

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 9 APRIL 2020

## WEATHER

Max: 38°C  
Min: 24.1°C  
RH: 34%  
Rain: Nil  
Forecast: Cloudy sky, Rain or thundershowers likely  
Max/Min temp. 39/24°C

## CORONA COUNT

CASES (+704)  
DEATHS (+29)  
5,916 179  
covid19india.org

## STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+49)  
TS: 453 11  
(+34)  
AP: 348 04

## WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,468,830

## DEATHS

85,443

## COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

209

worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

Saravali: Uttarayana  
Tithi: Chaitra Bahula Dwitya till 12.41 am (Friday)  
Star: Swati till 12.17 am (Friday)  
Varjyam: 8 am to 9.25 am and 5.20 am to 6.47 am (Friday)  
Durmuhurta: 10.14 am to 11.04 am; 3.10 pm to 3.59 pm  
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
MURUGAN CALAMANN  
Shubham 14:44:1 AH  
PRAYERS  
Fajar: 5:04 am  
Zohar: 12:28 pm  
Asar: 4:38 pm  
Maghrib: 6:36 pm  
Isha: 7:45 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 6:30 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:03 AM  
MOONRISE TODAY 7:59 PM  
MOONSET TOMORROW 7:03 AM

## COUNTER POINT



Pstf Mask, sanitizer, hydroxychloroquine...

## IN BRIEF

### FM lets states borrow ₹3.21-cr

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry has allowed all states to borrow a cumulative ₹3.20 lakh crore from market between April-December. The move comes amid states' demand for higher funds from the Centre to meet expenses in dealing with Covid-19.

### I-T refunds up to ₹5L for taxpayer

New Delhi: The Income Tax department on Wednesday said it will immediately issue pending refunds up to ₹5 lakh, benefitting around 14 lakh taxpayers. The Centre will also issue pending GST and customs refunds of ₹16,000 crore to give relief to business entities.

### Indigo: No global flights till Apr 30

New Delhi: Amid the nationwide lockdown implemented to contain the spread of novel coronavirus in India, budget carrier Indigo said on Wednesday it is suspending its international flights till April 30. An India has already suspended domestic and international flights till April 30.

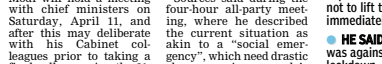
## NATION | 4

### Maharashtra, Delhi make face masks compulsory



## WORLD | 5

### Sanders drops out of 2020 US Prez race



## TABLOID

### 'We will bounce back'

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# Lockdown may be lifted in phases

## PM compares situation to 'social emergency' as 80% Oppn favours curbs beyond April 14

**DC CORRESPONDENTS NEW DELHI, APRIL 8**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a meeting with chief ministers on Saturday, April 11, and after this may deliberate with his Cabinet colleagues prior to taking a final call on easing the 21-day lockdown, due to be phased on April 14, in a phased manner, as most political parties with whom he deliberated on Wednesday wanted it extended, saying

it would not be advisable to lift it immediately. However, they left the decision to the Centre. Sources said during the four-hour all-party meeting, where he described the current situation as akin to a "social emergency", which need drastic changes in people's lifestyles in a post-coronavirus world, Mr Modi said all state governments and several experts have advised him not to lift the lockdown immediately.

**THE PRIME MINISTER** said all state governments and several experts have advised him not to lift the lockdown immediately.  
**HE SAID** consensus was against lifting the lockdown  
"Nobody is giving inputs on lifting the lockdown immediately, and the consensus which seems to be building is that doing so

isn't advisable and social distancing norms must be followed strictly," Mr Modi told the leaders. The Prime Minister, however, indicated he would hold discussions with the CMs again on the issue, with official sources saying the meeting will be held on April 11. After this, the Centre may take a final call. At the meeting, while around 80 per cent of Opposition parties were in favour of extending the

lockdown, they also sought financial relief and demanded that the MPLADS fund should be restored. Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad said he appealed to the PM to accept the suggestions in the letter sent to him by Congress president Sonia Gandhi that health workers and hospital staff be provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) on priority. Also,

testing should be made free and its capacity should be tripled. He also demanded that a targeted and sector-wise plan should be rolled out which would take into account physical distancing. The Congress said the task force formed by the Centre should include the chief ministers and demanded that MPLADS funds be used in the states where the MPAs from NCP supreme Sharad Pawar, who favoured an

easing of the lockdown, said the Tablighi Jamaat incident should not be commiserated, though what happened was a mistake. He added: "The media and social media should play a more proactive role, and avoid avoid actions that can lead to spreading hatred". Senior Congress leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay demanded the restoration of MPLADS and a relief package for West Bengal.

## COVID POSITIVES IN TS 453 WITH 49 FRESH CASES

**BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8**

The total number of coronavirus (Covid-19) positive cases touched 453 in Telangana on Wednesday, with the government saying 49 more persons tested positive for the disease since Tuesday night. However, the actual number of Covid-19 patients currently being treated is 397, while 45 were cured and discharged so far, while 11 people have succumbed to the disease.

The highest rise in cases in a single day were reported from Ranga Reddy district, where number of cases rose from 10 on Tuesday to 27 on Wednesday. The number of Covid-19 cases in Hyderabad rose from 150 to 161. In Nirmal, the increase was from four to ten. Health minister Etala Rajender told a press conference that each of the 1,100 and odd people from the state who attended the three-day Markez event in New Delhi were identified and samples collected from them for testing. Samples were also collected from 2,200 persons, who are either members of families of the state officials or close contacts.

**Page 2: No community spread, says Etala**

## Life in a lockdown



Motorists rush through the Alwal railway crossing during lockdown in Hyderabad on Wednesday. Many vehicles were seen playing on city roads in spite of restrictions by the police. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

# State bans spitting in public

**KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8**

Spitting in public places has been banned in Telangana state with immediate effect in wake of potential of this habit by some to contribute to spread of Coronavirus. The state government on Wednesday, issued orders to this effect, saying "habit of public spitting poses a serious threat to the

## CASES WILL FALL IN TELANGANA: ETALA

Health minister Etala Rajender said the number of Covid positive cases in the State will ease in the next few days  
**Interview on Page 2**

spread of such infections". The order says that spitting of paan, any chewable

tobacco or non-tobacco products, and sputum in public places and institutions is banned. The government said that Covid-19 pandemic has brought to fore importance of hygiene and cleanliness in both personal as well as public spheres. It is of utmost need to impose restrictions on unhealthy practices that may spread diseases.

**Page 2: Large droplets to spread coronavirus**

Spitting, chewing tobacco, smoking cigarettes, cigars, bidis and hookah are identified as potential hazards at normal times, but during the Coronavirus emergency, they can also facilitate spread of Covid-19. The oral system of the body is active during these acts.

**Page 2: Large droplets to spread coronavirus**

## Brazil Prez compares HCQ to Sanjeevani

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 8**

Requesting the supply of the anti-malarial drug Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) to fight against Coronavirus, Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro — in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi — has compared HCQ to the Sanjeevani herb in Ramayana that Lord Hanuman brought to save Lakshmana's life. Brazil seems to have

become the second country after the United States to seek HCQ from India at the top Presidential level. In his letter to PM Modi, Bolsonaro stated, "Just as Lord Hanuman brought the holy medicine from the Himalayas and (just as) Jesus (Christ) healed those who were sick and restored the sight to Bartimeu, India and Brazil will overcome this global crisis by joining forces and sharing blessings for the sake of all peoples."

## Centre directs states to act on black marketers

**S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8**

The Central government has directed all state governments to take serious action against black marketers of essential commodities and medicines during the lockdown. A circular issued by Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla said, "offences under Essential Commodities Act are criminal offences and may result in imprisonment of seven

years or fine or both." The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said its earlier orders under the Disaster Management Act have allowed manufacture, production, transport and other related supply-chain activities in respect of essential goods like food-stuff, medicines and medical equipment. However, there are reports of loss of production due to various factors, especially reduction in labour supply. "In this situation, there

is a possibility of inventory building, hoarding and black marketing, and lead to rise in prices of essential goods. State governments are advised to take urgent steps to ensure availability of essential goods, invoking provisions of Essential Commodities Act," it said. The states can take various measures, including fixing of stock limits, capping of prices, enhancing production and inspection of accounts of dealers.

