the club's Citizens At Home initiative urging fans to stay at home. -AFP

GOPI, ADVANI CONTRIBUTE

Mumbai, April 6: Indian badminton team's chief coach Pullela Gopichand, multiple world title holder coach Pankaj Advani, former hockey captain Dhanraj Pillay were some of the prominent names who made financial contribution in country's fight against Covid-19 pandemic. Gopi donated ₹26 lakh - ₹15 lakh to PM Cares fund and ₹5 lakh each to both Andhra and Telangana state governments. Advani and Pillay ₹5 lakh each to the PM Cares Fund. H.League football club Mynerva Punjab donated ₹5 lakh with ₹2 lakh to the PM Cares and ₹1 lakh each to the Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh state governments. Meanwhile, India's sports fraternity on Sunday joined the country in showing solidarity by lighting lamps and candles to demonstrate the nation's collective resolve. Badminton legend Sachin Tendulkar, badminton world champion P. V. Sindhu, six-time world champion boxer MC Mary Kom, sprinter Hima Das, Rio Olympics bronze medalist wrestler Sakshi Malik, London Games bronze winner Saina Nehwal, cricketers Virender Sehwag, Ravichandran Ashwin, Suresh Raina and others took to social media to put up photos of them and their families lighting lamps. -PTI



Badminton world champion P. V. Sindhu lights diyas at her home in Hyderabad on Sunday night to show solidarity in the fight against coronavirus.

Corona set to change sporting habits

Paris, April 6: As the coronavirus brings the international sports calendar to a grinding halt, here are three long-standing habits which could change forever once competition resumed.

USING SALIVA TO SHINE A CRICKET BALL

It's been a tried and trusted friend to fast bowlers throughout the history of cricket. But the days of applying saliva to one side of the ball to encourage swing could be over in the aftermath of Covid-19. "As a bowler I think it would be pretty tough going if we couldn't shine

the ball in a Test match," said Australia quick Pat Cummins.

PRE-GAME HANDSHAKES IN FOOTBALL

Pre-match handshakes were abandoned in top football leagues just before the sports shutdown. Premier League leaders Liverpool also banned the used of mascots while Southampton warned against players signing autographs and stopped them posing for

selfies. Away from football, the NBA urged players to opt for the first bump rather than the long-standing high-five.

"I ain't high-fiving nobody for the rest of my life after this," NBA superstar LeBron James told the "Road Trippin'" podcast.

"No more high-fiving. After this corona shit? Wait 'til you see me and my teammates' handshakes after this shit."

US women's football star Megan Rapinoe says edicts to ban handshakes or even high-fives may be counter-productive anyway. "We're going to be sweating all over each

other all game, so it sort of defeats the purpose of not doing a handshake," she told the New York Times in March.

TENNIS STARS THROWING TOWELS ON COURT

Tennis players throwing towels, dripping with sweat and blood and probably a tear or two, at ball boys and girls, has often left fans sympathising for the youngsters.

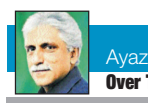
Moves by officials to tackle the issue took on greater urgency in March when the coronavirus was taking a global grip. Behind closed doors in Miami, ball boys girls got on duty at the Davis Cup

tie between Japan and Ecuador wore gloves. Baskets, meanwhile, were made available for players to deposit their towels. Back in 2018, the ATP introduced towel racks at some events on a trial basis, but not everyone was overjoyed.

"I think having the towel whenever you need it, it's very helpful. It's one thing less that you have to think about," said Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas when he was playing at the NextGen Finals in Milan.

"I think it's the job of the ball kids to provide towels and balls for the players," Tsitsipas added. -AFP

IPL can be played in Oct-Nov window



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

As more and more sports events become victims of the havoc unleashed by Covid-19, a tweet by former England captain Michael Vaughan on Thursday perked up an interesting debate on the possibility of the Indian Premier League (IPL) stands suspended till April 15. While the BCCI hasn't taken a call on the future of the 2020 tournament - the official stand is "let's wait and see" - there is

now no doubt that the IPL will not be played in the first half of this year.

Even if the lockdown is entirely lifted, there is simply no time for the BCCI and franchises to assemble their teams, have preparatory camps, start monetisation etc, for even a shortened tournament for which at one time seemed to be the solution.

Moreover, even if the BCCI, team owners and broadcasters are willing to take a small financial hit, it is unlikely that players

overseas and Indian - will be enthused to play in India, but globally, this is something that hardly needs explaining for the IPL is among the top 6 most valued sports properties in the world.

Vaughan, sounded the going on how the IPL can be salvaged in 2020 by tweeting, "Here's a thought... The IPL is played for the 5 weeks leading up to the T20 World Cup in Oz. all players use it as the great warm up for the WC, then the WC happens... So important for the game that the IPL takes place but also the WC."

The underlying thought behind Vaughan's suggestion, as he mentioned in a later tweet, is that the IPL

is extremely important for cricket's economy not just in India, but globally. This is something that hardly needs explaining for the IPL is among the top 6 most valued sports properties in the world.

Vaughan's tweets triggered off a protracted popwow on social media, with both pros and cons being hotly debated. Among the early responders was Aussie cricket scribe Peter Lalor who writes for The Australian. Lalor's tweet to Vaughan gives the issue an altogether different and intriguing spin. "Here's a thought, T20 World Cup in Oz abandoned because of obvious difficulties with players flying in, Quarantines etc. BCCI swoops and plays IPL in that October-November

window. CA will let players compete knowing it needs India to tour in summer. What do you think?"

This tweet is important. One, it correctly understands the hardship that the World T20 Championship will face. Though the tournament is more than six months away, getting all the teams in Australia, and guaranteed for a fortnight as seems inevitable given the trend of Covid-19 as yet. If the pandemic is not brought within complete control, the World T20 may still be played, but in without spectators, only for TV audiences. Since this is an ICC tournament, Cricket Australia will get guaranteed money which will considerably reduce its losses. In fact, with the event

scaled down, there may be no loss at all.

If the T20 World Cup is abandoned this year, it gives the IPL, perhaps a month's time more to come. The obvious guarantee Cricket Australia would want from the BCCI is that the Test series subsequently is honoured, as Lara emphasises. But why would Cricket Australia be convinced to not stage the prestigious World T20 this year? A BCCI official I spoke to who wants to remain unnamed, says this is possible if the ICC can be convinced to have another World T20 in 2022 (the 2021 edition will be in India). Cricket Australia might agree if they get to host it. This will require major rejigging of the interna-

tional itinerary over the next couple of years, but the official believes this is possible. His optimism is based on the excellent relations the cricket boards of India and Australia (and England) enjoy.

This would mean getting other member countries aligned to the idea, as well as the ICC, perhaps a more onerous task given the strained relations of the BCCI with the parent body (England) enjoy. "Not impossible though," says the official, because this would mean everybody's financial interests could be safeguarded. Of course, all this is speculative indulgence at this time. How the future unfolds, for cricket and all other sports, is how quickly Covid-19 can be tamed. Fingers crossed!