

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 8 APRIL 2020



WEATHER

Max: 37.7°C
Min: 24.0°C
RH: 40%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky. Rain or thundershowers likely
Max/Min temp. 36/24°C

CORONA COUNT

CASES (+434)
DEATHS (+16)
5,212 **150**

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+40)
TS: 404 11

(+10)
AP: 314 04

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

13,62,200

DEATHS

76,344

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

209

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Pournami till 8.05 pm and Padyami till 4.13 am (Thursday)
Star: Chitta till 3.02 am
Varjyam: 1.05 pm to 2.29 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.53 am to 12.42 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HURI CALENDAR
Shabaa 13,1441 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.04 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 4.38 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.44 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.30 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.05 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.56 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 6.17 AM

COUNTER POINT

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BRIEF

Interim power bills for April

Hyderabad: Electricity consumers will get 'interim bills' for April based on their previous power consumption patterns, said the Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission. Since distribution companies have not been able to record meter readings of consumers due to the ongoing lockdown, interim bills will be issued for April. The adjusted bills based on actual consumption will be issued after the lockdown was lifted. — DC

Full report on Page 3

Gold price nears ₹45,000

Chennai: Gold prices in the Indian futures market touched a new high, crossing ₹45,000 per 10 gm as increased liquidity supported investments in the metal. In the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures touched an intra-day high of ₹45,724 per 10 gm, almost ₹2000 up from the previous close. The market however closed at ₹44,950, still higher by ₹1,233. The spot markets were shut due to the lockdown. — DC



NATION | 4

Delhi to conduct 1 lakh random tests at hotspots



WORLD | 5

Leaders wish Boris speedy recovery

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Vol. 83 No. 98 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

No schools, public events till May 15

GoM for curbs on religious, social activity; most states want lockdown extended; decision on April 11-12

ANIMESH SINGH | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

The Centre is learnt to be considering extending the nationwide lockdown beyond April 14 to contain the spread of Covid-19 after requests from several state chief ministers and health experts, but it will take a final call only after a review meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which could take place on April 11 or 12.

Top government sources said the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is now working on a graded plan to lift the lockdown in a phased manner. If no fresh cases have been detected in any hotspot in the 75 identified districts, it could ease the lockdown in those areas. A Group of Ministers (GoM) on Covid-19 headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh, which met earlier on Tuesday, recommended the extension of the closure of all educational institutions and restricting all religious activities with public participation till May 15 irrespective of the government's final decision on the lockdown, official sources said.

It was decided at the meeting, also attended by home minister Amit Shah and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, among others, that religious centres, shopping malls and educational institutions must not be allowed to resume normal working for at least four weeks from April 14, when the current lockdown is due to end, till around May 15. Sources said it was felt within the GoM that a partial relaxation could be effected in the lockdown, but it was up to the PM to decide.

The PMO got inputs from almost all chief ministers on easing of the lockdown after April 14, with almost all unanimous about easing it in a phased way. With Mr Modi set to discuss the matter with all political parties on Wednesday, a review meeting could be held on April 11 or 12, where would take a final call after seeking a political consensus.

Sources told this newspaper that the government will start random testing across India from Wednesday (April 8) to check the intensity of the virus spread and identify more hotspots to implement the graded plan. The government has already identified hotspots.

Page 4: Rural borders may be sealed

RELIGIOUS CENTRES, shopping malls and educational institutions must not be allowed to reopen for four weeks from April 14, when the current lockdown is due to end, a panel headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh has stated. A final decision will be taken after the PM's meeting, likely on April 11

Curbs on malaria drug to be eased

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

Softening its ban on the export of anti-malarial drug, India on Tuesday said hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) will be exported "to some nations who have been particularly badly affected by the coronavirus pandemic" and will also be "licensed to neighbouring countries" which are dependent on India to fight the pandemic.

Though the US was not specifically named in the government's statement, it is understood that the drug will be exported to the country which has been ravaged by the pandemic.

The government, however, said HCQ and paracetamol will be kept in the licensed category and their demand position would be continuously monitored." It also said that "the current stock position could allow our companies to meet the export commitments that they had contracted".

Pointing out that "like any responsible govern-

ment, our first obligation is to ensure that there are adequate stocks of medicines for the requirement of our own people," officials cautioned against an "unnecessary controversy" and attempts to "politicise" the matter.

Reacting to India's ban on anti-malaria drug, US President Donald Trump on Monday threatened to take retaliatory steps against India, if curbs against the drug export was not lifted. The drug is seen to offer a viable therapeutic solution to coronavirus that has so far taken the lives of more than 10,000 Americans and infected over 3.6 lakhs, just in a matter of weeks.

It has been decided India would license paracetamol and HCQ to all our neighbouring countries... We will also supply these essential drugs to some nations who were badly affected by the pandemic.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY

India Covid total crosses 5k-mark

Centre tells states to ready 3 types of Covid hospitals

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

India on Tuesday reported 4,789 positive cases of co-ronavirus, of which 4,312 are active, 353 cured, and 124 deaths. In the past 24 hours, 508 new cases and 13 deaths were reported.

However, covid19india.org said 434 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 5,212. It said 150 people have died of viral infection, while 421 were cured.

With Covid-19 cases fast multiplying, the health ministry on Tuesday asked states to keep ready three types of Covid facilities for suspect and confirmed cases. The available data suggests nearly 70 per cent of Covid-19 cases either exhibit mild or very mild symptoms. Such cases may not require admission to dedicated hospitals.

States were asked to prepare Covid care centres (CCC), dedicated Covid health centres (DCHC) and dedicated covid hospitals (DCH). The DCH will be hospitals offering comprehensive care primarily for those clinically

assigned as severe. These hospitals will have fully equipped intensive care units (ICUs), ventilators and beds with oxygen support. DCHCs are hospitals used for cases showing moderate symptoms while CCCs should be used for mild, very mild or suspect cases.

The incubation period ranges from two to 14 days.

Officials said studies have indicated lockdown and social distancing are the most effective ways to contain infection. They quoted a "R-naught" study by ICMR — which indicated one Covid-19 patient can infect 406 people in 30 days if he/she does not follow the lockdown.

However, if social exposure is reduced by 75 per cent, the same infected person can spread it to just 2.5 people. The data analysis shows even though mortality is high among senior citizens, it's younger males who are the most infected.

Officials said the cluster containment strategy is showing positive results in Noida, Agra, Pathanamthitta, Bhilwara and East Delhi.



Eighty-two-year-old Manmohan Singh, in a wheelchair, comes out from the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital in New Delhi on Tuesday amid cheers from doctors and medical staff after he fully recovered from Covid-19. The elderly are among the most vulnerable groups. — PTI

Telangana's Covid tally at 404

State witnesses 40 new cases in a day; 17 from Hyderabad

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

The number of Covid-19 cases continued their relentless upward march in Nizamabad district, with Jogulamba-Gadwal district reporting nine new cases. The new cases in Hyderabad took the number of active cases in Hyderabad up to 150, highest in any district in the state.

The state health department, in its daily bulletin, said that currently 348 Covid-19 positive patients were being treated in various hospitals.

SONIA GIVES 5 IDEAS TO CUT GOVT. SPEND

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NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

A day ahead of the all-party meeting on Covid19, Congress president Sonia Gandhi gave five suggestions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on austerity measures.

Mrs Gandhi suggested a ban on media advertisements by the government and PSUs for two years. The only exceptions should be advisories for Covid-19 or public health," she said.

She called for suspension of the ₹20,000-crore 'Central Vista' beautification project, cancellation of foreign visits for two years and a 30% cut in the government expenditure budget.

Seventeen of the 40 new cases reported on Tuesday were from Hyderabad, while 10 others were from Nizamuddin in New Delhi between March 13 and March 15, or their contacts and touchpoints.

"It is either those who went to Markaz or contacts of these people, such as members of their families," the minister told a TV channel.

Telangana, Mr Rajendar said, was prepared for any eventuality. The state has readied isolation beds in 22 private medical colleges

across the state, which between them, have made arrangements to accommodate 12,000 patients, if need arises.

Mr Rajendar, along with municipal administration minister K.T. Rama Rao on Tuesday inspected a quarantine facility set up in the residential quarters of Gachibowli stadium, and also visited a private medical college to inspect facilities set up there.

Page 2: Etala gives credit to KTR for funds

WhatsApp limits forward option

New Delhi, April 7:

Social media platform WhatsApp will allow users to send frequently forwarded messages to only one chat at a time as part of efforts to curb spreading of misinformation amid the coronavirus pandemic. This limit will be in place once a message has been previously forwarded five times or more.

The latest move comes as countries, including India, are initiating measures to tackle the spread of rumours, fake news and misinformation on social media platforms.

"We are now introducing a limit so that these messages can only be forwarded to one chat at a

time... we've seen a significant increase in the amount of forwarding which users have told us can feel overwhelming and can contribute to the spread of misinformation," said the Facebook-owned WhatsApp, which has over 400 million users in India, in its blog on Tuesday.

Platforms like WhatsApp are being increasingly used by people amid lockdowns and social distancing measures to prevent the spreading of coronavirus infections. The company said it believes it is important to slow the spread of these messages to keep WhatsApp a place for personal conversation. — PTI



Mehbooba Mufti

MEHBOOBA IS NOW UNDER HOUSE ARREST

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, APRIL 7

The authorities in Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday shifted incarcerated former chief minister and leader of People's Democratic Party (PDP) Mehbooba Mufti to her residence in Srinagar's Gupkar area from a makeshift jail. However, she would continue to remain in detention under Public Safety Act (PSA).

Only her place of lodgement has been changed through a fresh order issued by Shaleen Kabra, principal secretary (home) to the J&K government, under the provisions of a stringent law. 'Fairview', her official residence on the foothills of Zabarwan here, has been declared a 'subsidiary jail'.

Ms Iltija Mufti who runs her Twitter account said that her mother is home but still booked under the PSA. "This isn't a release...the house has been declared as a subsidiary jail," she said.

Page 4: Not enough, says Omar Abdullah

HIGH | RISK

Despite KCR's assurance, junior doctors fail to get protective equipment

Doctors opt for crowd-funding to buy masks

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

The state government's decision to supply Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), sanitisers and masks to junior doctors in government hospitals treating Coronavirus patients and testing Covid-19 suspects has remained on paper only.

Despite Chief Minister K. Chandrababbarao's personal commitment, it is not

materialising on the ground.

On Tuesday, the Telangana Junior Doctors Association (T-Juda), having not received PPE, masks or sanitisers, was forced to opt for crowd funding and donations from senior doctors as they have not yet received any precautionary supplies from the TRS government.

"About five lakh PPE and masks were promised to us but they are nowhere to be

seen. Some junior doctors in Gandhi Hospital might have got some PPE and masks, but rest of us are struggling at the forefront of this battle," said a member of the T-Juda.

A senior resident doctors at the Osmania General Hospital, said, "We are seeing patients who are not revealing their travel history or contact footprint maps. Some of them are not even aware that they have come in contact with

those who travelled to Covid-19 affected countries. In such a scenario, we doctors and other medical staff are exposed. We badly need protection. The government made an announcement but nothing has reached us."

"We do not know where the gap lies? Is it superintendents of hospitals have not given right requirement or is medical department not releasing them?" the OGH doctor said.

Since junior doctors have to face patients directly every day, they have requested senior doctors and alumni to donate money or procure PPE and masks for them.

President of T-Juda, Dr K.U.N. Vishnu, said, "We are not getting safety gear on time. With number of cases rising, frontline workers have to be protected. If they fall ill or are quarantined, there will be shortage of manpower,

which will lead to trouble in Covid management. We are appealing to people to support us and provide us with funds to procure safety equipment."

The target is to get 5,000 N-95 masks and at least 1,000 PPE to begin with, Mr Vishnu said. PPE can be worn only for six to eight hours and has to be discarded properly. So there are protocols to be followed, which are important for medical fraternity.

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Health minister Etala Rajendar said on Tuesday that almost every single case that Telangana was finding were either of people

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SHORT TAKES

Imams, muezzins get remuneration

Hyderabad: The Wakf Board has released ₹10 crore towards the remuneration of imams and muezzins for November and December. Wakf Board Chairman Mohammed Saleem said this was done considering the lockdown. The government has not released the amount from January. The Wakf Board pays ₹5,000 to each of the 9,995 imams and muezzins every month in compliance with a Supreme Court verdict.

7,600 pharma docs offer services

Hyderabad: Telangana Planning Board vice-chairman B. Vinod Kumar said over 7,600 pharma doctors had offered join in the fight against Covid-19. PharmD Doctors Association state president Dr Banoth Chandrashekar Naik and other office bearers met Mr Kumar on Tuesday and offered to extend their services. They said PharmD degree holders had been recognised as doctors by an Act of Parliament.

Depressed techie commits suicide

Hyderabad: Depressed that his live-in partner left him, a software engineer committed suicide at a flat in KPHB Colony on Tuesday. He left a note mentioning that he could not live without her. KPHB inspector K. Lamxmi Narayana said the victim, Chandra Kiran, 32, stayed at a rented house in Begumpet with his girlfriend and shifted to KPHB about eight months ago. While taking the house on rent, they told the house owner that they were married. Around 25 days back, the woman left Kiran and was living separately. On Tuesday morning, a friend of the techie visited the flat where he found Kiran dead.

SAIFABAD PS SANITISED AFTER COP TESTS +VE

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA
T. I DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

A day after a Saifabad head constable tested positive for Covid-19, the police station premises was disinfected on Tuesday and 29 persons including 12 family members and 17 police officers working in the Hyderabad police commissionerate limits were sent to quarantine and samples collected from them for testing.

The 55-year-old head constable, a resident of Punjagutta, tested positive on Monday. "The policeman was not very interactive and kept to himself. Even during his regular duties, he maintained a distance from others. It is believed that he picked up the infection at a congregation," said a senior police official on Tuesday.

The head constable who also suffers from diabetes did not show any signs of Covid-19.

He was a regular visitor to prayer congregations at three different locations in the city.