## HUMAN | DISINTEREST | Seven cases of cocker spaniel, Doberman, Alsatian, Labrador, Pomeranian left behind at GHMC

# Owners abandon high breed pets fearing Covid

**MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8**

Some pet owners have been abandoning their pets fearing that Coronavirus could spread from animals to them. Call it inhuman or inhumane or cruel, several well educated and influential persons in society said that there was no need to panic about stray animals, as the corporation has been giving Corona

vaccine for over 30 years in the city. Several complaints have been pouring in from several sections of society that residents living in prime residential areas like Jubilee Hills, Banjara Hills, Gachibowli, Kukatpally, Madhapur and others have been inhumanly abandoning pet animals. Two pets in Patancheru and Kukatpally have lost their lives fighting with stray dogs in the last few days. Taking a serious note of the trend, GHMC officials said that abandon-



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ing pets is a criminal offence according to the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI). However, the GHMC, fearing influential persons who have lot of clout, have not booked any cases against the offenders. A senior GHMC official, working in the veterinary wing, told Deccan Chronicle that the Humane Society International (HSI), one of the world's largest animal protection

organisations, in their report said that there has been no evidence that Covid-19 can be transmitted from pets to humans. He said that as per HSI report, that there is little evidence that dogs and cats contract Covid-19. However, the official said that though Covid-19 can be transmitted from human to animals, there have been few cases reported only in China and

## UP seals 15 dists, Delhi cuts off 20 hotspots, toll 179

**VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 8**

India on Wednesday reported 704 fresh cases of novel coronavirus (Covid-19) in one day, taking the total figures to 5,916 cases, with 179 deaths overall. The total number of active cases are 5,230 while 507 people have recovered from the virus so far as per covid19india.org, a crowdsourced website that updates the numbers frequently. Among those who tested positive Wednesday today is film producer Karim Morani, days after his daughter Zoya and Shaza were also found positive. In a desperate bid to check the virus' spread, several states have started adopting "ruthless" and stringent cluster containment" measures like "geographic quarantine" by adopting the so-called "Bhilarva model". Uttar Pradesh, with 343 cases (including 11 new ones), said it would totally seal off "hotspots" in 15 districts from Wednesday midnight till April 15. People there would not be allowed to step out of their homes for any reason, and all essentials will be home-delivered. Vehicle movement will be banned. The hotspots include 22 clusters in Agra, 13 in Ghaziabad, 12 each in Noida and Kanpur, seven in Meerut and four each in Varanasi, Saharanpur and Maharajganj, Shamli, Bulandshahr, Firozabad and Basti. There are three hotspots each, and one each in Bareilly and Sitapur. Lucknow, the state capital, has eight major and four minor clusters. Delhi to seal it would seal 20 hotspots in areas like Nizamuddin, Sadar Bazaar, Dilshad Garden, Malviya Nagar, Sanjay Vihar and Gandhi Park. The ongoing lockdown was to end on April 14, but Punjab has already announced a statewide curfew till April 30.

## SC TELLS PRIVATE LABS TO MAKE COVID TESTS FREE

**PARMOOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 8**

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed that all tests relating to Covid-19 by government or private be made free. Giving the direction, a bench of Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice S. Ravindra Bhat said that all the tests "whether in approved government Laboratories or approved private Laboratories shall be free of cost", and asked the Centre to issue necessary instructions to this effect. It said the question of whether the tests are to be made free or private be made free. Describing doctors as "warriors" who must be "protected", the SC said that government should invite suggestions on the way forward in the fight against the deadly virus which has taken a plea on PPEs filed by Dr Jerry Banait, a Nagpur-based doctor.

Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot has sought a phased withdrawal, and Karnataka too wants lifting of the lockdown in districts that are free of the infection. Maharashtra, with 1,018 cases, is still the epicentre of the virus, with the highest number of deaths (64). Three more persons tested positive for Covid in the Dharavi area of Mumbai, taking the count in the densely-populated slum to 10. Health ministry officials said a door-to-door survey was being done in a 35 sq.km. area in Pune Central and Kondhwa, those with comorbidities were being scanned to see if they contracted an infected patient.

**Page 4: States spraying sanitizers on roads**



**IN BRIEF**

**Sahayam offers tele-counselling**

**Hyderabad:** Sahayam, the Osmania University's psychological counselling centre, will be offering free tele-counselling to those experiencing mental stress in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Sahayam incharge director C. Beena said 15 psychology experts will conduct counselling on cognitive, behavioural and emotional reactions. The free service will be available from Monday to Friday from 10 am to 8 Sahayam can be reached on the following numbers: 10 am to 12 noon 9848355305; 2 pm-4 pm 7674901954; 4pm-6 pm 8297976773; 6 pm 8 pm 9573027033. They can also be reached via email at ahayamou@gmail.com.

**JNTU-H assures regular salaries**

**Hyderabad:** Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad (JNTU-H), has assured regular payment of full salaries despite the lockdown subject to Covid-19. The university also clarified that there will no terminations within the faculty. There will, however, be no new appointments to the faculty during the lockdown period, a letterhead issued by JNTU-H stated.

**CBSE starts skill education courses**

**Hyderabad:** Pushing the centre's objective of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) franchise scheme, CBSE has decided to introduce new skill courses from classes 6-11 for the upcoming session 2020-21. The board, in a circular, announced that a skill subject may be offered as an additional sixth subject along with the existing five compulsory subjects at the secondary level. At the higher secondary level, the schools would offer at least one or more skill-based subject as an elective subject.

**CONG PLAYS POLITICS OVER COVID: TALASANI**

**REDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8**

Animal Animal husbandry minister, Talasani Srinivas Reddy on Wednesday slammed Congress leaders arguing that they are making false allegations against the government only for political survival. Taking to reporters at media point in the assembly premises, he said that the entire country is witnessing the measures taken by Chief Minister, K. Chandrababhan Rao, to prevent spread of coronavirus in the state, but Congress leaders are either unable to see the forest for the trees or they are just the CM is getting appreciation from the people. He said "It is unfortunate that some media houses are also misguiding the people with their false propaganda against the TRS government. While the Congress leaders were there all these days, he said that they suddenly appeared before the media to do a government speaking nonsense against the CM for their political survival.

**FOLLOW RULES OF LOCKDOWN, URGES BHAGWAT**

**JAYENDRA CHATHANAYA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8**

Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat has reiterated his appeal to people about not venturing out during the lockdown from home. A three-year-old boy and an 18-month-old baby girl contracted coronavirus in Pahadishareef. The commissioner said, "Cases of coronavirus are increasing by the day within Rachakonda limits. A three-year-old boy and an 18-month-old baby girl from Pahadishareef area have been tested positive though they maintain the spread of virus, people must follow the lockdown rules. Those advised home quarantine should stay indoors for 21 days without exception," he underlined. "To implement the lockdown strictly, Rachakonda police has started using drone cameras to monitor movement of people. Officials in the area have been instructed to check cases that will be booked against those who violate the lockdown rule. He also inaugurated a disinfection camp at Rachakonda police headquarters in Nerredmet area on Wednesday.

**Distancing goes for a toss**



Beneficiaries of free rice keep their belongings in the social distance marking rings and sit in the shade and wait at LB Stadium on Wednesday. — S. SURENDER REDDY

**UNANI HOSPITAL DISCHARGES 205 TESTED COVID-VE**

**ATHER MOIN | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8**

The district administration on Wednesday started discharging the 205 patients suspected of being Coronavirus (Covid-19) positive from the Government Nizamia General Hospital (Unani), Charminar, who were brought here for testing and kept under quarantine. After their Covid tests came negative, they are being discharged. Additional director, AYUSH, and principal, Nizamia Tibbi College, Mohammed Ahsan Farooqui said that 240 suspected Covid patients have been admitted here. Most of them had attended the Tablighi Jamaat's Markaz in Nizamuddin in Delhi. All patients admitted here tested negative. The Farooqui said that the process of discharging of about 205 patients has started today evening, which will continue till midnight, as patients are being discharged in batches. These patients have completed the first spell of quarantine. Some of them spent it either at their homes or at other hospitals. The remaining patients will be discharged tomorrow, he said. All patients being discharged have been instructed to undergo home quarantine till April 21 and have been stamped on their wrist as per national health emergency protocol. The first patient who was discharged from the Unani Hospital belongs to Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Anees Ahmed said he had come to Hyderabad with other Jamaat members from Ghaziabad and was staying at a mosque in Hakeemulla. He said that as per schedule, he was to return on April 15, but authorities instructed him to remain quarantined for 15 days.