"On Saturday, he felt giddy and visited NIMS, where it was found that his blood sugar levels were high and medication was provided. The next day, he complained of shortness of breath to his son who rushed the policeman to Gandhi Hospital," said the official.

When asked if the incident had shaken the police, Joint Commissioner, Central Zone, P. Viswa Prasad said, "The morale of police never goes down. It is unfortunate that a police official contracted the virus. The police is always motivated and strive for society's betterment."

Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar made a surprise visit to several places in the city and said about 95 per cent of people are following social distancing norms and appealed to all others to ensure maintaining distance from each other.

The top police official warned people not to venture out unnecessarily and not to spread rumours on social media.

Home minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali also appealed to the public to follow isolation norms at homes.

"Every small effort on our part will leave a big impact," the minister said. About 1,400 vehicles have been seized in the last fortnight for lockdown violations, the state home minister added.

Wait for essentials



Women practise social distancing while standing in a long queue for free vegetables near RTC crossroads in Hyderabad on Tuesday. — S. SURENDER REDDY

Lockdown hits dialysis patients

Many private hosps turn into isolation units

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Getting dialysis care is proving to be a big challenge for patients during the lockdown.

Around 40 Aarogyasri centers across Telangana state are running at full capacity, creating fears amongst hospital staff that there might be an overloading on dialysis machines and they must not break down. The facility is being used round-the-clock by patients coming to Aarogyasri centres, as private centers are not taking new cases due to Covid-19.

The new cases of dialysis are a challenge as their travel history, temperatures for fever and symptoms have to be checked before they can use the unit. The protocols of care have to be maintained as an infection can be a disaster for the unit. Hence, doctors are ensur-

DIALYSIS PATIENTS need to visit hospitals once in three days. Those who are on peritoneal dialysis have to visit only once in a month but these are very few patients in that category.

ing that only those cases with no symptoms and travel history are admitted.

Dr Manisha Sahay, senior nephrologist, Osmania General Hospital, said, "we are operating in full capacity at the OGH as all patients from Gandhi Hospital are now coming here. Initially, there were challenges due to non-availability of transportation, but after issuing certificates, patients are coming regularly."

The biggest challenge is for patients who can afford these services, because private sector facilities are shut down

due to lockdown. They do not want to go to government centers even as other private centers are screening them before giving services, adding to their problems.

Mr Vikram Vuppala, founder, NephroPlus, said, "with private hospitals becoming isolation centers for Covid-19, dialysis patients have been hit badly. Adjusting them in other centres means they have to travel some distance, which is more than usual. Our data estimates show that 20 per cent of them are not able to come to centers. Some of them are skipping a round of dialysis due to cash constraints. This will not be good for their health."

Dialysis patients need to visit hospitals once in three days. Those who are on peritoneal dialysis have to visit only once in a month but these are very few patients in that category.

SIX MALAYSIANS VIOLATE VISA NORMS, BOOKED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Six Malaysian nationals who violated visa conditions and concealed their travel history to a religious congregation held recently at Delhi were booked by the Banjara Hills police, along with the person who sheltered them.

According to the police, the nationals came to India on a visit visa but attended the religious congregation which is a violation of visa norms.

The Malaysian nationals travelled to Hyderabad and were staying at Hakimpet.

Despite the government appealing to the people to come forward if they had attended the Tablighi Jamaat event at Nizamuddin Markaz in Delhi, they failed to do so.

They were shifted to a government quarantine centre. Their samples were tested for Covid-19 and the results are not yet known, said the police.

Pay sanitation staff, Uttam tells govt

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee President N. Uttam Kumar Reddy demanded that the state government immediately release pending salaries to municipal sanitation staff and ensure supply of personal protection equipment for medical professionals.

Mr Reddy was speaking after felicitated the sanitation staff of Miryaguda

municipality on Tuesday along with Congress leaders by showering flowers petals and washing their feet. Congress leaders also provided them with cash incentives, masks, food items and other equipment. Mr Reddy applauded the services being rendered by the sanitation staff, medical professionals and police personnel and said it was a privilege for him to felicitate the sanitation staff on the occasion of World Health Day. He expressed shock

after learning that the sanitation staff of Miryaguda municipality had not been paid salaries for two months.

He said they were not being supplied with safety equipment. He spoke to the municipal commissioner and urged him to release the salaries.

The TPCC chief said that the statement made by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Monday that the state's revenues in the last week of March had dropped

from estimated ₹2,400 crore to just ₹6 crore was puzzling. What happened to the revenues collected before the imposition of lockdown on March 22, he asked.

Stating that the government must have collected over ₹7,000 crore in the first three weeks of March, he asked the Chief Minister to clarify on their utilisation as the government had so far not spent a huge amount on anti-coronavirus operations.

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Delhi returnee alleges harassment

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

An elderly person was taken into quarantine under government supervision just because he visited Delhi and stayed there between April 14 and April 17. Mohammed Moinuddin said he visited Delhi to meet his lawyer, practicing in the Supreme Court, in connection with a legal matter.

He said after returning from Delhi on April 18, he was receiving phone calls from police personnel seeking information about his Delhi visit.

He said on April 4, police personnel came with an ambulance and requested him to undergo a Covid-19 test and assured him that he would be allowed to return home later. They took him to Sarojini Devi eye hospital, took the test and kept him in quarantine. He said he and other inmates of quarantine were not informed about the results so far. Mr Moinuddin said he is not

MOHAMMED MOINUDDIN said on April 4, police personnel came with an ambulance and requested him to undergo a Covid-19 test and assured him that he would be allowed to return home later. They took him to Sarojini Devi eye hospital, took the test and kept him in quarantine.

able to understand why he and others were kept here without intimating them about their health conditions.

"We are being projected as suspect cases, while I did not attend the Tablighi Jamaat ijtema nor did I meet any person who attended the ijtema. If I was being quarantined just because I visited Delhi and am a Muslim, then it will increase the suspect toll and will create panic among the common people," he said.

TRANSPORT FOR STRANDED PEOPLE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

The Rachakonda police has started the 'alyte' service, with 10 vehicles to transport people stranded during the lockdown. Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat inaugurated the service in collaboration with an MNC, where the calls received through Dial 100, Covid control room and also the private company would be attended to on priority. The services can be availed by senior citizens, single mothers, specially-abled persons who need to visit grocery stores, pharmacies, banks and post offices, volunteers requiring to transport food and medicines, those visiting hospitals and dispensaries for periodical visits, and for health workers attending their duties and returning home. "If ambulance services through 108 are not available, public can reach out to the Rachakonda police," he said.

Tiger's death not due to Covid: Official

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Unfounded fears that a tiger which died in the Pench reserve in Madhya Pradesh last Saturday from possible exposure to coronavirus have been laid to rest with officials from the reserve making it clear that the animal had succumbed to an impacted intestine caused by a large hair ball lodged in the digestive tract of the animal.

Reports about coronavirus infection in a tiger at Bronx Zoo only added fuel to the speculation about the death of T-31, the designated number of the Pench tiger that died on Saturday, according to officials.

"Upon receiving information about the tiger in distress, we observed it for eight hours on Friday. We also used our elephants to coax it out of the water-hole as it was nodding off and slipping into the water. Not once was it observed coughing and reports that it had nasal discharges were wrong. It was the water that dripped off its face whenever it nodded off and its

Many takers for KCR's lockdown extension plan

S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU
I DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

The suggestion mooted by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on extending the nationwide lockdown by at least two weeks after April 14, when the three-week deadline ends, found favour from most sections, including political leaders across party lines and a cross-section of people, who all felt that in present circumstances, an extension of the lockdown is a must. They opined that Chief Minister Rao's argument that the economy could be recovered on a later date but lost human lives cannot be recovered was the clincher.

Though the end of the 21-days lockdown is near, April 14, number of Coronavirus positive cases are increasing, not only in the two Telugu states but also in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, New Delhi, among others.

In another week, it would be impossible to flatten the coronavirus curve. In these circumstances, if the lockdown is lifted and people start moving, gathering at public places and mingling in public transport modes, it is bound to further increase the reach of the virus and augment number of coronavirus cases to unmanageable levels.

Responding to Mr Rao's proposal, offered to Prime Minister Narendra Modi when they spoke telephonically on Sunday, Lok Sabha MP and Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar said, "we welcome any decision to control the deadly Coronavirus. Everyone must support the decisions taken by all government, be it centre or state."

Former MP and Congress leader, Vijayashanthi also welcomed the proposal, saying, "KCR correctly said loss of money can be recovered but we cannot recover loss of human lives."

People may suffer temporarily during the lockdown, but will be all right once coronavirus is controlled. Extension of lockdown for some more days is a must in present situation.

— P. MOUNIKA REDDY, Homemaker



If coronavirus is not controlled by April 15, there is no other way except to extend the lockdown. The public of India supports this.

— N. RAMACHANDRA RAO, MLC, BJP

The proposal is based on local feedback and global reports, which clearly indicate the curve in India is rising and will do so for a few more weeks before it comes down. The CM has been monitoring it very closely and understands our country's social behaviour best.

— K.R. SURESH REDDY, MP TRS

We welcome the proposal to extend the lockdown. Whatever decision is taken by Chief Minister for welfare of people of Telangana, we will extend our fullest support.

— PADMA CHARY, President, Telangana Employee's Union

Prevention is better than cure. It is easier to stop something happening in first place than to repair damage afterwards. To prevent deadly coronavirus, extension of lockdown is the only way.

— PELLURU KRISHNA JYOTHI, Homemaker

The Telangana government's proposal to extend lockdown by another two weeks is, without a doubt, correct. But government should be more stringent in action in case of violations.

— K. SOWRY, Retired bank employee

We are experiencing lockdown since last 15 days. It is better to extend lockdown to protect lives of people. Nothing is more important than that.

— KANDADAI PAVAN KUMAR, Software professional

Help orange farmers: Bandi

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Telangana BJP president and MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar demanded that the state government help orange and lemon farmers as they have been unable to market their produce due to the nationwide lockdown.

He said that farmers are struggling to transport

their product to Nagpur in Maharashtra, the biggest market. Provision of transport facilities will help the state's farmers get a good price. The state BJP chief said because of the lockdown farmers were unable to even sell their products locally. If transport cannot be arranged, the government should take immediate steps to purchase orange and

lemon crops from the distressed farmers, he underlined. Mr Sanjay appreciated Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao for bringing to the notice of Prime Minister Narendra Modi the scarcity of gunny bags. Procuring these bags is essential as the state has recorded good paddy production during the kharif season, he added.



The male tiger in Pench Tiger Reserve hours before its death from an impacted intestine arising from a football-sized hairball blocking its gut.

face started going under water and it again lifting its face up," an official from the reserve told *Deccan Chronicle*.

The tiger passed away around 9 am on Saturday at the water hole and some media reports said that the tiger could have died from a mysterious virus infection with some reporting that it died of possible coronavirus infection. "The post-mortem find-

ings were clear. There was a large hairball inside its gut and part of its stomach was filled with muddy water sludge. Because of the hairball impacting the intestines, the animal could not feed and was in deep distress and succumbed because of this," a source said.

Cats, both domestic and in the wild, lick themselves and some of their fur enters their gut and forms hair balls. If they

CONDUCT COVID TEST FOR ANIMAL KEEPERS: MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Forests and environment minister A. Indrakaran Reddy instructed the forest department to have animal keepers in the zoos, including those at the Nehru Zoological Park, tested for coronavirus. The instructions were issued during a review with principal chief conservator of forests R. Shobha, on precautions to be taken up to ensure the safety of animals in the wake of a tiger at New York's Bronx Zoo testing positive for Covid-19 disease.

are small and the animal manages to regurgitate it, then it usually stays fine. For some reason if the animal is unable to cough it out, the hairball grows in size over a period of time and blocks the digestive tract, forcing the animal off food.

IN BRIEF

451 bottles of liquor seized

Hyderabad: The KPHB police arrested a man who was selling liquor illegally at his house on Tuesday and seized 451 bottles of liquor of various brands from the premises. On a tip-off, KPHB police and the Madhapur Special Operations Team apprehended G. Vittal Rao, 45, a resident of Hydernagar. He was found selling IMF liquor bottles for higher prices.

Techie injured in road accident

Hyderabad: A software engineer who broke the lockdown rules and was driving around in his car and met with a road accident at NTR Marg. Raunak Agarwal, 29, a software engineer from Himayathnagar, escaped with minor injuries as the airbags opened. Police said he was speeding in his car (TS 29 FA 0990) towards Khairatabad when it rumbled into a median and overturned. It was found that he was going to meet his wife. The police said the breathalyzer test was negative.

Police trace missing youth

Hyderabad: Police traced a software engineer within 24 hours of his having gone missing. The police found the techie, C. Nagadharani Dutt, 23, at his friend's place. Addicted to online gambling, Dutt had lost ₹80,000 which he had borrowed from his mother in an online game. On Monday, Dutt had left a message on WhatsApp to his mother, stating that he had lost his job and money and wanted to end his life. His father, a businessman, complained to the police. Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat congratulated the team for tracing Dutt.

LVPEI develops low-cost visor

Hyderabad: The LV Prasad Eye Institute's (LVPEI) Center for Innovation has developed a low-cost visor for clinicians and frontline staff. The full-face protective gear is a transparent visor that is worn over a surgical mask, and protects the face. The design, which is open-sourced, is expected to be useful for medical staff during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. The cost of making visor is estimated at ₹50 and it is being used by LVPEI doctors and staffers.

HC TO CANCEL ITS SUMMER VACATION

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday decided to cancel the summer vacation to the courts, which was scheduled from first week of May to June 5. The decision was taken by a full court meeting on Tuesday through a videoconference.

Since March 23, when the lockdown was imposed by the state government, all courts were hearing only urgent matters through videoconferencing.

The court decided that irrespective of the decision on the extension or lifting of the lockdown, all courts in the state will conduct proceedings only in the virtual mode like videoconferencing April 30.

CIVIC WORKS IN OLD CITY INSPECTED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Officials of the municipal administration and urban development including Arvind Kumar visited the Old City on Tuesday and took stock of the Strategic Road Development Plan (SRDP) works being taken up. They inspected construction of multi-level grade separator works near Owaisi Hospital junction flyover and instructed GHMC engineers to speed up foundation works.

They told officers to make use of lockdown and expedite works as there is minimal vehicular movement. Engineers briefed the officials about progress of work.

Later, they inspected proposed extension of existing grade separator at Chadrayanagutta to Barkas road junction, where works could not be taken up as shifting of pipelines was not taken up.

The MA&UD officials urged water board officials to initiate steps to shift pipelines.

Centre releases app to track Covid-19 patients

'Aarogya Setu' will record movements of users on their phones

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

A week ago, the Centre released a contract tracing application. The app named 'Aarogya Setu', upon being downloaded in a user's smartphone, will record all his movements using Bluetooth and GPS. During this time, if the user is found to have come across a Covid-19 positive patient whose location data is also recorded in this app, he/she will be alerted about it.

Contact tracing apps are not new and have recently been used in countries such as Singapore and China, albeit eliciting criticism from some quarters. Privacy experts in India note that when it comes to Aarogya Setu, there is very little information on how the app will be operated and how it will collect, store, and share user data.

How the app works: Upon downloading, users are asked to register using their mobile numbers. They are also asked to enter their name, gender, age and medical condition based on a set of furnished options. Most importantly, it asks users to keep their Bluetooth and location services (GPS-based in most phones) on at all times. The app will use both technologies to pin-point a person's location with reasonable precision. The app also has a "self-assessment" tool which allows

HOW THE APP WORKS: Upon downloading, users are asked to register using their mobile numbers. They are also asked to enter their name, gender, age and medical condition based on a set of furnished options. Most importantly, it asks users to keep their Bluetooth and location services on at all times.

you to assess your risk using an automated chatbot.

Documentation in the app notes that personal information of users would be stored locally in the user's device. The government will get access to the same data in "anonymised, aggregated datasets for the purpose of generating reports [...]". If a user tests positive, however, this personal information could be given to the government.

Within a week of going live on Google Playstore (it is also available on the iOS store), the app has been downloaded by more than one crore people, giving the government a wealth of information. There is very little clarity on who will have access to this data, and if it will be shared with the state governments in any form.

There is such a dearth of information that it isn't clear how the main objective — of alerting people about positive cases — will work. The app itself

doesn't allow users to self-report as positive, so how is it supposed to know of the person's Covid-19 test result?

A senior bureaucrat from the Telangana state government speculated that it could be done through data furnished by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Central institution that is running the Covid-19 testing operation in the country. "ICMR has all details of all people who have tested positive so far, along with their mobile numbers. Perhaps, once someone is tested positive, his mobile number is fed into the Aarogya Setu app," he said.

So far, the state government hasn't received any communication about the sharing of Aarogya Setu data from Union ministry of electronics and information technology or the health ministry. "Right now, the app seems to be targeted only for individual-citizen usage," he said.

Mr Sidharth Deb, policy and parliamentary counsel for the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF), a digital rights advocacy group, pointed out that the legal/legislative grounds on which the app is functioning remains unknown. "Our surveillance architecture is not aligned with the right to privacy. Firstly, the government needs to elucidate the value of contact tracing and location surveillance in this situation.

They also need to be transparent about how the data will be stored, the extent to which it is collected, the purpose for which it will be processed and by when it will be deleted," he said. He added that the government must clarify which government departments will have access to the data.

Additionally, Mr Deb said the app's claim of "anonymised aggregation" also require scrutiny. "There are cases wherein anonymised datasets remain information security risks and can still be vulnerable to re-identification of personally identifiable information," he said.

Mr Srinivas Kodali, an independent researcher and privacy rights activist, noted that that mass adoption of Aarogya Setu would be an essential factor in its success. "Almost everyone needs to have the app installed on their phones. We don't know if this is feasible in India where internet and mobile connectivity is just picking up," he said. Additionally, he argued that whatever insights the app is able to provide also needs to be given to the state governments as well, since it is they who are at the forefront of the pandemic response activities. "In any case, an app won't solve everything. We need vaccines, medical and safety equipment to address the situation," he added.

Tough times



A child seen selling watermelons to financially help his family in Khairatabad on Tuesday.

— R. PAVAN

Farmers sent to 600 areas as 12 rythu bazaars shut

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

The Telangana state government decided on Tuesday to set up 3V safe tunnels, a disinfectant tunnel, at major markets like Monda and LB Nagar in the city to contain the spread of coronavirus. The TRS government also decided to close down 12 rythu bazaars in the city and send the farmers to 600 different locations.

The government decided to continue this model even after the lockdown since it has been receiving good response from vegetable buyers. The government is conducting a survey currently, in partnership with the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRS), to find out the consumption pattern in gated communities, slums and different colonies to supply vegetables at the people's doorsteps to avoid congestion at markets.

Despite the closure of hotels, restaurants and function halls, the average consumption of vegetables has increased by 1,300 quintals per day in the city. The price of vegetables has decreased by six per cent in average. The retail price of per kg of tomato on Tuesday was ₹15, brinjal ₹27, ladies' finger ₹33, green chillies ₹31, bitter gourd ₹31, ribbed gourd ₹33, cauliflower ₹17, cabbage ₹20, carrot ₹34, potato ₹35, onions ₹28 and all others commodities at around ₹15.

Similar pricing will be maintained during lockdown to benefit farmers and consumers. The marketing department officials said there will be no shortage of vegetables and people need not worry about price hikes.

Principal secretary (agriculture) B. Janardhan Reddy told *Deccan Chronicle* that 3V safe tunnels would be installed at two major market yards at Bowenpally and LB Nagar, where commodities come from all districts, and even neighbouring states. He said that disinfection tunnels would be installed at both markets to contain spread of virus.

Mr Reddy said that 12 rythu bazaars in the city

have been shut during lockdown. Vegetables were being supplied to 6,000 locations across the city to avoid congestion at markets. "Though the department has increased per kg price of each commodity by ₹5, we have been receiving overwhelming response from public since they can avoid congestion at market places, maintain social distance, and get vegetables at doorsteps. They save on travel and fuel cost. Since there is good response for mobile rythu bazaars from consumers, we would implement the same even after lockdown," Mr Reddy said.

He said the department has been coordinating with NRS to geo-fence localities to check demand of vegetables across the city and rationalise it. Based on density and demand, the department will supply required quantity of vegetables.

"To eradicate public congestion, we would eventually shut weekly markets and supply vegetables to doorsteps. The idea of decentralisation of rythu bazaars have impressed the Centre and it has asked state government share the model to implement it across the country," Mr Reddy added.

Helping the needy



Essential commodities being packed on Tuesday by volunteers for Deputy speaker T. Padma Rao who will be distributing them to middle class families in his constituency in Secunderabad.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Tech company sacks 80 workers

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Small IT companies are struggling with the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. Across Hyderabad, employees of multiple such companies are either being laid off or face salary cuts.

Selectsys India Private Limited, a company with an office in Jubilee Hills, with around 300 employees, has sent emails to several employees telling them they have been fired. An employee who had received the mail said at least 80 others received it. The employee said that the company had been unable to offer them a

work-from-home option and work had come to a standstill since the lockdown began. "Like most others, I got the email on Sunday, a non-working day. Some others received it on Monday," he said.

He rued that he was unable to speak to the management to negotiate a severance package or even collect a relieving letter. "It will be at least 5-6 months before we can look for a job again. I have no idea what to expect until then," he said. The email, sent by an HR professional, blamed the Covid-19 crisis for the layoffs. "As we all know Covid-19 has impacted the whole world and our busi-

ness too is not an exception [...] we have no choice but to lay off some employees by April 6 [...] So you have been laid off [...] We could hopefully rehire you at a later date once everything comes to normal," it read.

Phone calls to the company's landline went unanswered. Emails to the company's director, Vijaya Lakshmi, and CEO, Kalyan, are yet to be answered.

Another city-based company is facing issues because of the pandemic. The Panjagutta-based company, which has less than 50 employees, has sent emails to its employees that they would be paid

only 20 per cent of the 'basic' component of their salaries.

Mr Vinay Kumar Pyaraka, head of the Information Technology Employees Association (ITEA), said his organisation has been receiving a flood of emails in the past few days from IT employees, not just in Hyderabad but all over the country. "Almost all companies are looking to cut costs. In fact, it is not just the small ones, even the big MNCs are doing it," he said.

He said ITEA was looking into the legalities of what could be done to provide relief to the laid-off employees.

Cong questions KCR over virus

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday questioned Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu why he was not consulting with Opposition leaders in the state when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was doing so, with regard to taking preventive measures to contain Covid-19.

Speaking with the media after distributing ration to the poor in his constituency, he asked why Mr Rao had not consulted with medical experts on containing the spread of the disease. "It appears that KCR and his son KTR are alone having expertise and the rest are useless," Mr Revanth Reddy said.

He said it is strange that Mr Rao was wishing that Covid effect upon Opposition leaders who pointed out the flaws of the government.

Elsewhere, Congress Legislature Party leader Bhatti Vikramarka on Tu-

esday took serious exception to the language used by CM K. Chandrababu Naidu against Opposition leaders during Monday's press conference.

He said Mr Rao's language had pained him. "We could also use such words against him but we have respect for KCR's age," Mr Bhatti said. It was unfortunate that the CM was targeting the Opposition though they were supporting the measures being taken by the government.

He said that the Opposition would support the extension of the lockdown, precautions have to be taken to ensure that the poor do not suffer. He said those with white ration cards.

Meanwhile, in a letter to Mr Rao, senior Congress leader and Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy expressed dissatisfaction with the policies of TRS in the wake of the lockdown. He appealed to the government to address the problems of the poor people in the state and address their concerns.

ETALA GIVES CREDIT TO KTR FOR FUNDS

From Page 1

"We are arranging for lakhs of PPE kits and N-95 masks. Thanks to Mr Rama Rao's initiatives, many donors are coming forward to contribute to our efforts to contain further spread of the virus," Rajendar said.

Meanwhile, in several other districts, local administrations continued imposing severe restrictions and setting up 'no movement' zones. Additional such zones were set up in Nizamabad district on Tuesday.

"Even if there is just one case, but with contacts of primary patient, we are imposing such restrictions in the districts. No one living in such a zone can either leave nor can any outsider enter it," Rajendar said.

He called on people to strictly follow 'social distancing' and maintain distance between each other. "The only way to stop the disease is by staying put at home. If one has to go out, then ensure social distance is maintained," he said.

ELECTRICITY | CRISIS After lifting of lockdown, actual consumption will be recorded, bills adjusted thereafter

'Interim bills' for power consumers due to Covid-19

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Electricity consumers in the state will get 'interim bills' for April based on their previous power consumption patterns, as per a decision taken by the Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission (TSERC).

According to orders released by the commis-

sion on Tuesday, distribution companies have not been able to record meter readings of consumers due to the ongoing lockdown following the outbreak of coronavirus. Because of this, only interim bills will be issued for April.

Immediately after lifting of the lockdown by the state government, the actual consumption will

DISTRIBUTION companies have not been able to record meter readings of consumers due to the ongoing lockdown following the outbreak of coronavirus

be recorded and bills adjusted thereafter. The TSERC said for LT-I domestic connections



existing since March 2019 or earlier, the bill to be issued this April will be equal to the bill amount

for April 2019. Consumers who have received connection between April 1, 2019 and February 29, 2020, the bill generated this April will be equal to the bill they received in March 2020. For consumers who received a new connection this March, the bill will be for minimum power demand for each of such connections. For all other LT cate-

gories except agriculture, the new bills will be 50 per cent of the bill amount for April 2019 if they have been consumers before March 2019, with similar timelines for active power connections, TSERC clarified. It said consumers will be intimated about estimated bills through digital channels, such as SMS, mobile apps, websites and so on.

The commission further said transmission and distribution companies will be exempt from making payments to generating stations for three months because of the lockdown impacting revenues. It maintained that these relaxations are as per the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission guidelines.

SHORT TAKES
BJP MLA, SENA LEADER BOOKED FOR HOLDING PUJA

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, APRIL 6

In Maharashtra, not just the common people, but even the politicians are violating the lockdown rules. Police has filed a complaint against Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Surjit Singh Thakur and Shiv Sena leader Sambhaji Shinde for performing puja at the Vitthal-Rukmini Mandir at Pandharpur.

According to sources, Mr Thakur and Mr Shinde, both members of the Shri Vitthal Rukmini Mandir Samiti, performed puja at the temple on the occasion of Chaitra Ekadashi on April 4.

Though the Samiti had cancelled the annual fair this year, the puja of Shri Vitthal and Rukmini was carried out at the hands of both the leaders, who were present with their wives.

The Pandharpur city police filed complaints against Mr Thakur and Mr Shinde and their wives accusing them of violating the lockdown. In the complaint, it has been mentioned that Mr Thakur, despite the lockdown, reached Pandharpur without any legal permission and performed the puja.

However, Mr Thakur has denied charges saying it's a political vendetta against him.

"The decision to perform puja at the temple was taken by the Mandir Samiti well in advance on January 7. During the puja, only me, my wife and one more person was present. It can be verified by checking the CCTV footage," he said.

TAKE CARE, BANERJEE TELLS DIDI

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, APRIL 7

Nobel laureate Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee on Tuesday expressed concern over West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's frequent visits to public places across the city amidst lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic after she put the statewide death toll at five in wake of the BJP's allegation of cover-up by her government.

Advising the Trinamul Congress supreme to be "careful" Prof. Banerjee, who has been roped in by her government to head a high-level panel of experts to tackle the economic crisis, also prescribed a list of measures to be taken as the state government is going to ease the restrictions further by allowing the reopening of markets for flower and agricultural produce despite identification of seven hotspots of the infection.

At a video conference, the Nobel Laureate told Banerjee, "You take care of yourself. I am already confined at home. You are however going around everywhere. I am concerned about you."

He also wondered about various types of markets in the state being thrown open to the public while referring to the Chief Minister's announcement.

JAMAAT MEMBERS DEFECCATE OUTSIDE QUARANTINE ROOM

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

The Delhi Police on Tuesday has registered an FIR against two members of Tablighi Jamaat for allegedly defecating in front of a room at a quarantine centre in Outer Delhi's Narela.