**NO COMMUNITY SPREAD, SAYS MINISTER**

**From Page 1**

Telangana, which has been recording a steady numbers of new Covid-19 cases over the past few days, might be looking forward to ending of case numbers in next few days. "We hope that once test results of all those who returned from the Markaz congregation organised by the Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi, as well as the close contacts are received, we will begin seeing new cases in single digits again," health minister Etala Rajendar said. Mr Rajendar said that there were no cases of community transmission reported for 15 days.

**COVID | STUDY**

**Companies in this part have higher propensity to adopt work-from-home practices**

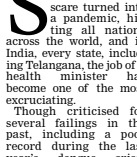
**ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8**

A study by the Indian Society of Business (ISB) has found that south India will face lesser disruption due to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) lockdown compared to rest of the country. According to researchers, companies in peninsular part of the country are better equipped to deal with prevailing condition, owing to overall higher propensity to adopt work-from-home practices or automate work. The research depended

**'Docs, nurses giving us hope we can beat Covid'**

**Biggest challenge is to stop spread of virus, says Etala**

**EXCLUSIVE**



**view with Balu Pulipaka of Deccan Chronicle.**

Soon after the coronavirus scare turned into a pandemic, hitting all nations across the world, and in India, every state, including Telangana, the job of a health minister has become one of the most exasperating. Though criticised for several failings in the past, including a poor record during the last year's dengue crisis caused by a prolonged monsoon, and early on in the fight against Coronavirus for underestimating the threat, dismissing it as a cold/cough viral fever that paracetamol can combat, Etala Rajendar, health minister of Telangana, has been doing an exceptional job in aiding Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao and municipal administration minister K Rama Rao in ensuring the state wins the battle against Covid-19. Cometh the moment, arises the leader, might well be the title in his profile. In an exclusive inter-

view with Balu Pulipaka of *Deccan Chronicle*, Rajendar said that Telangana's efforts in fighting the virus would not have been possible but for the dedication of doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers, police and officials from various other departments.

**Q: Has the nationwide lockdown been effective?**

**A:** Real problem appears to be in some urban areas, particularly in Hyderabad, where people do not appear to understand that we are fighting an invisible enemy that can strike anyone, anywhere. This despite people watching what has happened in China, and other countries over the past three months. We keep educating people. Only when there is no other option, will the choice of punishing reckless people comes into play.

**Q: How are you keeping medical staff**

**A:** Medical staff are making great sacrifices. They are the ones who have ensured that we do not end up praying for a miracle, and instead have hopes of us high that we are all relying upon. Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao, a great leader with vision, has motivated doctors and health staff to perform effectively, making it possible for us to control the spread of Covid.

**Q: What is our Covid-19 testing capacity? Is it adequate?**

**A:** We now test 700 to 800 samples a day at six different facilities. We ordered equipment to double this capacity. For every single we order, once we receive it, we will be able to add another 4,500 tests a day. We have identified about 100 clusters of the disease in the state and have enforced a very strict lockdown in those areas.

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**Large droplets to spread Covid**

**From Page 1**

There is a higher likelihood of large droplets coming out of a person, which will allow the harmful virus to spread. Since Covid-19 spreads through large droplets, these activities in public places is dangerous during these times, as it can enable the virus to spread faster and more easily. Smokeless tobacco products like gutka, zarda, khani, paan masala and areca nut increases production of saliva, followed by a strong urge to spit. Spitting in public places is dangerous during these times, as it can enable the virus to spread faster and more easily. Dr A. Srikanth, secretary, Indian Dental Association, Deccan branch, said, "Spit in public places, if it comes in contact with paper, handkerchiefs or other objects, will allow the virus to spread. Just as we have educated people about hand wash, hygiene and wearing of masks, it is important to spread message about spit too. Those who want to spit cannot do so on corners of roads, outside public toilets, trees or market areas. They have to understand that it is unhygienic, and dangerous."

Similarly, smoking in public spaces, hookah in bars, cafes, lounges hotels and restaurants must not be allowed as it is another potential threat. Smokers are immune compromised, and like diabetics, are at a higher risk to Covid-19 infection. Dr Ramana Prasad, pulmonologist, KIMS Hospital, explained,

"Covid's attack on lungs is very strong. Since smokers are compromised, they are more susceptible. They can also be asymptomatic carriers as they have immune compromised condition, and contact with them can lead to spread of the disease. Due to this reason, smokers are considered in red zone." Similarly, hookah is simultaneously smoked by several users and same mouthpiece is passed from person to person, which will increase risk of spread of virus. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has asked all states to tell people to not spit and smoke in public places. B Mukhopadhyay, chief executive, Voluntary Health Association of India, said, "We now have to create massive awareness about not spitting in public, like we have done with hygiene and hand wash. This awareness will go a long way in tackling not just covid but also other infectious diseases. Dr Namrata Mothar Rupani, dentist, Capture Life Dentistry, said, "The move of Telangana government to ban tobacco and smoking in public is very welcome. People must use the lockdown to consider long-cherished desire to quit and focus on health. Coronavirus is dangerous because so are smoking and other forms of tobacco. Smokers must quit now and use the lockdown to become healthier."

**Coronaviruses in cats, dogs mild**

**FROM PAGE 1**

He said coronavirus that dogs and cats commonly carry is not transmissible to humans.

"There has been vaccine for coronavirus, which attacks gastrointestinal system but Covid-19 virus affects the respiratory system. The coronavirus in dogs and cats are mild, the corona vaccines are considered non-essential and not routinely recommended. We have been giving such corona vaccines to stray animals and dogs. Some of the veterinary doctors have been practising the same for several years," he added.

**TIPS TO PETS OWNERS**

● When handling and caring for animals, basic hygiene measures should always be implemented. This includes hand washing before and after being around or handling animals, their food or supplies, as well as avoiding kissing, licking or sharing food.

● If they must look after their pet, they should maintain good hygiene practices and wear a face mask if possible. Animals belonging to owners infected with Covid-19 should be kept indoors as much as possible and contact with those pets should be avoided as much as possible.

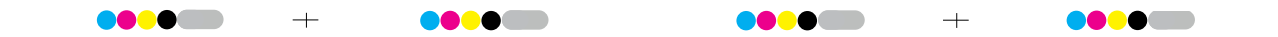
● Currently, there is no evidence that companion animals are playing a significant epidemiological role in this human disease. However, because animals and people can sometimes share diseases (zoonotic diseases), it is recommended that people with Covid-19 limit contact with companion and other animals until more info is known about the virus.

● When possible, people who are sick or under medical attention for Covid-19, should avoid close contact with their pets and have another member of their household care for their animals.

**PASSION PLAYS NOT TO BE HELD**

**SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, APR 8**

An annual event in the Catholic Church, Good Friday's *Passion Play of Christ's Crucifixion* has been cancelled. The play, a theatrical drama enacts the depiction of Christ's arrest followed by his crucifixion and resurrection. Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Band Lines, Hyderabad, which has been holding performances from 1910, called off the event this time. Even St. Joseph's Cathedral, Gunfoundry, said no to the enactment this year.





IN BRIEF

Medical, health staff felicitated

Hyderabad: Hyderabad city police commissioner Anjani Kumar felicitated Medical & Health staff of District Hospital, King Kothi, Hyderabad, as a mark of respect and appreciation for their 'supreme commitment in their relentless fight against Covid-19. Mr Kumar said, "We are dealing with a health crisis. Healthcare staff who are in the forefront in the war against covid-19 are doing a great job. It is all our responsibility to appreciate their services."

IAF helps reach vital aid

Hyderabad: Taking up cudgels against coronavirus, the Indian Air Force and air-aided medical supplies to state governments and supporting agencies to effectively combat the contagion particularly in remote areas. In the last few days, IAF has delivered essential medical supplies and commodities to several nodal points within Manipur, Nagaland and Gangtok in the north-eastern region; apart from the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. The air force deputed an aircraft on April 6 to airlift personnel and 3,500 kg medical equipment of CMR (Central Council of Medical Research) from Chennai to Bhubaneswar for setting up Covid-19 testing labs and facilities in Odisha.

Advocate booked for hate comment

Hyderabad: A social activist lodged a complaint with Hyderabad city police commissioner against an advocate for making derogatory comments against Islam and Quran. According to the complainant, Syed Wasif Hussain, he noticed an advocate B. Ram Mohan Reddy operating a Facebook Profile 'Telangana Yaqeen' in which he posted blasphemous content that insults Islam and their holy book and warrants stringent action.