The police said that the duo accused have been identified as Mohammad Fahd (25) and Adnan Zahir (18). They are residents of Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh and had attended the religious congregation held last month at Markaz.

According to a senior police official, after a few members who attended it were tested positive for coronavirus in March, several others were shifted to different quarantine centres across the city.

"The case was registered on Saturday, after the police received information from the sanitation staff at the quarantine centre about the men defecating in front of their rooms," said the senior police official.

"The incident took place in front of Room No. 212 on the second floor of the centre. A sanitation worker and the house keeping supervisor reported the incident. The suspects didn't follow the instructions of the health department and government to prevent the spread of the virus," read the FIR registered at Narela Industrial Area police station.

ALLOWANCES OF MPs TOO CUT BY 30 PER CENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

A day after the 30 per cent pay cut for members of Parliament, the Centre on Tuesday issued notifications saying there will also be a 30 per cent cut in the MPs' constituency and office allowances.

The MPs get ₹70,000 as constituency allowance and ₹60,000 for office expenses, in addition to their salary, which is ₹1 lakh.

Their salary has been reduced to ₹70,000 and now they will get ₹49,000 as constituency allowance and ₹54,000 for office expenses.

The office expenses has two components — salary of staff (₹40,000) and stationary allowance (₹20,000).

While the staff salary component has not been touched, the amount for stationary has been cut by 30 per cent.

The Cabinet had on Monday also suspended the Member of Parliament Local Area Development fund for two years, and the money will go to the Consolidated Fund of India.



People maintain social distance as they stand in queues to collect drinking water in Chennai on Tuesday during the nationwide lockdown, imposed as a preventive measure against the coronavirus pandemic. — PTI

In a first, Delhi to conduct 1L random tests at hotspots

AK unveils 5-point plan, says testing, tracking, treatment to go up

SANJAY KAW & SUNIL THAPLIYAL | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Tuesday, unveiled a '5T' action plan to combat the novel coronavirus and said that the administration will conduct 1 lakh random tests for the deadly disease in the city's hotspots areas.

The five-point plan consists of rapid random testing at hotspots, tracing patients, scaling-up treatment for up to 30,000 active patients, team-work with Central and state governments, and tracking.

Delhi is the first state in the country to go for random testing to detect Covid-19 carriers.

The chief minister stressed that there was an urgent need to learn

from other countries on how to tackle the deadly virus and that one should be three steps ahead of the disease. Elaborating on the action plan, he said, "The first 'T' is testing. If you don't test, you won't be able to find out which houses have been affected. It'll go on spreading. South Korea identified every single individual through large scale testing. We are now going to do large scale testing like South Korea."

Mr Kejriwal said that the government has started receiving 50,000 testing kits.

"We have also placed orders for 1,00,000 testing kits. From Friday, we will be equipped to hold rapid tests. Wherever we have hotspots like Markaz (Nizamuddin) and Dilshad Garden, we

will hold random tests." Mr Kejriwal said that the second step is tracing.

He said, "We have also started taking the help of the police. We have given them the phone numbers of 27,702 people to find out if the people, under self-quarantine, are indeed staying at homes. Today we are going to give 2,000 phone numbers of people who were brought out of Markaz to find out if they roamed in the area. The areas

they went out to, will be sealed and monitored."

The state government has declared Lok Nayak Hospital, GB Pant Hospital, and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital for treatment of Covid-19 patients only.

Mr Kejriwal said 2,950 beds have been kept ready only for coronavirus patients. Of these, 400 beds are in private hospitals — Max (Saket), Apollo, and Ganga Ram.

The chief minister said if Delhi has 30,000 active patients, the government will take over 8,000 beds in hospitals, 12,000 hotel rooms, and 10,000 patients will be in banquets and dharamshalas.

He said, "We have also planned at what stage we will need it. We are also prepping for ventilators and PPE (personal placement equipment) kits

and what are the numbers we will need."

Mr Kejriwal said it was his responsibility to monitor 24x7 whether the administration was doing its job as assigned to them. He, however, praised both the state and the Central governments for rising above political interests to fight the Covid-19 battle.

He said, "I am happy that all governments — state and Central — and agencies are also working together. We need to ensure team work and learn from other states and their best practices. We need to ensure that if the lockdown is lifted in one state, patients from other states don't go and infect there. If we stay three steps ahead of coronavirus, we will be able to defeat it."

IT IS COP OUT, SAYS OMAR ON SHIFTING MEHBOOBA

From Page 1

In a series of tweets, she said that media was not given access to her mother for hours. "Is Government of India scared that she'll articulate her views on illegal abrogation of Article 370?" she asked and asserted "Time doesn't change facts or erase a betrayal etched in memory".

She said that when restrictions are finally lifted on Ms. Mufti, she will approach all stakeholders for a joint strategy to move forward. "She will also speak to the press about her views on what transpired post August 5," she said adding that the former chief minister has urged the Centre to immediately release all detainees including political leadership jailed in and outside J&K.

She said, "All Kashmiris illegally detained since August 5 deserve freedom. Their continued incarceration even in times of a pandemic undermines our democratic credentials. Nevertheless, I'd like to thank everyone for their support & good wishes."

Reacting to Ms. Mufti's continued incarceration, National Conference leader and former chief minister Omar Abdullah tweeted, "@MehboobaMufti must be set free. Shifting her home while continuing to keep her detained is a cop out".

J&K People's Conference chief spokesperson and Srinagar's Mayor Junaid Azim Mattu said the continued detention of Ms. Mufti and other mainstream politicians is "authoritarian". He said, "They've been under detention for more than eight months now- not allowed access to the media, to their colleagues and their relatives."

Ms. Mufti is among several political figures who were taken into custody ahead or immediately after Article 370 was scrapped.

Rural borders may be sealed

From Page 1

Under the graded plan, the Centre will scan all districts in India to find if there are any new pandemic cases or if there is a slowdown in their spread.

Based on this, those districts where cases have increased or more hotspots are identified, will remain in lockdown.

If it is found districts are seeing a slowdown in terms of infection spread, people in such areas would be allowed to move out, but the borders of "improving districts" would be sealed so that people from neighbouring districts cannot enter them.

Also, sources said rural (or tribal) belts which

have largely remained unaffected by the Covid virus would be isolated from urban areas by sealing their borders to prevent the movement of city people to such areas.

The movement of essential commodities will, however, be eased.

A large number of states, including Maharashtra, Telangana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and Karnataka are not keen on ending the lockdown soon and have indicated it should be eased gradually.

It may be noted that many have indicated they would take a call after reviewing the situation prevailing at the end of the ongoing lockdown period.

One patient can infect 406 people: ICMR

New Delhi, April 7:

An ICMR study has found that a Covid-19 patient can infect 406 people in 30 days if preventive measures such as lockdown and social distancing are not implemented, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday.

With preventive measures in place, the possibility of the infection can be reduced to an average of just two-and-a-half persons per patient in the same period, joint secretary in the ministry of health Lav Agarwal said.

Citing the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) study, Agarwal said that the current 'R0' or R naught for the coronavirus

is somewhere between 1.5 and 4. 'R0' is a mathematical term that indicates how contagious an infectious disease is. It tells the average number of people who will catch a disease from one infected person.

"If we take the 'R0' to be 2.5 then one positive person can infect 406 people in 30 days, if the lockdown and social distancing measures are not in place, but if social exposure is reduced by 75 per cent then that one sick person will only be able to infect only 2.5 persons," Agarwal said, highlighting the importance of the ongoing 21-day lockdown and social distancing.

He appealed to the people to adopt social distancing and follow the lockdown order, saying this is a very important intervention in terms of management of Covid-19.

He appealed to the people to adopt social distancing and follow the lockdown order, saying this is a very important intervention in terms of management of Covid-19.

Assam MLA booked for spreading rumours

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APRIL 7

Taking a tough stand against those engaged in rumour mongering, Assam Police on Tuesday arrested a legislator on sedition charges and remanded him to judicial custody for making provocative and communal remarks besides posting false fabricated posts in social media on coronavirus disease and the treatment of patients at isolation centers in the state.

Assam Director General of Police, Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said that Mr Aminul Islam, the Dhing MLA from the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), has been booked under relevant Indian Penal Code sections and arrested on charges of criminal conspiracy and spreading disaffection among communities, among others.

In an audio clip that has gone viral, Mr Islam claimed that a conspiracy is being hatched to kill the people who are kept in quarantine. Mr Islam

who represents Dhing constituency in central Assam's Nagaon district, had also claimed that the quarantine centres in Assam were worse than detention camps for illegal immigrants.

The AIUDF legislator was also trying to propagate that nobody from the Nizamuddin Markaz event has tested positive for coronavirus.

Mr Islam, who is notorious for inflammatory speeches, also came down heavily on media and said that both national

and regional media have been trying to malign the image of the Muslim community in the country. "See the name of the first infected patient in India. See the names of all other patients. Are they all Muslims?" he argued.

Accusing Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of trying to politicise the issue, Mr Islam had also alleged that the minority people have been targeted and tortured in various camps set up by the state government to offer quarantine

facilities. Assam police picked up Mr Islam from his residence in Dhing on Monday night and arrested him on Tuesday morning after interrogation.

"He was produced in court on Tuesday which remanded him to judicial custody. We have seized his personal digital accessories and processing them as per law. We have found several clippings in his mobile, which we will have to test digitally," said the senior police officer. The police claimed that

during interrogation, the MLA confessed that the voice in the purported audio clip is his and that he circulated the audio clip on WhatsApp. The police have taken away his mobile phone for forensic examination. Police said that the state Assembly speaker has been informed about the arrest of the MLA.

Meanwhile, contrary to Mr Islam's statement, Assam MP Maulana Badruddin Ajmal has urged all who returned to Assam to undergo testing.

MOB ATTACKS COPS FOR ENFORCING LOCKDOWN


RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APRIL 7

A mob here late on Monday attacked a patrolling party with sharp weapons for enforcing lockdown, leaving two cops injured. The assailants opposed the move by the policemen to enforce lockdown and then attacked them with knives, causing stabbing injuries to two cops.

The injured policemen were rushed to the local government hospital.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan took serious note of the incident and ordered to book the assailants under NSA. The key accused, Shaheed, was arrested after being booked under NSA.

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE OF OUR DEAR FRIEND




IGNATIUS JOSEPH ABRAHAM
DOB: 08-04-1952 DOD: 26-03-2019
Your loving memories will remain in our thoughts & hearts forever.
Inserted by:
ANIL MEHTA & FAMILY MEMBERS
MEHTA LIGHTS
(S/2021/D00005)

UTHAVANA



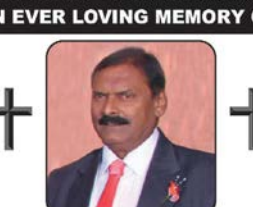
SRI SUJAN KUMAR BHARGAVA (Advocate)
(Sis. Late Sri Gopinath Bhargava)
Expire on 6 April 2020
UTHAVANA to be held today 8 April 2020
between 3 pm to 4 pm at our residence
Basheer Bagh, HYDERABAD.
Inserted by: Bhargava Family
Residence: Flat No. 12,
Sri Niketan Apartments, Palaca Colony, Road No. 2,
Basheer Bagh, HYDERABAD. Mob. 9247400027

5th Death Anniversary




Shri S.R. Ashok (Sr. Advocate)
Though it has been five years since your passing away, your memories are fresh with us and you continue to remain in our hearts.
We miss you dearly.
Uma, Vivek, Harshita, Natasha, Saashya, Manasa, Venkat, Akshaan.

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE IN EVER LOVING MEMORY OF




Mr. IGNATIUS JOSEPH ABRAHAM
DOB: 08-04-1952 DOD: 26-03-2019.
"You will always remain in our Hearts & Minds"
Brother's, Sisters-in-Law, Sister's, Nieces, Nephew's & their loved ones.
(S/2021/D000010)

5th ANNIVERSARY



MANGALARAPU MAHESH KUMAR YADAV
BJP State Council Member
Date of Expired: 08-04-2015
Your memories will remain in our thoughts and spirit forever
Inserted by:
Wife: M. Sujatha Sree
Sons: M. Vijay Chander Yadav, M. Bhuvan Chander Yadav
Daughters-in-law: M. Yaminiha Grand Son: Tanish Yadav
H. No. 23-6-769/123, Bela X Road, Near Sudha Theater, Shah-All-Banda, Hyd. Ph: 9030970600

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE



IGNATIUS JOSEPH ABRAHAM
DOB: 08-04-1952 DOD: 26-03-2019
"Your passing away leaves an emptiness that will never be filled. We miss you in every moment of our lives."
Wife: Barbara Abraham,
Daughter & Son-in-law: Judith & Pravin,
Son & Daughter-in-law: Keith & Sarena
Grand Children: Avia, Shellya & Arin
(S/2021/D00004)

IN BRIEF

Mujibur killing: Ex-Armyman held

Dhaka: A former Bangladeshi military captain, who was convicted for killing the country's founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was arrested by the police in Dhaka on Tuesday. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal confirmed ex-captain Abdul Majed's arrest and said he had been sent to court to "exhaust legal options". He was one of the six absconding ex-Army officers handed down capital punishment after their trial in absentia.

Missing Kennedy kin's body found

Washington: The body of John F. Kennedy's grand-niece who disappeared during a canoe trip with her young son was recovered Monday, US media reported. Maeve Kennedy McKean, 40, and her eight-year-old son Gideon went missing Thursday while canoeing in the vast Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. The search for Gideon will resume Tuesday. The family said Saturday that mother and son were presumed dead. It is the latest chapter of heartbreak for the Kennedy political dynasty that has suffered multiple tragedies since President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas in 1963.

Indian appointed judge in S'pore

Singapore: An Indian-origin judicial commissioner and intellectual property expert in Singapore has been appointed as a judge of the city-state's high court by President Halimah Yacob. Judicial Commissioner Dedar Singh Gill will join the high court bench from August 1, 2020, said the Prime Minister's Office on Monday. Judge Gill, 61, was appointed judicial commissioner of the Supreme Court in August 2018. Earlier, he was the managing director of the intellectual property department at Drew and Napier. After assuming his Supreme Court role, he was appointed by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon to manage the intellectual property list of the high court.