Channel booked for false news

Hyderabad: A regional news channel in the city was booked for allegedly airing false news related to Covid-19 on Wednesday. According to Chaitanyapuri News, owned by K Satyanarayana Gupta, had reported that a meat shop owner at Chaitanyapuri had tested positive for Covid-19. On receiving information, police verified the facts and found it to be false news.

TS asks TS take on salary cuts

Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court asked the state government's position on a PIL complaining about the deferment of salaries for state employees. The PIL was taken under suo motu, based on a letter addressed by senior advocate, S. Saravjit Reddy, who claimed that the deferment of salaries was against the constitution. The High Court said that the deferment can be done only for punishment. He sought direction to strike down the government order through which 10 per cent of the salaries of all state government staff have been cut down due to the lockdown. The PIL was adjourned to April 17.

UoH STUDENTS OPPOSE RISE IN APPLICATION FEE

Hyderabad: The UoH Students Union has taken exception to the varsity's decision to double the application fees on Wednesday and demanded an immediate roll-back. Already, the rise in application fee for new admissions from the existing ₹25 to ₹50 for different categories. They also expressed dismay over the proposal to introduce new courses without revealing the fee structure for them. "At a time when the nation, and the world, is battling coronavirus pandemic and livelihood of several people have been affected drastically, an increase in the application fee would add to their misery. The University should instead lower the fee, which will facilitate a greater number of applicants," the letter said. The student body also reiterated their demand for the release of a prospectus.

GHMC identifies 12 Covid-19 clusters

Special attention is being given to sanitation and spraying of disinfectant in these clusters

MADHY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has set up 12 containment clusters to help combat the further spread of coronavirus (Covid-19), said commissioner D.S. Lokesh Kumar on Wednesday. The GHMC officials have set up containment clusters in Ramgopet, Shaikhpeth, Red Hills, Malakpet (Santosh Nagar), Chandrayangutta, Alwal, Moosapet, Kakatipally, Qutubullapur (Gajularamapuram), Mayurinnagar, Yousanguda and Chandanagar, given that these areas reported a total of 89 Covid positive cases so far. Special attention is being given to sanitation and spraying of disinfectant in these clusters, Mr Kumar said. Apart from this, a team consisting of health

and GHMC officials are going to each and every household to identify those who are symptomatic and getting them tested. "In these clusters, public movements is monitored and barricading has been done to keep check on public movement. Discussions have been held with Hyderabad city police commissioner Anjani Kumar," he said, adding that barricading and bandobust will continue. Out of 593 people who returned from Tabligi Jamaat's Markaz event in Nizamuddin in New Delhi, 63 people have tested Covid positive including 45 family members. Since they have all been identified and hospitalised, there is a good chance that coronavirus cases will decrease, he hoped. He said precautionary steps have been taken for safety of sanitation work-

ers. Masks are being supplied to all workers through zone commissioners, he claimed. Over 80,000 reusable cloth masks are getting ready stitched by SHG women, he said. "We are now on wearing a mask, gloves, and health kit will be made mandatory," he said, noting that for convenience of workers, 34 buses are being arranged. To maintain social distancing, volunteer will be appointed to manage crowd in each

LOKESH KUMAR, GHMC chief, further said that they have issued passes to 145 donors to distribute food in 400 locations across the city

Currently, nearly 27,000 GHMC sanitation workers are on the field without adequate health kits, which by Mr Kumar's own admission, will be supplied with them, at the earliest, in a week. From now on, wearing a mask, gloves, and health kit will be made mandatory, he said, noting that for convenience of workers, 34 buses are being arranged. To maintain social distancing, volunteer will be appointed to manage crowd in each

retreat over its mistaken adventure, the GHMC, through an order from additional commissioner on April 4, again "granted permission" to private charities to feed the poor, but were made to "give credit" to GHMC under the lockdown drives. On his part, the GHMC chief, conceded that around 17,000 food packets are being distributed by private individuals in 10 mobile vans, adding, "but are being monitored" by a special wing set up in the GHMC. Lokesh Kumar further said that they have issued passes to 145 donors to distribute food in 400 locations across the city. A junior official, claiming GHMC, on condition of anonymity said, "we are barely able to do a good job of feeding people with kits. It is subsidised food in normal times through

Annaapurna cefting. To take on the job of feeding the poor, a mistake during lockdown was a mistake. To save face, after realising our other ban on letting them do it," a volunteer, working on feeding nearly 50,000 people each day since the lockdown began, said, "the GHMC tried its best to stop our volunteers. They wanted to put GHMC stamps on our food packets. They violated even privacy norms and made calls to volunteers for some time. It is while year for these officials."

Duty calls



(Left) Police seen chasing the pillion rider of a two-wheeler who jumped off the vehicle and started running after they were asked to stop the vehicle at a checkpoint near RHSET near Tarnaka. (Right) Police warns motorists who came outside unnecessarily during the lockdown in Bahadurpura on Wednesday.



(Left) Police seen chasing the pillion rider of a two-wheeler who jumped off the vehicle and started running after they were asked to stop the vehicle at a checkpoint near RHSET near Tarnaka. (Right) Police warns motorists who came outside unnecessarily during the lockdown in Bahadurpura on Wednesday.

Health staffer at airport cured

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

One of three staffers of the health department who was deputed for screening of arriving passengers at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA), and had tested positive for coronavirus (Covid-19) in March, has now been cured and has been discharged. Two of his colleagues, who also later tested positive, are on their way to full recovery and are expected to be discharged soon, airport health officer for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Dr Anurag Meju, said on Wednesday. "The recovery of this patient, and the healing of his other two colleagues, again demonstrates that there is nothing to fear about coronavirus as a disease. Timely medical attention will help nearly everyone to recover fully. Anyone who has Covid-19 symptoms, should seek medical attention so they can keep themselves and their families safe," Dr Meju said. The health department staffer was found to be Covid-19 positive on March 23 but had placed himself under self-quarantine from March 23 itself. The staffer was the first official on duty at the airport to be tested positive for Covid-19, which not only helped this man but many other patients subsequently. "It was a great help that Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced ₹50 lakh assistance for health workers on the frontlines, including outsourced workers. This contributed to him, and his colleagues, finding additional courage in terms of safety and security of their families," Dr Meju said.

NO TESTS AT GANDHI, ONLY ADMISSIONS

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC HYDERABAD APRIL 8

Throughout Wednesday many individuals, who turned up at Gandhi Hospital for undergoing coronavirus tests, were turned away and asked to visit King Kothi government hospital. Gandhi Hospital — which is at the centre of the battle against the deadly virus in Telangana — will now be exclusive for Covid-19 positive patients. Beginning Wednesday, it has stopped conducting tests for the killer virus. Also, there will be no isolation wards for those who undergo swab tests and await their reports. Alarming as it may sound, the increasing number of positive patients in the state has led to this situation. Even the Centre has advised state to have hospitals exclusive for positive patients. Since morning, several individuals turned up at Gandhi Hospital to get themselves tested. But the staff told them that testing will not be done anymore there and referred them to King Kothi government hospital. Already, hospitalised, patients even argued with the staff but they were still sent to King Kothi hospital.

HC asks for reports of incidents of police hitting people in Hyd

VJUNJI YAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

Responding to the Wananparthi police brutality, wherein a person named Murali Krishna was beaten up by police for coming out on to the road during the lockdown period in front of his young son, who was seen begging and pleading with the police to not to beat his father, a division bench of the Telangana High Court comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauthan and Justice T. Anuramath Goud on Wednesday directed police department, to file a response report by April 16, 2020, furnishing details of the incident, along with action taken. The bench directed the home department about such incidents that have taken place in the state, when police performing duty during lockdown have beaten up people mercilessly. The bench was dealing with a PIL, based on a letter

addressed by P.G.V. Umesh Chandra, advocate, who brought incident to the notice of the High Court. Elaborating on police excesses during lockdown, including abusing people orally with filthy language, making them undertake physical punishments and beating them up with lathis and kicking them, the petitioner highlighted the Wananparthi incident. He brought to notice of the court various incidents and reports, wherein police had beaten people up.

Chief Justice Chauthan, after hearing contentions of petitioner Umesh Chandra, said that the police should "ensure they work well within rules" and should be reasonable. However, appreciating police services of the petitioner Umesh Chandra, said, "The Telangana police is doing a wonderful job during the nationwide lockdown. They are bound to exercise power against people who violate law. But, stray incidents like these," spoils their reputation."