Child sex abuse: Cardinal set free

Melbourne: Australia's most senior Catholic Cardinal George Pell on Tuesday walked out of prison after the country's highest court unanimously acquitted him of child sex offences, overturning a lower court's judgement against the 78-year-old former Vatican treasurer. Once the Vatican's third-ranking official, Pell was released from Barwon Prison outside Melbourne and reached a church after serving 13 months of a six-year sentence. He was driven from the prison in a convoy. Pell was sentenced in March last year to six years in prison with a non-parole period of three years and eight months. The High Court ruled in its judgement that there is a "significant possibility that an innocent person has been convicted because the evidence did not establish guilt to the requisite standard of proof".

BOEING TO DO SPACESHIP TEST WITH NO CREW

Washington, April 7: Boeing will relaunch an uncrewed test flight of its Starliner spaceship, the company said Monday, after an earlier mission failed due to multiple glitches. The aim of Starliner is to take US astronauts to the International Space Station. A test run in December was ended early when the spacecraft failed to engage its thrusters on time. Another problem was intermittent space-to-ground communications, impeding the flight control team's ability to command and control the vehicle. "We have chosen to re-fly our Orbital Flight Test to demonstrate the quality of the Starliner system," Boeing said. "Flying another uncrewed flight will allow us to complete all flight test objectives and evaluate the performance of the second Starliner vehicle at no cost to the taxpayer. "We will then proceed to the tremendous responsibility and privilege of flying astronauts to the International Space Station." A Boeing spokeswoman was quoted by CBS News as saying the company hopes to fly the mission "in the fall of 2020".

In ICU, stable Boris in 'good spirits'

World leaders send their messages of support while wishing UK PM's early recovery

London, April 7: Boris Johnson who was hospitalised with persistent Covid-19 symptoms is stable in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a London hospital and has not required ventilator support for breathing, Downing Street said in a health update on the British Prime Minister on Tuesday.

Johnson, who had been shifted to the ICU on Monday night, remains in "good spirits" and has not been diagnosed with pneumonia — one of the fallouts afflicting critical patients of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. "The Prime Minister has been stable overnight and remains in good spirits. He is receiving standard oxygen treatment and is breathing without any other assistance," a Downing Street spokesperson said. "He has not required mechanical ventilation or non-invasive respiratory support," the spokesperson said.



Police officers hold a minute of silence for the Covid-19 victims as the lockdown to combat its spread continues in Madrid, on Tuesday. — AP

Hang in there: Modi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the world leaders who sent out their messages of support to the UK PM. "Hang in there, Prime Minister Boris Johnson! Hope to see you out of hospital and in perfect health very soon," he tweeted. US President Donald Trump said Americans "are all praying for his recovery" as he described Johnson as "a very good friend of mine and a friend to our nation" who is "strong" and "doesn't give up". Russian President Vladimir Putin wished him a speedy recovery, saying his "optimism and sense of humour" would help him get better. — Agencies

EASTER TREATS: 'EGGCESSIVE' HIKE IN PRICES

Milan, April 7: The price of Easter chocolates and cakes has spiked online in Italy, a consumer protection group Federconsumatori said and called on the government to crack down after price hikes of up to 168 percent were seen. The price of a "Colomba di Pasqua", a Panettone-like cake in the form of a dove costs 9.69 euros but can reach 19.99 euros online. The same has been seen with chocolate eggs, rising 37 percent online. — AFP

Now, minister Gove in self-isolation

66k may die in UK: Study

London, April 7: UK Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove on Tuesday became the latest senior government figure to go into self-isolation after a member of his family displayed symptoms of Covid-19. Gove, who had just hours earlier given an update on British PM Boris Johnson's health in hospital, said he will continue to work from home in line with UK government advice, which calls for 14 days of self-isolation should a relative develop Covid-19 symptoms. "In accordance with the guidance, I am iso-

lating at home after a member of my family started to display mild symptoms of the Covid-19 on Sunday. I have not displayed any symptoms and am continuing to work as normal," he said.

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BRITAIN ON Tuesday reported a record 786 new Covid-19 deaths in its daily update, following two days of falling figures.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock was another senior Cabinet minister who had tested positive has since returned to work after his seven-day self-isolation. Johnson's Chief Strategy Adviser at Downing Street, Dominic Cummings, continues to remain in isolation. — PTI

Hospitalisation drop, flat death toll 'good': NY Gov.

New York, April 7: New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said an effectively flat death toll for two days and a drop in the number of hospitalisations and ICU admissions could be "good signs" of a "possible flattening" of the Covid-19 curve in the state but warned that becoming complacent will be a mistake. The state, the epicentre of the US, has a total of 130,689 Covid-19 cases and 4,758 people have died from the virus. But in a slight glimmer of hope, Cuomo said the death toll in the state has been "effectively flat for two days". In the 24 hours since April 4, the death toll grew to "all-time increase" of 630. On Sunday, fewer than 600 deaths were reported in New York — 594. However, the city registered 731 deaths, its highest in 24 hours on Monday. The number of cases reached 68,766 and the death toll was 2,738. He said while the death toll is not good news, "the possible flattening of the curve is better than the increases we have seen". He also said that there had been a drop in number of hospitalisations, ICU admissions and daily intubations. — PTI

Ex-staffer of DC succumbs to virus

Washington, April 7: Scores of Indian-Americans have tested positive with the novel Covid-19 in the US and several of them, including a journalist of a news agency, have died, according to multiple news reports from community organisations and diaspora leaders from across the country. While there is no official or unofficial count of Indian-Americans infected with the virus in the country, information available on various private social media groups indicate that a significant number of them are in New York and New Jersey. The two States, which have the highest concentration of Indian-Americans in the US, are also the worst hit by the Covid-19. By Monday, over 170,000 people tested positive in these two States and fatalities crossed 5,700. Veteran Indian-American journalist Brahm Kuchibhotla, a former contributor to United News of

India news agency and a Deccan Chronicle staffer, breathed his last at a New York hospital on Monday night. "Really shocking that this is happening to the community. Cannot believe that this is happening to us and the people we know," said Indian American Rajendra Dichpally. Community leaders said that every day they have been receiving reports of their near and dear ones and other testing positive. — PTI

India news agency and a Deccan Chronicle staffer, breathed his last at a New York hospital on Monday night. "Really shocking that this is happening to the community. Cannot believe that this is happening to us and the people we know," said Indian American Rajendra Dichpally. Community leaders said that every day they have been receiving reports of their near and dear ones and other testing positive. — PTI

1st time, no deaths: China

Beijing/Wuhan, April 7: China will open-up the epicentre of its Covid-19 pandemic Wuhan on Wednesday for outbound travel for the first time since the January 23 lockdown, as the country reported no new deaths, attaining a new milestone in the battle against the disease. Just as China started opening-up the epicentre, concerns of rebound of Covid-19 was on the rise in the country as imported infections increased to 983 with 32 new confirmed cases, the National Health Commission said. Also, 30 new asymptomatic Covid-19 cases were reported on the mainland on Monday. The NHC said 1,033 asymptomatic cases were still under medical observation. — PTI

SPAIN DEATHS HIT 743 AFTER DROP
Madrid, April 7: Spain's daily Covid-19 death toll shot up to 743 on Tuesday after falling for four straight days, lifting the total to 13,798, the health ministry said. However, it emphasised that the rise was due to weekend deaths being tallied and that the overall "downward trend" is continuing. The new figure represents a 5.7 percent increase over the 637 deaths recorded on Monday, the lowest number of fatalities since March 24 in the world's second hardest-hit country. — AFP

101-YR-OLD FLEES SENIOR HOME, HELD
Berlin, April 7: A 101-year-old woman crept out of an old people's home in a bid to get to visit her daughter on her birthday. German police said Tuesday. Officers intercepted her after she had escaped via an emergency exit at the home in northern Germany. Brunswick police said they were called out after the enterprising senior lost her way in her search for her daughter's house in a suburb. Although she claimed that she lived with her daughter, officers suspected the truth. — AFP

Prince Harry, Meghan name body after 11-month son Archie Archewell: Ex-Royals' new charity name

London, April 7: Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, who stepped down as frontline royals and set up base in the US, have unveiled the name of their new non-profit charitable organisation as Archewell — based on the name of their 11-month-old son Archie. The couple, now living in Los Angeles, said they look forward to formally launching the new foundation "when the time is right", which will replace their erstwhile Sussex Royal brand. They also revealed that the Greek word in the project, Arche, was the inspir-

ation behind the name of their son, Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor. "Like you, our focus is on supporting efforts to tackle the global Covid-19 pandemic but faced with this information coming to light, we felt compelled to share the story of how this came to be," the Duke and Duchess of Sussex said. The couple had not planned to launch details of the non-profit organisation yet due to the focus on the Covid-19 pandemic. But after paperwork, including the name was filed in the public domain in the US, they confirmed

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Cyclone batters Vanuatu town

Port Vila, April 7: A deadly cyclone destroyed much of Vanuatu's second-largest town but early warnings appeared to have prevented mass casualties in the Pacific nation, with some residents sheltered in caves to stay safe, aid workers. Tropical Cyclone Harold, which claimed 27 lives when it swept through the Solomon Islands last week, lashed Vanuatu's northern provinces overnight as a scale-topping category five superstorm. The town of Luganville, population 16,500, took a direct hit as winds of 235

JAPAN PM ABE DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY

Tokyo, April 7: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared a month-long state of emergency for Tokyo and six other prefectures on Tuesday to ramp up defenses against the spread of the Covid-19 as the number of infections surges. But the move came in the form of a stay-at-home request — not an order — and violators will not be penalised. The Covid-19 outbreak is now rampant and rapidly spreading, threatening people's health, their daily lives and the economy, Abe said. The state of emergency, which is until May 6, will only permit Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike and heads of the six other prefectures to do more to reinforce calls for social distancing. "The most important thing is for each one of us to change our activity," Abe told a government task force. He urged everyone to cut contacts with others by 70-80% for one month, calling the pandemic "the biggest postwar crisis." The announcement follows surges in new cases in Tokyo, including consecutive rises exceeding 100 over the weekend. By Tuesday there were 1,196 confirmed cases in the metropolitan region of 14 million people. Nationwide, Japan has reported 91 deaths from Covid-19 and 3,906 confirmed cases. — AP

HK PANDAS USE PRIVACY TO CONJUGATE

Hong Kong, April 7: Stuck at home with no visitors and not much else to do, a pair of pandas in Hong Kong finally decided to give mating a go after a decade of dodging the issue. Like half the planet, Ying Ying and Le Le have only really had each other for company since Covid-19-caused lockdowns shut off the flow of guests to their themepark pad. And like couples everywhere, they've been making the best of the time on their own. "Since Ying Ying and Le Le's arrival in Hong Kong in 2007 and attempts at natural mating since 2010, they unfortunately have yet to succeed until this year upon years of trial and learning," said Ocean Park conservation official Michael Boos. Vets had their hopes up when the monochromatic lovers started showing an interest in each other during the short spring mating season. The park said confirmation of pregnancy can only be detected by an ultrasound scan 14 to 17 days before birth. — AFP

'Covid' tiger, Mexico zoo's ray of hope

Cordoba, April 7: He is small and ferocious with a deadly name, but a Bengal tiger called Covid has given hope to a zoo in Mexico as the pandemic ravages the world. The cub was born last month at Bio Zoo in the eastern state of Veracruz as the virus that causes Covid-19 spread like wildfire, forcing half the world's population to stay home and devastating millions of businesses — including the privately-run zoo. "The birth of Covid was a gift for us, an incredible gift for both Bio Zoo and us as a family — it was a bit of hope in the current situation," said Kitzia Rodriguez, a vet at

the zoo run by her family. "It is a name of hope, of a virus that came to teach us to look after ourselves." Though he still struggles to stand up and constantly sticks out his tongue demanding milk, Covid is already showing his Bengal tiger roots with energetic roars. "Covid was born very

strong, he was born big, although no one knew that his mother was pregnant," Rodriguez added. His eight-year-old mother was rescued from a circus and had problems with her hips, making it difficult for her to get pregnant. But a younger, lighter male succeeded where others failed. — AFP

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DECCAN Chronicle

8 APRIL 2020

KCR bells the cat on extending lockdown

The whole of India will, in times to come, look back at Telangana state Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's clarion call to Prime Minister Narendra Modi — two days after the PM himself had a video conference with all CMs — to extend the nationwide lockdown to combat the coronavirus pandemic by at least two weeks.

Chief Minister Rao was extremely intrepid in raising the issue — first to bell the cat, first to address the elephant in the virtual room. And characteristically wise in advocating the simplest and wisest course of action available to India — if we must win against Covid-19, we must exercise a maximum of social distancing, the only first weapon available to each individual — and to ensure that for a nation of 1.3 billion people, extend the lockdown.

Mr Rao weighed the issue well for all Indians — there is a medical emergency that cannot be wished away or bent around on, and an economic stagnation building up in dead mass through inactivity of productive assets — people, factories, fields, offices, entire cities, states and the entire country — but we must get to addressing it later. In Mr Rao's own words, we can grow back the economy, but cannot get back those whose lives will be needlessly lost if we hasten to lift the lockdown even one hour before we are ready.

The crucial statement found great resonance. Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Punjab, Kerala, and West Bengal have given indications that they would rather have an extension of the lockdown than risk a flare-up of the virus.

The BJP Chief Ministers ranging from Karnataka, MP, UP, HP, Uttarakhand to NDA CMs from Bihar and Tamil Nadu, too, have in their own tacit ways, conveyed their view. Significantly, there is not one political leader who spoke to the contrary and advocated the lifting of the lockdown. The national political consensus is significant in our polarised times. The threat of mass killings by the virus has brought leaders across parties to realise that we cannot let down our guard in this existential battle. Citizens too, by and large, have rallied around and will continue to take suffering with stoicism till the curve is flattened.