TS accepts Modi's lockdown extension

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) parliamentary party on Wednesday told Prime Minister Narendra Modi, that the TRS and the Telangana government extend their full support for an extension of the nationwide lockdown beyond April 15. TRS leaders Dr K. Keshava Rao and Nama Nageshwara Rao, during the video conference the Prime Minister had with floor leaders of all political parties in the Rajya Sabha told him that the lockdown is the most effective tool to control the coronavirus outbreak. While pledging complete support from the party as well as the state government to him in the fight against Covid-19, they said that they demand that the centre must de-centralise both funds and operations in our education system, states rather than keeping them consolidated. During the video conference, Dr Keshava Rao said the nation must continue

the lockdown even though it comes at enormous costs as there is no alternative. While admitting that it was best of bad deals, he said, "If the lockdown is relaxed, the situation will worsen, especially in rural areas where there are poor healthcare facilities." Dr Rao felt that the notice of the PM that due to the lockdown, revenue collections in Telangana had fallen drastically and help from the centre is needed.

Dr Rao and Nama Nageshwara Rao asserted, "Preventing spreading of the epidemic must be our priority. We are aware of its adverse impact on our economy which can be dealt with, after we overcome this hurdle. Economic growth should not be prioritised at the cost of human lives." They brought to the notice of the PM that due to the lockdown, revenue collections in Telangana had fallen drastically and help from the centre is needed.

national education adopted digitisation in November 2018." "All the answer sheets are digitized. We are evaluating all the copies online in a random papers to evaluate. We don't have physical evaluating camps. We have a huge data of students which will help us in future. We are using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

2 accused in attack on cop arrested

DURGA PRASAD SUNUKU | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

Two accused who attacked a police constable for asking them to maintain social distance in front of a customer service point of a bank under self-quarantine from March 23, were arrested by the police on Wednesday. The accused, identified as Shaik Mohammed Ameeruddin and Shaik Saif Mohibuddin, police said that on last Saturday, the accused attacked the constable P. Pragasam Kumar while he was performing bandobast duty for crowd control and maintaining social distancing at customer service

point of a bank in Gulshan Iqbal colony. Mohd. Majeed, ACP Khammam, said, "The police constable was performing his duties and asked the accused to maintain social distance in front of a customer service point of a bank under self-quarantine from March 23. After few minutes they attacked him with a rod and hit him on head and chest, causing injury. The police constable was immediately shifted to nearby hospital for medical treatment and is said to be in stable condition. Chandrayangutta police has booked a case under the Epidemic Disease Act.

Education goes digital due to Covid-19 crisis

ONLINE | ACADEMICS

We are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in evaluation, says Navin Mittal

Education goes digital due to Covid-19 crisis. The Telangana government has adopted digitisation in November 2018. Speaking on the issue during a webinar on Wednesday, Mr Mittal said, "In the last few years, we have been working towards adopting digital technologies and market reform oriented processes in our education system. We have adopted many technologies in both higher education and technical education adopted digitisation in November 2018." "All the answer sheets are digitized. We are evaluating all the copies online in a random papers to evaluate. We don't have physical evaluating camps. We have a huge data of students which will help us in future. We are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in evaluation. We found that this is a very useful process and it has a very great impact in our days, AI will be incorporated in our whole system. All the teachers and education in various universities. Adding to that, the department has developed online teaching methods for students along with five new online courses for the students to take up," Mr Mittal added. "We have also asked our faculties to use digital libraries. Many of them are trying new things in our classrooms during the lockdown. We have also asked our faculties to use online teaching platform development. We are using the technology for employment for our students also," said Mr Mittal.



SHORT TAKES

PAK BOYCOTTS SAARC VIDEO CONFERENCE

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

Pakistan on Wednesday boycotted a video conference of senior trade officials of SAARC countries held to discuss the impact of travel restrictions and the larger Covid-19 situation on intra-regional trade despite having received an invitation.

New Delhi and Islamabad recently exchanged sharp war of words over the new domicile law by the Indian government in J&K.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "It was recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have a considerable adverse impact on trade in the SAARC region. In order for the countries to deal with the situation, it was agreed that new steps and means be jointly identified to sustain and expand the intra-regional trade until the normal trade channels are fully restored. The imperative need to maintain essential trade within the SAARC region was viewed as an important thrust area for favourable consideration."

DIDI BLAMES CENTRE FOR TJ EVENT IN DELHI

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, APRIL 8

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday squarely blamed the Centre for allowing the Tihar Singh Jamaat even to take place at Nizamuddin in New Delhi last month amidst strict actions due to Covid-19. Giving a clean chit to the participants of the religious congregation of spreading the deadly virus across the country, she underlined that a disease doesn't infect people by their religion.

"Neither the external affairs ministry nor the ministry of home affairs are with the state. Both are with the Central government. Many people gathered at Nizamuddin. It happened because it was allowed. It would have been otherwise had any action been taken earlier. Still our administration quietly acted within six hours after getting information although it reached us late. Some people are in jail. When a disease becomes pandemic, it strikes all irrespective of creed and religion without giving a chance like fire and flood," she said. "The Centre announced the total lockdown on March 24. But the outbreak was in January and the Nizamuddin event took place on March 13," she added.

East Central Railway Notice No. 01 of 2020-21 (Open)-Engg/DDU On line (through e-tendering) for the following work is invited by DRMC/Engg/DDU for and on behalf of the President of India from experienced and financially as well as technically sound contractors including those entities with the Railway, CPWD, BSNL, MNS, PWD and other public sector undertakings.



Priests wearing protective mask as a precautionary measure against the Covid-19 perform prayers at a temple on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti in Mumbai. - Rajesh Jadhav

Assam to release 75,000 people from quarantine

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 8

In what may be a major relief, the health department is contemplating to release more than 75,000 people from quarantine after completion of 14 days of observation period on Thursday in Assam while considering the option of conditional withdrawal of lockdown after April 14.

Informing that some of those in quarantine has shown any sign of being corona positive during the mandatory quarantine period, sources in the state health department said that majority of them followed the guidelines of the health department during the home quarantine. Admitting that necessity of testing all the 75,000 people in quarantine was not felt by the doctors, health department sources said that some of them with symptoms were tested but report was negative.

Assam government which has 28 corona positive cases so far was not in favour of extending the

complete lockdown after April 14 and proposed "conditional withdrawal of lockdown". Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "The state cabinet has decided that a complete lockdown will not be possible because if we extend the lockdown then next month the situation will not support many services like public distribution system. We have to relax the lockdown policy under which there will be relaxation in some areas and more or less our proposal is same with other states."

"On April 13 the state cabinet will meet again to decide what will be their course of action from April 15 onwards. We should not try to speculate what will happen... let us all keep trust on Prime Minister Narendra Modi," said the minister. In case there is withdrawal of the lockdown, the state has decided that it will not issue any guidelines of its own and instead will follow the instructions issued by the Centre. Mr Sarma adding, "Today the cabinet decided that Assam government will not issue any instructions or guidelines relating to the lockdown on its own because this is a central lockdown and not that of the state government. We are not even going to issue any instructions to the deputy commissioners, they have to implement the Centre's guidelines only if they are satisfied that social distancing is maintained. If the Centre allows opening of shops, the deputy commissioners have to first ensure that social distancing is maintained and then they can implement the central order."

Not wearing mask in Mumbai can now land you in a jail

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 8

In Mumbai, not wearing a mask at public places is now a punishable offence. In view of increasing positive cases in the city, the BMC chief Praveen Pardeshi has issued directives, which mention wearing of masks compulsory at public places. BMC chief Praveen Pardeshi has initiated the action under the Epidemic Diseases Act for the

prevention of containment of Covid-19. With nearly 700 patients, Mumbai has the highest number of positive cases in Maharashtra. Violating the BMC instructions will be punishable under Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code and will be strictly penalised. It may also lead to arrest and imprisonment, said civic officials. In a circular issued on Wednesday, Mr Pardeshi said that it

has been observed that wearing of face masks can reduce the spread of coronavirus substantially in persons coming in contact with each other. According to the BMC, wearing of masks in a public place is mandatory. Meanwhile, wearing face masks has been made compulsory for all staff and Secretariat — the seat of J&K government — and Leh district in the UT of Ladakh, officials said.