Yes, everyone is not equal during a lockdown. Daily wage earners, migrant workers, homeless and those below the poverty line are hit worst, and for them each day is a fight to exist on a different plane too. Governments have started working and must augment relief to the subaltern without let-up and with greater efficiency. A death by starvation may not be contagious but no less a national shame.

The lockdown, by most projected scenarios, from Boston Consulting Group report to calculations of epidemiologists like Ramanan Laxminarayan, should and will stretch across April, perhaps the whole of May too. But it does not matter. Till the last patient is in hospital, quarantined and cured, till there are no new Covid cases reported beyond doubt, India must stay at home, safe.

We must win the battle and the war at any cost. If the lockdown stays, we will.

Just tokenism, no substance

The Union government's decision to suspend the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) scheme and effect a cut of 30 per cent in the salaries of the MPs for two years to raise money to fight pandemic Covid-19 is rich in symbolism but poor in substance. The MPLAD scheme authorises each member of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha to allocate ₹5 crore a year for development programmes in their constituencies. The money is often spent on infrastructure development though the scheme faces charges such as lack of interest on the part of the MPs and money being spent on unworthy projects. The decision to cut MPs salaries may satiate the middle class appetite for neta-bashing but the government would not tell them how much money it will save through the measure. Information minister Prakash Javadekar has contended that it's not about the amount but about the message it sends to the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made his countrymen perform two tasks — of clapping the hands and lighting lamps — to send a message to the nation on its resolve to fight the virus. The government must now stop sending messages and instead start sending more testing kits to hotspots, money to states, personal protection equipment to healthcare workers, ventilators and medicines to hospitals and medicines for patients. It must also come up with an action plan on using the remaining period of the lockdown and its staggered lifting. It is also time the government addressed the issues plaguing the economy, which is at a standstill. The efficacy of the MPLAD scheme may be suspect but it would have proved an effective channel to ensure that every part of the nation gets some funds to fight the virus by restricting the use to this specific purpose. The central takeover of the scheme has nipped that option. It's time for substantive action; tokenism can wait.

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu

Babu booked for breaking quarantine

For many babus, rules are only for others not for the heaven-born. An IAS officer in Kerala skipped home quarantine after returning from abroad. He was later traced in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, his hometown. A case has been lodged against him for going AWOL. Anupam Mishra, sub-collector of Kollam, had returned from Singapore and was advised to remain under home quarantine as stated in the protocol for overseas returnees in the backdrop of the novel coronavirus outbreak. However, he did not follow the order, which the government has taken as "a serious lapse on the part of an IAS officer". Once his disappearance came to light, the Kollam authorities immediately placed Mishra's driver, personal security guard and secretary in isolation. Kerala is one of the worst-affected states due to the Covid-19 out-

break in the country and is already under lockdown. The Kerala government is reportedly in touch with the UP government in this regard and Mishra will have to face proceedings for defying his superior's orders.

IPS OFFICER SHOWS THE WAY

A police officer in Tamil Nadu R. Rohith Nathan and his doctor wife Kaveri Subbiah have proposed to the ministry of home affairs to use high technology to effectively control the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The technology would involve analysis of technical data, artificial intelligence and geo-fencing. Sources say, the IPS officer and his wife recently made a presentation to a panel of joint secretaries in the ministry. It is learnt that the panel agreed in principle to implement the IPS officer's proposal across the country. Nathan is currently superin-

tendent of police at Sivaganga. Having got the green signal, the SP is reportedly now formulating the standard operating procedure to launch this digital surveillance system in Tamil Nadu to control the coronavirus outbreak. The aim is to use advanced technology to trace persons who may have come in contact with infected persons and also to assess their health condition for appropriate medical treatment.

KERALA BABU REINSTATED

The Kerala IAS officer who had come under a cloud after the police accused him of being involved in a drunken-driving accident and causing the death of a journalist has been reinstated into the service. After the incident in the state capital in August last year, IAS officer Sriram Venkitaraman was placed under suspension by the state government.

However, sources say, repeated attempts were made to get the babu reinstated despite criticism from opposition parties and the public. Earlier, this January, a committee headed by chief secretary Tom Jose decided to reinstate Venkitaraman into service, but the government kept the decision on hold. Until now.

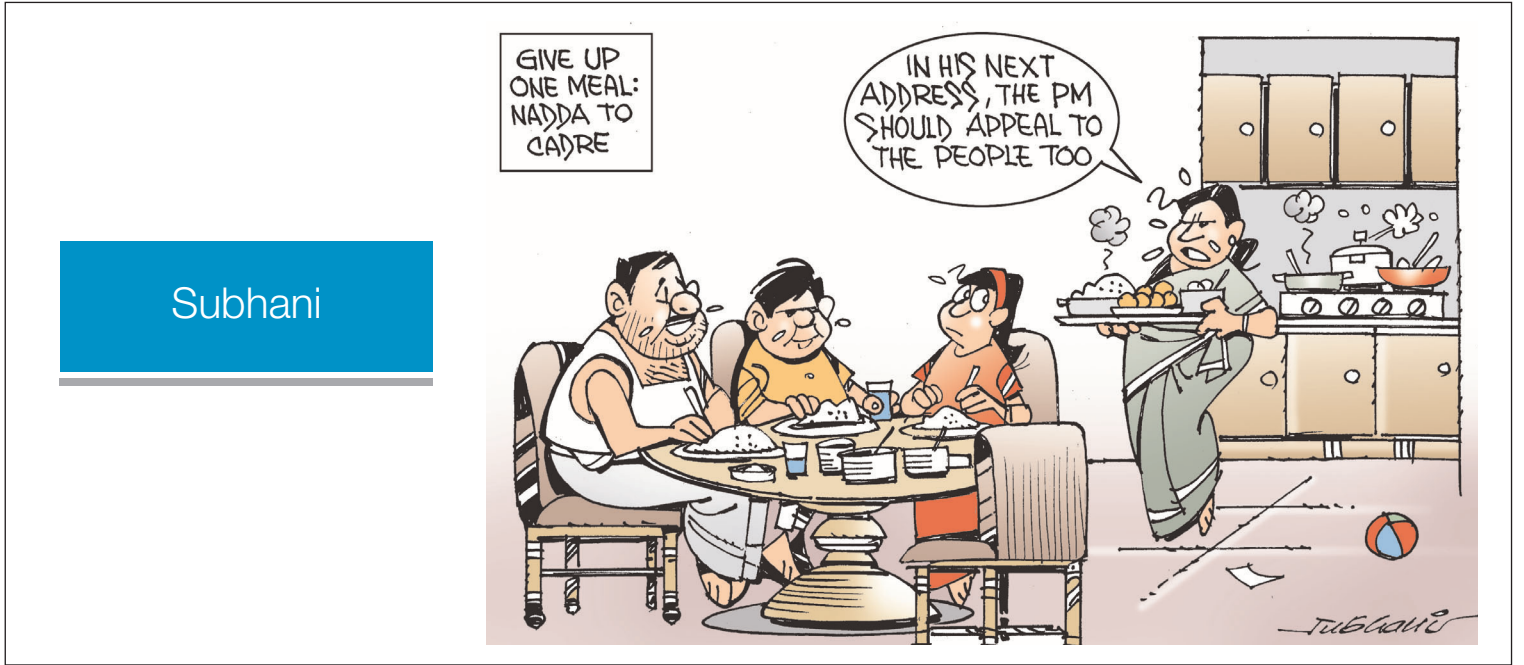
It is being said that the Kerala government which is fighting the Covid-19 outbreak is keen to get all hands on board, and the decision to reinstate the tainted babu should be seen in this context. However, it is unlikely that the babu's reinstatement will pass off quietly.

TAILPIECE

Buzz says that Gujarat revenue minister Kaushikbhai Patel's personal assistant Chirag Panchal has been appointed as undersecretary at the Prime Minister's Office. He

will be on deputation for two years. At present, Mr Panchal is an assistant manager in the Amdavad Municipal Corporation. Given the importance of the PMO these days, the requisitioning of a babu of relatively modest station for the PMO seems strange, unless the PM has some definite task earmarked for Mr Panchal.

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



Subhani

As we fight virus, think & plan for crises ahead



Sanjay Kumar

Was there any alternative to the sudden and complete lockdown? As India faces one of its most serious crises, there is little point in even asking this question. But if an answer is needed, that's easy: yes, the lockdown was the only option.

But the question one must ponder: could we not have given a few days' advance warning to the migrants, mostly daily wage earners, to plan the return to their villages or hometowns, if they so wished, before the total shutdown was in force? Should not the government have made plans for meeting the daily needs of the migrants and others whose daily earnings would come to a complete standstill?

One may argue that the whole purpose of the lockdown would have been defeated if people were given a few days to return to their native places as large numbers would have rushed to their villages and homes — in overloaded buses and trains — and effectively negating the "social distancing". But what we saw a few days after the total lockdown announcement was much worse — lakhs of poor people walking on foot, trying to take any vehicle they could to return to their villages. In their desperation, some of them even travelled inside water tankers and milk vans. If the government announced a temporary rehabilitation plan for these migrant workers, there was a possibility of many of them not panicking and trying to return to their native places, and maybe the situation wouldn't have been so bad.

There are a mix of several factors that created this panic among migrant workers to return to their villages. One can't discount the

role of rumours of various kinds in creating this uneasy situation of lakhs of migrants on the road, which the administration found extremely difficult to handle. It is obvious that many of those rushing home to their native places were daily wage-earners. An earlier study by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) had found that 29 per cent of the earning population in big cities get paid daily wages, while their numbers are 36 per cent in small and medium-sized towns, while in villages it is very large — 47 per cent — most of them being agricultural labourers. The estimate

good saving capacity from whatever they earn. In a study conducted by CSDS, only 15 per cent of adult Indians accepted being able to save from their earnings after meeting all their household needs, while another 32 per cent agreed that they earned well, and were able to meet all their family/household needs, but were unable to save, though overall they don't face any difficulty in life. But a very large proportion (60 per cent) of Indians accepted having varying degrees of difficulties in meeting their family/household

option for creating "social distancing", which is possibly the best way of handling the coronavirus crisis. And while the closure of markets, schools, colleges and universities, public transport, offices and similar such public places has helped to implement the policy of social distancing, it is also true that in many Indian homes "social distancing" is easier said than done. Data from Census 2011 suggests that 37 per cent of Indians live in a one-room house/dwelling, while another 32 per cent live in a two-room house/dwelling. While by definition these could be categorised as one-room or two-room dwellings, a glimpse of some of these in our bigger cities or small towns would show that a large majority of them could be better described as huts or jhuggis. With an average family size of five or six members per dwelling, especially among the poor and lower income families, living in one of them would leave "social distancing" only on paper and not in practical reality. The Census 2011 had also highlighted that four per cent of Indians do not have any house or dwelling at all, and live under the open sky. In a complete lockdown situation, when everyone has been asked to remain indoors, the big question remains for these homeless: Where to find a roof to live under?

The answers to some of these questions are not easy, and there are very few options to be exercised while handling such emergencies. Often, one does not know which one to exercise and which one not to implement. But these experiences give us an opportunity to think and plan ahead for handling any major crisis in the future. At the moment, though, we must all come together in this fight against the coronavirus.

The writer is a political analyst and commentator, and a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

LIGHTING LAMPS

People from all walks of life like scientists, lawyers, doctors, politicians, sports persons and thespians participated in the call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to light lamps on April 5 at 9 pm. How dare you call us all sheep? And how can you interpret that it was a call to celebrate mini-Diwali? Do you think people are foolish enough to take it as a celebration? Whatever political school you belong, this was an offensive editorial. I wonder if calling ceasefire and losing one-thirds of Kashmir to Pakistan or compromising by way of Article 370 in Kashmir was of sound Nehruvian scientific philosophy as stated in the editorial.

Sreekanth Nallakunta, Hyderabad

PANDEMIC, PENURY

The picture of girls running towards a vehicle to beg for food depicts penury and total destitution. (Street children beg for survival amid lockdown, DC, April 7). Pavement and street vendors used to lead a precarious and hand-to-mouth life. Prompt and timely help is needed for them. The TS government must speed up ration delivery and pecuniary aid to them.

Zubair Khan Tolichowki, Hyderabad

MAINTAIN DIGNITY

Governments as also NGOs have announced a relief package for the poor during the ongoing coronavirus crisis. Unfortunately, there is a downside. It is disheartening to see people receiving assistance being shown in the social media. Such thoughtless actions prevent many from accepting charity. Dignity of the less fortunate must be maintained as respect is the right of every citizen.

Md Rustam Parwez EFL University, Hyderabad

Shinde on need for aerial spraying of pesticides

BOMBAY, April 7 UNION Minister of State for Food and Agriculture A.P. Shinde today advised the State Governments to give high priority for aerial spraying of pesticides in their plant protection programmes. 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

The Minister who was scheduled to inaugurate the All-India Plant Protection Conference could not come down to Bombay. His speech was read out by Miss Anna George, Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Department.

Buzz says that Gujarat revenue minister Kaushikbhai Patel's personal assistant Chirag Panchal has been appointed as undersecretary at the Prime Minister's Office. He will be on deputation for two years.

quick
BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	30,067.21 8.97
Nifty 50	8,792.20 8.76
S&P 500*	2,725.09 2.31
Dollar (₹)	75.63 0.72
Pound Sterling (₹)	93.32 0.25
Euro (₹)	82.22 -0.21
Gold (Oz)* (₹)	1,670.80 -0.37
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	32.87 -0.54
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.414 -0.062
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.739 8.997

* As of 9.30pm IST

Salary paid to directors subject to GST: AAR

Firms will have to pay GST on the remuneration they give to directors, the Authority for Advance Ruling has said. In an application filed before the Rajasthan bench of the AAR, Clay Craft India had sought a clarification if salaries paid to directors on the rolls would attract GST. The AAR said director is the supplier of services and the company is the recipient of the services. It said the Central Tax (Rate) notification states the same clearly.

SBI cuts savings rate by 25 bps to 2.75 per cent



State Bank of India has cut savings rate by 0.25 per cent to 2.75 per cent on all deposits, with effect from April 15. SBI has also cut the marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) by 35 bps across all tenors. The one-year MCLR is 7.40 per cent per annum, from 7.75 per cent, from April 10. Consequently, the EMIs on home loans linked to MCLR will get cheaper by Rs 24 per Rs 1 lakh on a 30-year loan.

Workers facing worst crisis since WW-II: ILO

Some 1.25 billion workers are seeing their livelihoods threatened by the pandemic, the UN said. In a study, the International Labour Organization warned that the steps taken to rein in the disease would, during the second quarter of 2020 alone, wipe out 6.7 per cent of working hours globally, equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. It said the crisis could potentially push 40 crore informal sector workers in India deeper into poverty.

Total invests ₹3,707 cr in solar venture of Adani

Total SA will invest Rs 3,707 crore in a solar energy joint venture with Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL), the third investment the French giant has made in India along with the Adani Group. Total will invest Rs 3,707 crore for a 50 per cent partnership with AGEL in a joint venture that houses 2,148 MW of operating solar projects across 11 states in India, the Adani Group firm said in a statement.

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Buying frenzy makes investors richer by ₹8 L cr
Sensex soars above 30K, clocks best gain post-'09RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 7

Signs of coronavirus containment in the worst-hit regions of the world led to the best ever absolute gain for the Indian stock market, with the Sensex moving up by nearly 2500 points and battered investors getting richer by Rs 8 lakh crore on Tuesday, which saw market participants rushing to buy heavily oversold blue chips.

The short covering rally in the global market on Monday, with the US market gaining over 7 per cent, and Asia and European markets rallying for the second consecutive day led to frenzied broad based buying in large-cap stocks.

The Sensex closed above the 30,000-mark, gaining 2476 points, or 8.97 per cent. The Nifty-50 gained 8.76 per cent, or 708 points, closing at 8,792.20. The BSE's market capitalisation soared to Rs 116.38 lakh crore from Rs 108.66 lakh crore on Friday.

However, the rally may not last for long since investors are still cautious; the provisional data showed foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 741.77 crore while the domestic



Top Gainers			
Indust Bank	22.60	ICICI Bank	13.82
Axis Bank	19.41	Hind Unilever	13.51
M&M	14.44	Maruti Suzuki	13.41
		Nestle India	12.36
		Bajaj Auto	12.05
		Reliance	11.89
		Hero MotoCorp	11.83
		K&S Infographics	

institutions were buyers by just Rs 422.51 crore.

The market opened extremely bullish on overnight US market gains. Deepak Jasani, head-retail research, HDFC Securities, said, "Markets began the shortened week on a decisive note, staging their biggest one-day gain since May 2009. Global stock

markets on Tuesday followed up on Wall Street's Monday rally amid continued signs that the coronavirus outbreak may be peaking in a number of hard-hit places. European markets traded sharply higher on Tuesday as investors hoped that the region could be seeking a plateau in the virus outbreak. Asian stock markets rallied for a second day on Tuesday, and riskier currencies rose, buoyed by tentative signs the coronavirus crisis may be levelling off in New York and receding in Europe."

He said, "In India volumes on the NSE flared up as traders rushed to cover shorts and/or square up their option positions. Defensive and old economy stocks were in demand."

Expectation of higher foreign investor allocation to Indian blue chips from May due to portfolio rebalancing also led to buying in the index heavy weights, said analysts.

Siddhartha Khemka, head-retail research, MoSL, said, "Market expects MSCI to rebalance MSCI India weight in the emerging market index after India moved into a new regime that increased sector-wise limits for the FPIs.

Re gains 53p on improved risk sentiment

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 7

Tracking gains in the domestic equity market, the rupee on Tuesday gained 53 paise to close at 75.63 against the dollar. Traders said that risk sentiments improved globally, as Italy and Spain saw a fall in the number of deaths due to Covid 19, igniting hopes



that the coronavirus spread might have peaked

in these key global centres.

During the day, the rupee traded in the range of 75.61 and 75.92. Most of the Asian currencies appreciated against the dollar tracking gains in the yuan, which appreciated by 0.5 per cent. The dollar index weakened globally by 0.921 per cent and all emerging market and developed market

currencies appreciated against the US dollar.

The Reserve Bank of India reduced the timing of market hours from 10 am to 2 pm for bond and currency market starting from April 7 to April 17.

The news that the government could lift the national lockdown in phases also helped improve the domestic risk sentiment.

Aurobindo faces class action suit

Hyderabad, April 7: A class action suit has been filed against some drug manufacturers, including Aurobindo Pharma and Emcure Pharma-ceuticals, in a USA court for allegedly concealing facts about cancer-causing agent, N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) presence in the metformin medicine.

MSP Recovery Claims filed the petition on April 3 in the US District Court for the Southern District of Florida on behalf of similarly situated healthcare insurers to recover payments unlawfully induced by the drug makers—Aurobindo Pharma, Auro-life Pharma and Heritage Pharmaceuticals.

Metformin is the most prescribed oral pharmaceutical drug for patients with type-2 diabetes. The petition was based on tests done by Valisure, an online pharmacy. Valisures tests revealed that the metformin produced by Aurobindo and Heritage were contaminated with NDMA with levels between 37 and 266 ng per tablet.

As for Heritage's metformin products, the NDMA presence was up to 8.6 times the FDA's interim daily limit.

Valisure, while posting the results on its website, however, indicated Aurobindo passed the FDA test for the NDMA presence.

Officials of Aurobindo could not be reached for comments.

The petition claimed that the defendants have manufactured and distributed metformin drugs throughout the US, for which the litigants assignors paid about \$124 million on behalf of their members.

The drug makers breached their express warranties with respect to their metformin drugs because the drugs did not comply with cGMPs (Current Good Manufacturing Practices), were adulterated and contaminated, were not bioequivalent to branded drugs, and could not lawfully be sold, the petitioner alleged.

The defendants with an intent to defraud, concealed from plaintiff and class members the material facts concerning their pervasive cGMP violations "...made express and implied representations... that their metformin drugs conformed to applicable standards of quality," the petition said. —PTI

Non-life insurers still rely on investment for a profit

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 7

Non-life insurance companies continue to compete amongst themselves for chunky corporate businesses, offering insurance at unviable rates to expand market share, thereby reporting underwriting losses. This is despite the fact that it's been more than a decade since the industry was freed of price controls in 2007.

Contrary to the global trend, domestic non-life companies remain dependent on their investment portfolio for profitability, since they have been reporting underwriting losses in competitive segments, but not in segments where pricing is mandated by regulations such as motor third party insurance.

Over the years, the investment portfolio of the non-life insurance industry has swelled from Rs 48,891 crore in FY10 to Rs 2.55 lakh crore in FY19, a compound annual growth rate of 20.2 per cent. Investment earnings have been helping insurers to report an overall profit.

Experts say insurers



have to offer a better service experience along with product innovation to their clients to have a sustainable business model.

It has been noticed that the combined ratio of the public sector players is generally more than the combined ratio of their private sector peers. The combined ratio—which is the aggregation of the loss ratio (claims relative to premiums written) and the expense ratio (operational and commissions expenses incurred relative to premiums written)—remained over 100 per cent for most companies.

Combined ratio measures the money flowing out of an insurance company in the form of claims paid, expenses, and losses

Hospitals see sharp drop in occupancy

ASHWIN J PUNNEN
MUMBAI, APRIL 7

The coronavirus outbreak has come to haunt domestic hospital chains, as players like Apollo Hospitals, Fortis, Aster DM and Narayana Hrudayalay are seeing a sharp fall in occupancy amidst restrictions on people movement and postponement of elective procedure.

With adverse inbound travel advisories and the national lockdown medical tourists have also stopped coming.

Over the past month, the hospital stocks have corrected in the range of 20-50 per cent.

Hospitals are seeing lower inflows of people in both their in-patient and out-patient departments as social distancing norms have come into play.

In a recent investor conference call, Fortis Healthcare Ltd said there has been a 35-50 per cent decline in admissions to the in-patient department, while out-patient department visits have dropped by 60-80 per cent.

While emergency medical services continue, social distancing norms have meant that people are choosing to postpone some elective medical procedures.

According to industry experts, players like Apollo Hospitals have seen a significant drop in occupancy levels, to 40 per cent from 69 per cent, while Fortis is seeing a decline in the number of elective surgeries. Fortis has indicated to



analysts that the business is impacted in a major way, as occupancy levels have fallen to 45 per cent from 68 per cent in Q3FY20 and OPD and IPD volumes have come down drastically.

Similarly, Narayana Hrudayalay's domestic volumes have fallen by about 40 per cent due to travel restrictions and deferred surgeries.

Many hospitals have suspended operations after Covid-19 cases reported among their staff. According to analysts, medical tourism, which accounts for about 10 to 15 per cent of the revenue mix of these hospital chains, has been badly hit because of the travel restrictions.

Hospitals with diagnostic chains have seen a similar fall in volumes at their diagnostic arms, which will also impact consolidated operating leverage.

"There is no accurate way to guess timelines on that, but suffice to say that business as usual for hospitals may be a distant scenario. With outpatient

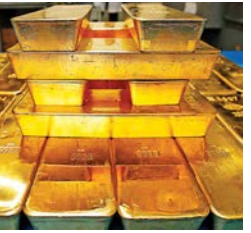
occupancies, particularly for elective surgeries, now at an all-time low, we believe procedure pipelines are likely to remain dry through H1FY21 and earnings will remain subdued through FY21," said analysts at Edelweiss in a note.

Analysts said impact on private hospitals' operating profit (Ebitda) will be 10 per cent in Q1 FY21 and 3-4 per cent for FY20.

"With fixed cost forming 60-80 per cent of costs in hospitals, the reduced occupancy numbers...are likely to impact the performances of hospital sector for Q4FY20 and Q1FY 21," said ICICI Securities in a report.

"Overall, we expect hindrances to persist for the next two to three months with full normalcy from H2FY21 onwards," the report said. "The firm said it remains positive on the hospital space as a structurally evolving story with moderating capex and improvement in profit margins and return ratio in most cases looking favourable."

Gold crosses ₹45,000 in futures mkt

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 7

Gold prices in the futures market touched a new high, crossing Rs 45,000 per 10 gm as increased liquidity in the markets supported investments in the yellow metal.

In the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold futures touched an intra-day high of Rs 45,724 per 10 gm, almost Rs 2,000 up from the previous close. The market, however, closed at Rs 44,950, still higher by Rs 1,233. The spot markets were shut due to the lockdown.

The price movement got support from international rates. While the international spot market had on Tuesday seen gold moving up to \$1,678 an ounce, in US futures market it zoomed past \$1,700.

Harley rides in Low Rider S

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, APRIL 7

Harley-Davidson on Tuesday introduced its new Harley-Davidson Low Rider S model, a cruiser, in India priced at Rs 14.69 lakh at Delhi showroom. The closest rival to the Low Rider S in India is the Indian Scout Bobber Sixty. The Low Rider S is part of the firm's 'Softail' series of motorcycles.



FMCG availability hit by labour, logistics issues

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 7

Despite government assuring free movement of essential products, FMCG companies are finding it tough to transport raw materials to production units and finished products to stores. This, coupled with labour shortage, has hindered availability of several daily-use goods.

After the panic buying prior to the lock-down, retail shelves are not getting fully replenished, especially packaged food items, including milk products. The products absent from the shelves are mostly those which need to cross inter-state borders. According to Walmart India, its cash and carry business is facing chal-

lenges in securing sufficient supplies due to either production shortages from manufacturers or transportation hurdles in reaching their locations.

Production is limited to select items which the government thinks are essential. Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies have to secure approvals from state government authorities to produce them.

"The company has received approvals from a number of state authorities for the manufacturing of essential commodities. These factories have been operating with restricted number of hours and reduced workforce in line with the approvals received from the local authorities," said an ITC



spokesperson. "We have got the permissions and have commenced in-house production of key essential products, including hand sanitisers, and intend to expand it to multiple factories going forward," said Dabur India's executive director-operations Shahrugh Khan.

FMCG companies also are facing transportation hurdles, though the government has promised smooth movement of essential products throughout the country.

"Even for producing these essentials goods, we are facing issues around free movement of incoming raw materials and packing goods, and outgoing finished products, across states. While the Centre has permitted movement of trucks, there is still a gap in coordination with states, which is impacting seamless movement of raw materials and finished goods across state borders," said Khan.

The supply chain for any single FMCG product typically involves 20-30 components and their seamless

movement is essential to ensure continued production and uninterrupted supply of finished products to consumers. "It is extremely important that the guidelines issued by the Centre are properly communicated to authorities across states and to the local police as well. Proper implementation of these guidelines on the ground would ensure seamless movement across states and enable timely delivery of these essential products to end-consumer households across India," Khan added.

Manpower shortage is another big challenge FMCG companies are facing across their different functions. "During my interactions with FMCG companies, I have found

that labour shortage is a big issue. They need labour in their production units, for loading and unloading at the units as well as at the distribution centres," said Pinakiranjan Misra, partner and national leader, consumer products and retail, EY India. Availability of drivers who can carry goods in heavy-duty trucks also is a challenge.

Meanwhile, in a bid to ensure supplies to the end consumer, some FMCG companies have partnered with delivery platforms like Dunzo, Swiggy and Domino's Pizza for last mile delivery. Britannia, ITC and Marico have announced such partnerships. But that solves only one part of the supply chain problem.