Saad to join probe after self-quarantine

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

Tablighi Jamaat chief Maulana Saad Kandhalvi will join the Crime Branch investigation in connection with the Nizamuddin incident, after his self-quarantine period of 14 days is over. On Wednesday it was suspected that the Maulana is traced through technical surveillance somewhere in Zakir Nagar area in Delhi. However, it is yet to be ascertained. Maulana's lawyer Tauseef Khan said he is currently under self-quarantine and will join investigation once the period of 14 days gets over. On Tuesday, Delhi Police's Crime Branch lodged an FIR against seven people, including the cleric, on a complaint by SHO Nizamuddin for

64,000 kg of decayed fish seized

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 8

Decayed, contaminated and formalin laced fish continues to be supplied and sold in Kerala despite lockdown with officials seizing 25,000 kg in Kochi on Wednesday. The food safety and health officials have seized 64,000 kg of contaminated fish during joint raids in the last two days. Meanwhile, the health officials have directed officials to adopt stringent measures to check the supply and sale of contaminated fish. The decayed fish is coming in from neighbouring states particularly Tamil Nadu. In many cases fish preserved for nearly two months using toxic chemicals, fish with maggots is being brought into the state. Due to lockdown

CHIEF MINISTER has directed officials to adopt stringent measures to check the supply and sale of contaminated fish. DECAYED FISH is coming in from neighbouring states, particularly TN.

fishermen are not able to venture into the sea and the demand for fish in Kerala is very high. Over 2,000 kg of decayed fish was seized from a boat in Thiruvananthapuram. In Alappuzha nearly 1,500 kg of contaminated fish was seized from a boat. The seized fish was destroyed by the officials. A patient who had a problem of blood clot in

MP invokes Esma to tackle Covid-19

CM issues ultimatum to Delhi attendees

RABINDRA NATH SINGH CHOUHARI | DC BHOPAL, APRIL 8

Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday invoked the Essential Services Management Act (Esma) amid spiralling Covid-19 deaths in the state. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhara took to Twitter to announce enforcement of Esma with immediate effect as coronavirus positive cases breached the 300-mark to touch 327 by Wednesday evening. "The government has implemented Esma with immediate effect with an objective to handling the Covid-19 outbreak in a better way and in the interest of the citizens", Mr Chouhan tweeted.

Cops attacked by mob in Indore

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, APRIL 8

A mob on Wednesday attacked a patrolling party in Indore for enforcing lockdown. This was the second such incident in the state in last one week. According to the police, a group of youths got angry when the patrolling party asked them not to violate the lockdown by gathering on the road. They had a heated exchange with the police-

men and later pelted stones at them after chasing them. However, the policemen managed to escape unhurt. The video of the attack on Wednesday went viral helping police to identify the miscreants. Seven persons were arrested in connection with the incident, police said. Last week, two cops sustained stabbing injuries in their hands when a mob attacked them with knives here for enforcing lockdown.

WB SAYS NO HOME DELIVERY OF LIQUOR

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, APRIL 8

Booze lovers' spirit went up and down in West Bengal on Wednesday after the news of the state government's move to allow the home delivery of liquor spread have before the government officials called it "fake". A purported message in a WhatsApp group of the cops in the city triggered the confusion. Earlier, Mr Chouhan squarely blamed the party for spreading virus in the state, particularly among the police personnel who have been in various places to quarantine them. "We will be booked for posing threat to security of the country if they violated the ultimatum", Mr Chouhan warned.

Mr Chouhan tweeted, "Earlier, Mr Chouhan squarely blamed the party for spreading virus in the state, particularly among the police personnel who have been in various places to quarantine them. We will be booked for posing threat to security of the country if they violated the ultimatum", Mr Chouhan warned. The message also hinted at the cops would issue delivery passes to the retailers from the local police stations after the liquor shop owners would approach their respective local police stations for obtaining the passes with one shop getting only three delivery passes at a time, sources revealed. Later senior excise and police officials clarified that no such order has been issued by the government. They also called it a rumour.

The liquor shops along with bars have been closed across the city and state since March 21 when restrictions came into force on the eve of 'Janata curfew' before the lockdown got under way from March 24. Earlier, the West Bengal government said it is in favour of the extension of the curfew to a lock-down, minus the "excesses". This was indicated by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi hinted at lockdown extension.

In another significant development, the Chief Minister issued an ultimatum to the attendees of last month's religious congregation in Nizamuddin who have been asked to report to the local health centres within 24 hours. "We will be booked for posing threat to security of the country if they violated the ultimatum", Mr Chouhan warned. Earlier, Mr Chouhan squarely blamed the party for spreading virus in the state, particularly among the police personnel who have been in various places to quarantine them. "We will be booked for posing threat to security of the country if they violated the ultimatum", Mr Chouhan warned.

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States spraying sanitisers on roads

From Page 1

In Rajasthan too, similar containment measures are in place in Jaipur and Jodhpur. Several states started spraying sanitiser on roads, parks and colonies and made wearing of masks mandatory. In Karnataka, 1.21.271 done so far, of which 13,345 were done on Tuesday. Health officials fear the numbers will rise further and stringent containment measures need to be put in place. "We are dealing with a huge challenge. An asymptomatic carrier of the infection may pass it on to others. The total behavioural changes are needed," a senior health ministry official said.

According to official information, over 20 migrant workers returned to Odisha before the lockdown started. Of the 42 positive cases, coastal districts have recorded 41 cases. The footprint of Covid-19 is seen in as many as six of the nine coastal districts. While Khurda district with 34 cases has emerged as the epicentre in Odisha, other hotspot coastal districts are Puri (1), Bhadrak (3), Jagpur (1), Kendrapada (1) and Cuttack (1). Though Odisha has recorded only single Covid-19 death till date, the mortality rate, however, is estimated at 2.4 per cent against the national average of 2.9 per cent. Even with a lone death till date, the state figures among the top states in the mortality rate graph nationally. According to official information, over 20 migrant workers returned to Odisha before the lockdown started.

tered against local Congress MIA Siddharth Kishwaha and seven of his associates for violating section 144 of Indian Penal Code by staging a demonstration in Naini Basti area in Satna late on Tuesday evening. Meanwhile, eight fresh cases of coronavirus positive were reported in Bhopal on Wednesday taking the tally of confirmed cases in the city to 92. The total number of confirmed cases in the state also mounted to 327 by evening. Indore continued to top the chart of Covid-19 positive cases in the state with the confirmed cases spiking to 173 on Wednesday. The death toll due to virus infection in the state also mounted to 25. Meanwhile, Former Chief Minister and Congress veteran leader Kamal Nath on Wednesday prescribed Hanuman Chalisa recitation to escape

scourge of deadly coronavirus, taking the intelligence here by surprise. In a statement issued here, Mr Nath, known as an ardent devotee of Lord Hanuman, exhorted his party men to recite 'Hanuman Chalisa' to escape the wrath of deadly coronavirus. He issued the message for the party men on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti. "Recite Hanuman Chalisa in your houses to protect yourself from Covid-19", he said. His recommendation of Hanuman Chalisa recitation has been the intellectual by surprise. "Mr Nath is known as a progressive minded and intellectual person. His statement prescribing Hanuman Chalisa recitation to keep away from coronavirus has really surprised us", B.Garg, an eminent doctor here, said.

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Advertisement for NAINI SURESH REDDY, a medical professional. Includes contact information and a small portrait photo.

Advertisement for SAD DEMISE, a medical professional. Includes contact information and a small portrait photo.

Advertisement for ASHKA PAINTS & FRIENDS, featuring a portrait of G.A. BHARATHI and contact information.

Advertisement for FOND REMEMBRANCE & LOVING MEMORY, featuring a portrait of MANI CHATRUJMAL BAJAJ and contact information.



IN BRIEF

Explosion on road kills five

Diyarbakir: Five civilians were killed on Wednesday when their car was hit in a bomb attack in Turkey's southeast, local officials said. The governor of Kurdish-majority Diyarbakir province said the attack was carried out in the early hours by "members of the PKK terror organisation", referring to the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party. The PKK has fought an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984 and is listed as a terrorist group by Turkey and its Western allies.

Taliban kills 7 Afghan civilians

Kabul: At least seven Afghan civilians were killed when the Taliban attacked security forces in northern Balkh province, local officials said Wednesday. The insurgents abducted the civilians on Tuesday afternoon in the district of Shogara and later killed them, according to Sayed Arif Iqbal, the local police chief. There was no immediate confirmation from the Taliban that they were behind the attack in Balkh. The violence comes as the Taliban have said their peace deal with the US, signed at the end of February in Doha, was nearing a breaking point, blaming Washington for alleged violations of the deal that the US denies.