SHORT TAKES

Japan shelves Oly flame display

Tokyo: The Olympic flame will be removed from display in Japan, officials said Tuesday, as the country braces for a state of emergency due to the coronavirus that also forced the historic postponement of Tokyo 2020. It had been on public display in the northeastern Fukushima region since last week, but Japanese Olympic organisers decided to shelve it as coronavirus cases climb in the country. The ill-fated flame, lit in Greece, arrived in Japan on March 20 for a torch relay originally scheduled to start six days later and climax at the Olympics opening ceremony on July 24. But the raging pandemic prompted the first postponement of the Games in peacetime, with the opening ceremony now slated to take place on July 23, 2021. To keep the Olympic spirit alive in Japan, local organisers decided to maintain the flame in a lantern and display it in Fukushima. — AFP

British Open off, first since WW 2

London: The British Open has been cancelled for the first time since World War II due to the coronavirus. The 149th Open was scheduled to take place at Royal St George's Golf Club in Kent in July. But with the pandemic ripping the 2020 sporting schedule to shreds, the event has become the first of the sport's four majors to be cancelled this year. Golf's oldest major will now be hosted at the same Sandwich venue in July 2021. "The Open was due to be played in Kent from 12-19 July but it has been necessary to cancel the championship based on guidance from the UK Government, the health authorities, public services and the R&A's advisers," organisers R&A said in a statement on Monday. St Andrews will still host the 150th British Open, but a year later than scheduled in 2022. — AFP

TT Worlds from September 27

Lausanne: The world championships of table tennis, originally scheduled for March 2020, will now be held from September 27 to October 4, the world governing body of the sport ITTF announced on Tuesday. Originally due to take place between March 22-29 in Busan, an emergency ITTF Executive Committee meeting had proposed provisional dates of June 21-28 while maintaining that further back-up plans may be required if the pandemic persisted. "On 29 March 2020, the ITTF Executive Committee held a follow-up meeting to confirm that new dates would be announced for the Hana Bank 2020 World Team Table Tennis Championships, in light of the fact that all currently planned ITTF events and activities are suspended until 30 June 2020," said the ITTF in a statement. — PTI

FIGHT CORONA WITH POSITIVE MINDSET: GOPI

New Delhi: The job losses and pay cuts are "bitter pills" to swallow but common man still needs to figure out ways to stay physically and mentally fit even as Covid-19 pandemic wreaks havoc, feels chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand. Gopichand, who recently completed his three-week isolation after coming from All England Championships in UK, said sports will be a part of this global meltdown but urged people to fight it. "I think world is going through a lot and everybody's careers are important for them, whether you are a student, a journalist or a sports person. But this lockdown is in place for a specific reason and I think we should follow it. It is definitely going to hurt every segment of the population not sports alone. We need to stay positive and keep ourselves mentally fit," Gopichand said. — PTI

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Oz go down under

Clarke says players bent backwards for IPL favours

Sydney, April 7: Australian cricketers "sucked up" to India and Virat Kohli by holding back on verbal sledging to protect lucrative Indian Premier League deals, according to former Australia captain Michael Clarke. Clarke said players were "too scared" to play a normal game against India because of the influence of the world's wealthiest cricket tournament. "Everybody knows how powerful India are in regards to the financial part of the game, internationally or domestically with the IPL," Clarke said on Sky Racing television. "I feel that Australian cricket, and probably every other team over a little period, went the opposite and actually sucked up to India. "They were too scared to sledge Kohli or the other Indian players," he said, referring to the verbal sparring that often takes place on the pitch. Australian players have attracted big money since the IPL started in 2008. Pacesman Pat Cummins is the most expensive overseas star this year with Kolkata Knight Riders paying \$2.17 million. The contest has been delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic and the league must announce soon whether it will be held at all. The league was due to feature top internationals including England's Ben Stokes and David Warner of Australia. Clarke, who played for the now-defunct Pune Warriors in 2012, said Australian players coveted the million-dollar deals on offer. "The players were like: 'I'm not going to sledge Kohli, I want him to pick me for Bangalore so I can make my \$1 million for my six weeks,'" the former Australian skipper said. "I feel like that's where Australia went through that little phase where our cricket became a little bit softer or not as hard as we're accustomed to seeing," Clarke added. The league is a huge revenue earner for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and is estimated to generate more than \$11 billion for the Indian economy. — AFP



Australia's One-Day International captain Aaron Finch (left) and David Warner (right) listen as Indian captain Virat Kohli speaks during the recent series in Australia.

Bhaji backs IPL without fans

Mumbai, April 7: Veteran off-spinner Harbhajan Singh says he won't mind an IPL played in empty stadiums but the event should go ahead when the Covid-19 pandemic is brought under control as several livelihoods are dependent on the it. "Spectators are important, but if the situation arises, I don't mind playing without them. Yes, as a player I won't get the vibe, but this will ensure that every fan will get to watch IPL on their TV," Harbhajan, who plays for Chennai Super Kings, told Star Sports' Cricket Connected. "We will have to be cautious about everything and should prioritise the safety of the players by ensuring that the match venues, team hotels, flights are properly sanitised. A lot of lives are on line so we should organise IPL when everything is fine," he added. The BCCI has suspended the IPL till April 15 but the tournament is increasingly looking unlikely. "I miss matches the most, was hoping that I would get to play 17 matches (including finals) after a year's gap. I miss our visits to the ground, the hordes of fans waiting to greet us, the bikes that used to ride along our bus and am sure that every fan is missing this as well," Harbhajan said. He is keeping himself fit for the league if happens. — PTI

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE IS BIG, HOPE IT CAN BE HELD THIS YEAR: BUTTLER

London, April 7: Indian Premier League is "massive" in terms of stature and it is a "big shame" that it cannot be held at the moment due to the Covid-19 pandemic, said star England batsman Jos Buttler, who is expecting the cash-rich event to be slotted later in the year. Buttler, who plays for Rajasthan Royals, underlined the importance of a tournament like IPL. "I don't know any more than you know about when IPL would be played or people talking about whether it can be pushed back. At the moment, everything is quite indefinite as no one knows how long it will last. So it can't be decided at the moment when it could or could not happen," Buttler was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. Buttler, who made massive strides as

a white ball player after a few seasons of IPL, spoke about the impact of not having an IPL and the effect it could have on revenue. "As for the stature of the tournament, it's a massive, massive tournament. Revenue that is involved in IPL is massive. It is a very important competition to cricket and it's a big shame that it's not going ahead or whether it does have the way to push it in the schedule and allow it," he said. However, IPL pushed back later in the year could well mean that some of the top players could miss the tournament due to their bilateral commitments. "Of course, that might mean certain players might be unavailable. They will have to work through as the situation unfolds," he concluded. — PTI

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— HARBHAJAN SINGH
Chennai Super King player

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fan is missing this as well," Harbhajan said. Harbhajan said he is keeping himself fit for the league if happens.

"I hope that IPL happens soon, till then I will keep myself fit," quipped the 39-year-old veteran of 103 Tests. — PTI

English clubs face the heat

London, April 6: Premier League clubs are facing a backlash after Liverpool tapped into public funds during the coronavirus pandemic while Fifa on Monday urged players and clubs to reach agreement over wage reductions. English top-flight clubs, among the wealthiest in the world, have come under intense scrutiny, with government ministers warning bosses and players they should "think carefully" over their next moves. The highest-paid Premier League players such as Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea and Manchester City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne command eye-watering salaries, reportedly nearing 20 million pound (\$25 million, 23 million euros) a year. Even the average salary for a Premier League footballer is more than 3 million pound a year. European champions Liverpool, who recorded pre-tax profits of 42 million pound in February, announced their decision to furlough some non-playing staff on Saturday, becoming the fifth Premier League club to do so. "Clubs, players and owners should be thinking very carefully about their next steps. Leaving the public purse to pick up the cost of furloughing low-paid workers, whilst players earn millions and billionaire owners go untouched is something I know the public will rightly take a very dim view of," Oliver Dowden, a culture and sports minister said. — AFP



Liverpool's Virgil Van Dijk (left) vies for the ball with Manchester City's Sergio Aguero during their English Premier League match in this file photo.

Spanish league not to resume before June

Madrid, April 7: The president of the Spanish football league says he is not contemplating returning to action before the end of May. The country is expected to remain under lockdown until April 26. Javier Tebas says other scenarios are also being studied. They include having the European competitions restarting only by the end of June and not conflicting with the domestic leagues. Tebas says it is very likely the league will

restart with games in empty stadiums and that matches in venues with reduced capacity will also eventually be an option. The league president says it has been "impossible" to reach a deal with players on the salary reductions needed to reduce the financial impact of the crisis but he expects the majority of the clubs to reach agreements with players. Meanwhile, South Korea's professional baseball league says it hopes to start practice

games between teams on April 21 before possibly opening the season in early May. The Korea Baseball Organisation says the plans are contingent on the country's coronavirus caseload continuing to slow. The KBO will advise players to wear face masks in locker rooms and require them to download smartphone apps to report their daily health status to league officials. — AP

FRESH BRIBERY CHARGES ON FIFA 2018, 2022 WCs

New York, April 7: Two former executives with US media giant Fox were charged with corruption, bank fraud and money-laundering on Monday as US federal prosecutors shed fresh light on the scandal-tainted bidding war for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. Former 21st Century Fox employee Hernan Lopez, 49, and Carlos Martinez, 41, face charges along with 65-year-old Gerard Romy, who worked for Spanish media conglomerate Imagina. The three men are accused of paying millions in bribes to officials from CONMEBOL and CONCACAF. The charges allege the bribes were paid in exchange for lucrative television rights contracts for regional competitions, the Copa America and qualifying games for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. The case forms part of the wide-ranging 2015 corruption scandal that left world governing body FIFA in turmoil and led to the downfall of president Sepp Blatter. — AFP

● **Two former executives with US media giant Fox were charged with corruption, bank fraud and money-laundering for the scandal-tainted bidding war for 2018 and 2022 World Cups.**

CORONA CONTRIBUTION

Gavaskar, Pujara play their parts

New Delhi, April 7: The legendary Sunil Gavaskar on Tuesday donated ₹59 lakh, while Test regular Cheteshwar Pujara also made an unspecified contribution to the CARES fund, joining the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic which has claimed over 100 lives in India. Gavaskar, who is now a sought after commentator and analyst of the game, did not reveal the contribution himself but a source close to him confirmed after former Mumbai skipper Amol Mijundar tweeted the same. "Just heard that SMG has donated 59 lakhs towards covid relief fund. 35 to @PMcaresFunds n 24 lakhs to @CMOMaharashtra. Thumbs up superb gesture Sir," Mijundar said. Pujara, on his part, thanked all the front-line warriors including doctors, para medical staff, and police, who are doing selfless service at this critical juncture. "My family & I have contributed our bit to the CARES Fund and the Gujarat CM Relief Fund, and hope that you will to. "Every single contribution counts, so let us all do our bit and together we will certainly overcome. We would like to convey our deepest gratitude to all the front line warriors," Pujara stated. — PTI

Sportswomen give groceries to the needy

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 7
Sportswomen of the State got together to distribute groceries to the needy at the Lal Bahadur Stadium on Tuesday. Tennis player Sania Mirza's social service organisation Youth Feed India and shooter Esha Singh gave away items sufficient for one week to over 300 women from the slums at the Lal Bahadur Stadium Gate No.6, from 11 am to 12 noon. Telangana Sports Minister V. Srinivas Goud and Sports Authority of Telangana State chairman Allipuram Venkateshwar Reddy also took part in the distribution programme. Mr Reddy said the program will continue for the next five days, over which other sports personalities will take part in the distribution as follows: April 8: Budha Aruna (gymnastics); April 9: Sikki Reddy (badminton); April 10: Erra Dixitha (weightlifting); April 11: Mithal Raj (cricket); April 12: Saina Nehwal (badminton) and April 13: P. V. Sindu (badminton).

McLaren's Ron to drive NHS home

London, April 7: Former McLaren supremo Ron Dennis has created a scheme to supply a million free meals to workers in Britain's National Health Service during the coronavirus outbreak. Dennis said Monday his foundation would provide a budget of 1.5 million pounds (\$1.8 million, 1.7 million euros) after linking up with other organisations with the aim of supplying 1,000 meals a day to health workers. "I wanted a big solution to a big problem," Dennis told the BBC. "It is an amazing effort, which I think is reflective of my reputation. If I say 'I'm going to do something I do it,'" he added. The 72-year-old was inspired to act after a meeting with his family. His daughter, Dr Charlotte Hall, added: "We were talking about how, we as a charity, could help everyone in the current coronavirus crisis. "We can't help medically but we could perhaps make the situation just a bit more bearable — being in the hospital, taking away the stress of getting food, having something hot and nutritious to eat or having something to look forward to when you get home," she added.



Please don't go to sleep with an empty stomach. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to send me a private message. I will be more than happy to share whatever I have.
— NICK KYRGIOS
Australian tennis player

KYRGIOS SET TO SERVE FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY
Controversial tennis star Nick Kyrgios has offered to deliver food to people finding themselves hungry during the coronavirus lockdown, his latest charitable effort after spearheading sporting donations to help Australia's bushfire crisis. The Canberra-based Kyrgios, infamously outspoken and known for his fiery on-court antics, said he would personally drop food on doorsteps after Covid-19 restrictions closed down entire industries, forcing huge numbers of people out of work across Australia. "Please don't go to sleep with an empty stomach," Kyrgios, the world number 40, posted on Instagram late Monday. "Don't be afraid or embarrassed to send me a private message. I will be more than happy to share whatever I have. "Even just for a box of noodles, a loaf of bread or milk. I will drop it off at your doorstep, no questions asked!" he added in the post. — Agencies

BAGAN, EAST BENGAL JOIN FORCES WITH WORLD BODY

United Nations, April 7: India's two leading football clubs Mohun Bagan and East Bengal will join a global campaign by the United Nations and the World Health Organisation to encourage people to remain "active" as millions across the world stay home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The football clubs are among several from across the world that will join the #BeActive campaign launched on the UN International Day of Sport for Development and Peace to "encourage people to be #HealthyAtHome as the world comes together in the fight against Covid-19, today and every day." FIFA has joined forces with the two organisations in this campaign, which kicks off with Real Madrid CF, FC Barcelona, Liverpool FC and Manchester United FC asking football fans to set aside their rivalries and to come together to #BeActive in order to defeat the coronavirus. Other clubs, including Club Amrica, CD Guadalajara, Beijing Guoan FC, Shanghai Shenhua FC, Mohun Bagan AC, East Bengal FC, Melbourne City FC, Sydney FC, Auckland City FC, Team Wellington FC, CA River Plate, Olympique de Marseille, TP Mazembe, CR Flamengo and SE Palmeiras will also join the initiative in the coming days. — PTI