Death warrant for Mujibur killer

Dhaka: A Bangladeshi court on Wednesday issued a death warrant against a former military captain for his involvement in the 1975 coup in which the country's founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated. Abdul Majed, who was arrested in Dhaka on Tuesday after hiding in India for nearly two-and-a-half decades, was brought to court from the jail in heavy security. Dhaka's District and Sessions Judge Helaluddin Chowdhury issued the death warrant with Supreme Court's special permission during the ongoing Covid-19 holidays. The court was presided over by the secutor Abdulah Abu said.

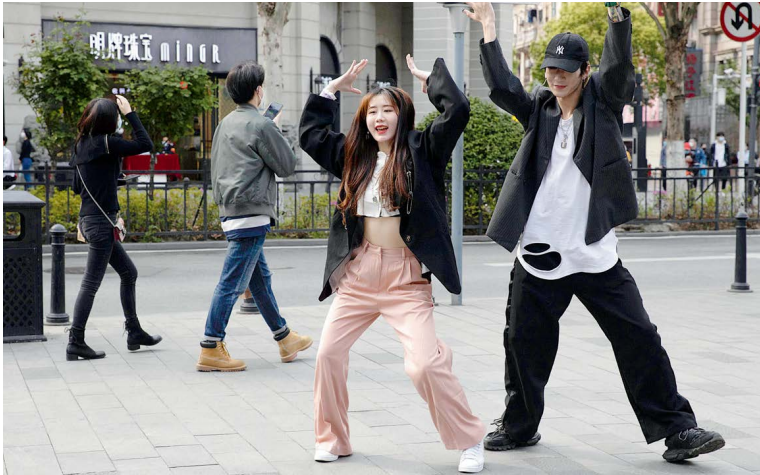
S. Africa min defies lockdown, on leave

Johannesburg: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Wednesday placed on special leave a minister seen launching a fringe party in violation of the coronavirus lockdown. Ramaphosa has ordered a two-week national lockdown to try to brake the virus, which has infected 1,749 people, killing 13 of them, according to the official tally. But a picture posted on Instagram on Sunday showed Communications and Digital Technologies Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams having lunch with five other people at the home of a former deputy minister earlier that day. "President Ramaphosa has placed the Minister on special leave for two months," the presidency said in a statement. Ramaphosa has accepted the minister's apology for the violation but was unmoved by mitigating factors she tendered," it said.

SPACE CREW SET FOR LAUNCH AMID PANDEMIC

Almaty, April 8: A three-man space crew finished preparations on Wednesday for a mission to the International Space Station, which is going ahead despite the coronavirus pandemic. Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner of Russia's Roscosmos space agency and NASA's Chris Cassidy will blast off from Kazakhstan for a six-week mission at 08:05 GMT Thursday. But with journalists and relatives unable to travel to Baikonour due to restrictions related to Covid-19, the traditional farewell press conference broadcast by Roscosmos had a more distant and sombre feel. "Instead of talking only to some cameras we would be talking to some people right now," said Cassidy, who is readying for his third stint in space. Cassidy, 50, admitted that the crew was "affected" by their families not being able to be in Baikonour for their blast-off to the ISS. "But we understand that the whole world is also impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Quarantine and isolation from the rest of the world are not new habits for astronauts.

Wuhan shakes it up



Chinese youth record a dance routine on the streets of Wuhan in central China's Hubei province on Wednesday. Streets in the city of 11 million people were clogged with traffic and long lines formed at the airport, train and bus stations as thousands streamed out of the city to return to homes and jobs elsewhere. Yellow barriers that had blocked off some streets were gone, although the gates to residential compounds remained guarded. — PTT

US: India gave us 29 mn HCQ pills

Washington, April 8: A sizeable chunk of the 29 million doses of hydroxychloroquine bought by the US to combat the coronavirus pandemic is from India. President Donald Trump has said as he acknowledged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "great" when he sought his help to obtain the sale of the anti-malaria drug to treat the growing number of Covid-19 patients in America.

Trump and Prime Minister Modi spoke over the phone last week. During the call, Trump requested Modi to lift the hold on the American order of hydroxychloroquine, of which India is the major producer. Hydroxychloroquine has been identified by the US Food and Drug Administration as a possible treatment for the Covid-19. Trump has given initial positive results. Trump has bought more than 29 million doses of hydroxychloroquine. — PTT

WHO denies it sided China, slams func cut

Terms Covid-19 outbreak in Europe as 'very concerning'

Geneva, April 8: World Health Organisation officials on Wednesday denied that the body was "China-centric" and said that the acute phase of a pandemic was not the time to cut funding, after US President Donald Trump said he would put contributions on hold. The United States is the top donor to the Geneva-based body which Trump said had issued bad advice during the new coronavirus outbreak. US contributions to WHO in 2019 exceeded \$400 million, almost double the second largest country donor, according to figures from the US State Department. China contributed \$44 million, it said. "We are still in the acute phase of a pandemic so now is not the time to cut back on funding," Dr Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, told a virtual briefing when asked about Trump's remarks. Dr Bruce Aylward, senior advisor to the WHO Director-General, also defended the UN agency's relationship with China, saying its work with Beijing authorities was important to understand the outbreak which began in Wuhan in December. "It was absolutely critical in the early part of this outbreak to have full access to everything possible, to get on the ground and work with the Chinese to understand this," he told reporters. "This is what we did with every other hard-hit country like Spain and



People wearing protective clothing and masks arrive at Hankou Railway Station in Wuhan, to board one of the first trains leaving the city in China's central Hubei province on Wednesday. — AFP

had nothing to do with China specifically." Aylward, who led a WHO expert mission to China in February, defended WHO recommendations to keep borders open, saying that China had worked "very hard" to identify and detect early cases and their contacts and ensure they did not travel. "China worked very hard very early on, once it understood what it was WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom said. "Then they made it very clear that these people would not and could not travel within the country, let alone internationally," he added. — Agencies

Spain records 757 new deaths

Madrid, April 8: Spain recorded Wednesday a second successive daily rise in coronavirus-related deaths with 757 fatalities, lifting the total toll in Europe's second-hardest-hit country after Italy by 53 percent to 14,555. The number of new infections rose by 4.4 percent to 146,890, the health ministry said, as Spain has ramped up its testing for the disease. The number of daily deaths, which peaked on Thursday at 950, rose for the first time on Tuesday after falling for four straight days. But the rate of increase in both deaths and new infections on Wednesday was largely in line with that recorded the previous day, and half of what was recorded just a week ago. "We have consolidated the slowdown in the spread of the virus," Health Minister Salvador Illa tweeted after the latest figures were published. The Spanish government on March 14 imposed one of the toughest lockdowns in Europe to curb the spread of the virus, with people allowed out of their homes only to work, buy food and seek medical care. The pandemic has stretched the country's public healthcare system close to breaking point, with a shortage of intensive care beds and equipments, but in recent days hospitals have said the situation has improved. "We have observed a de-escalation at this hospital in particular, and I believe at all hospitals," Illa's spokesman for the Hospital Severo Ochoa in Leganes near Madrid, Jorge Rivero, said. "We can't let down our guard, emergency services are now working below their full capacity and are working well, they are not saturated and overcrowded but it does not mean that we can relax and go to the emergency ward because you have an ailment." — AFP

Sunak in line to be Deputy PM

London, April 8: The UK's Indian-origin finance minister, Rishi Sunak, is next in line to deputise for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson while he is in hospital with coronavirus and in case UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is unable to carry on amid the pandemic. Downing Street has said, Sunak, who has been leading the UK government's economic response during the Covid-19 lockdown as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will automatically step in as part of an established order of precedence in the UK - which does not have a written Constitution. "There is an established order of precedence. The Prime Minister has appointed the Foreign Secretary (Raab) as his First Secretary of State in line with the order of precedence, and the Chancellor [Sunak] would follow from the Foreign Secretary," Johnson's spokesperson at Downing Street told reporters in response to a question about the chain of command at the top of the British government. Given the rapid spread of Covid-19 in the UK, where the death toll has crossed 6,000, and its impact on frontline ministers, questions around leadership have been increasingly doing the rounds. — PTT

FINAL JOURNEY American legend passed away due to complications arising from coronavirus

Legendary folk singer John Prine dies at 73

Los Angeles, April 8: American folk legend John Prine has passed away due to the coronavirus complications. He was 73. Prine, whose coronavirus diagnosis was revealed on March 17, died on Tuesday, his publicist told Variety. His wife and manager, Fiona, had on April 3 posted on Twitter that Prine was severely ill after being admitted to an intensive care unit of a hospital. In a career spanning over half a century, Prine churned out heartfelt and unforgettable songs like "Angel From Montgomery." "Sweet Revenge" and "In Spite of Ourselves". He was regarded as one of the Midler and many other music legends. Born on October 10, 1946 in Maywood, Illinois, the singer-songwriter emerged on the Chicago folk scene in the late 1960s, when he was discovered by country star Kris Kristofferson. He is still remembered for his 1971 anti-war track "Your Flag Deal Won't Get You Into Heaven Anymore", which came at the height of the Vietnam War and is still relevant to many till date. In recent years, he had taken a step back from music but came back in 2018 with the album "The Tree of Forgiveness". It was his first LP in 13 years. Prine was a winner of two Grammy award for best contemporary folk albums - "The Missing Years" (1991) and "Fair & Square" (2005). He was an inductee of the Songwriters Hall of Fame and also bestowed with Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. The news of his demise sent shockwaves across the music industry, with stars like Bruce Springsteen, Kacey Musgraves, Bonnie Raitt, Bette Midler and others paying their tributes to the legend. "Over here on E Street, we are crushed by the loss of John Prine. John and I were "New Dynians" together in the early '70s and he was never anything but the loveliest guy in the world. A true national treasure and a songwriter for the ages. We send our love and prayers to his family," Springsteen wrote in a post on Twitter. While Musgraves posted, "Heartbroken," Raitt, who recorded "Angel From Montgomery" in the 1970s, said he is feeling "crushed" after learning about Prine's demise. — PTT

Sanders drops out of 2020 Prez race

Washington, April 8: US Senator Bernie Sanders suspended his presidential campaign Wednesday, clearing the way for rival Joe Biden to win the Democratic nomination and challenge incumbent Donald Trump in November. "I have concluded that this battle for the Democratic nomination will not be successful," the leftist Sanders told supporters in a livestream announcing he is dropping out. "Vice president Biden will be the nominee," the 78-year-old added. Biden, a very decent man who I will work with to move our progressive ideas forward," Sanders, who challenged Hillary Clinton for the party's nomination in 2016, mounted a formidable challenge to Biden in the 2020 race, becoming the frontrunner early this year and earning the most votes in the first three state-wide contests. But he was soon eclipsed by a surging Biden, who won the vast majority of the remaining primaries and now holds a commanding lead in the all-important race for delegates who choose the nominee. Sanders ran an intense, issue-driven campaign, bringing his liberal ideological platform - including a call for universal health care and a \$15 hourly minimum wage - into the mainstream. "Together we have transformed American consciousness as to what kind of nation we can become, and have taken this country a major step forward in the never-ending struggle for economic justice, social justice, racial justice, and environmental justice," Sanders said. Several US lawmakers have come out in support of such prescriptions, and Biden himself has shifted leftward to incorporate some Sanders policies, although he has stressed he does not support Sanders's Medicare for All plan. Biden tweeted his thanks to Sanders, hailing him as "a good man, a great leader and one of the most powerful voices for change in our country." — AFP



Ren Zhiqiang

CHINA PROBES PARTY MEMBER CRITICAL OF XI

Beijing, April 8: A prominent Communist Party member who criticized Chinese leader Xi Jinping's "rare leadership" has been investigated on suspicion of a "severe violation of discipline and law." The probe was part of a joint government-party watchdog said. Ren Zhiqiang is a former head of state-run real estate conglomerate Huanuan Group and a party member, who has been investigated on suspicion of a "severe violation of discipline and law." He was removed from sight in mid-March after publishing an online essay that criticized top leaders and one of the handling of the virus outbreak that originated in Wuhan in central China. While government data show Covid-19 appeared in Wuhan in China, more than 1.4 million people have been infected worldwide. A notice issued Tuesday by the party-government joint watchdog body in Beijing's western district said Ren was undergoing a "review and monitoring investigation" but gave no details and did not mention Ren's article or previous statements. — AP

INDO-AMERICANS MOURN DEATH OF INDIAN SCRIBE

Washington, April 8: The Indian-American community mourned the death of veteran journalist Braham Kanchibotla, who died of coronavirus in the US. Kanchibotla, 66, was admitted to a hospital on Long Island in New York on March 28, some five days after he showed symptoms of the virus. In recent years, he was writing for two ethnic Indian-American publications - "The Indian Panorama and South Asia Times." He was a former editor of Deccan Chronicle. PM Narendra Modi on Wednesday condoled the demise of Kanchibotla, saying he will be remembered for his fine work. "Very sad to learn about the passing away of veteran Indian-American journalist Braham Kanchibotla due to Covid-19. Our heartfelt condolences to his family." — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

9 APRIL 2020

Export of HCQ tablets by India humanitarian

India's decision to lift the embargo on the export of HCQ (hydroxy-chloroquine) to USA, Brazil and several others is not only pragmatic but also a humanitarian gesture at this hour of global crisis caused by the novel coronavirus. The decision to restrict exports of drugs like HCQ and paracetamol that are needed in India to treat malaria and influenza.

Mr Trump's threat became the focus of internal politics with sections of the major Opposition picking on the need to serve Indians first. Their criticism is misplaced but they have been privy to the government decision to clear shipments having been conveyed to the US State department some time prior to Mr Trump's obstreperous bleating at his White House media briefing on Sunday. It was unlikely that the stability of India-US ties would have been unduly affected by any one decision on trade like HCQ tablets or Harley Davidson motorcycles.

India has the capacity to produce about 20 crore HCQ tablets of 200mg each in about 30 days and a couple of dozen in its own pharmaceutical factories would not only leave international customers satisfied but also a domestic surplus built for the drug's primary use, which is in treating malaria, a disease tropical countries are still battling with and which causes more deaths annually than the coronavirus in many parts of the world.

Quite curiously, Mr Trump has been advocating the miracle effects of HCQ taken in combination with drugs like the antibiotic Azithromycin in combating Covid-19. This flies in the face of the opinion of Dr Anthony Fauci, the expert on infectious diseases who is on the White House Coronavirus Task Force. However, ICMR too has advocated its use in India as preventive medication in high risk population like nursing staff who deal with Covid-19 patients in close proximity.

Mr Trump's suggestion to cut government expenditure is also in line with the fiscal conservatism of economists often advanced. True, the government should cut wasteful expenditure but it should find new avenues to pump in more money into the economy if we were to survive as a nation.

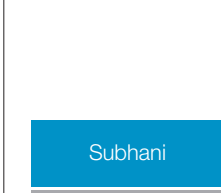
The Congress president's suggestions on a blanket 30 per cent cut on Central expenditure other than on salaries, pensions and central schemes are in line with the fiscal conservatism of economists often advanced. True, the government should cut wasteful expenditure but it should find new avenues to pump in more money into the economy if we were to survive as a nation.

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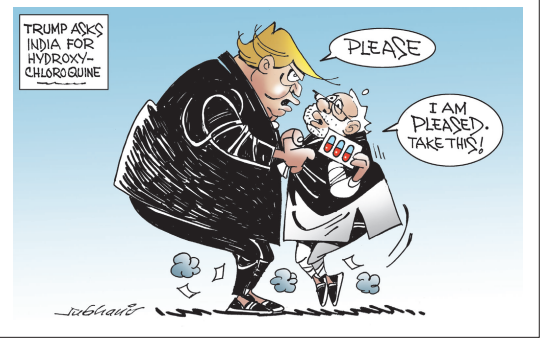
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While the world is still reeling from Covid-19's ravaging, idealistic revolutionaries are already looking beyond it. They envision this crisis as a catalyst to cause major wealth redistribution and produce a fairer world. How valid is this view?

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Subhani



Covid's T factor: Shun prejudice, stick to facts



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The facts, however unexciting, are really the key. The Sars-CoV-2, or Covid-19, did not emanate from the annual gathering of the Tablighi Jamaat held at its centre in New Delhi's Nizamuddin area between March 13 and 15. The virus sneaked in, because many participants in the event had travelled from Malaysia, and many among them were from Malaysia and Indonesia, and they must have arrived in New Delhi sometime in the first half of March when the government and the experts were not quite sure how the virus will play itself out in the country because many other countries, especially in Europe, were already in its vice grip.

So it is understandable that the Tablighi travellers from Malaysia were not tested rigorously at the airport. Many of them dispersed across the country after the meeting because the Covid-19 alarm had not been rung by the middle of the month. It happened only after March 20. When the Tablighi centre was found to house nearly 2,000 members inside its premises at the end of March 30, after the lockdown was imposed on March 23, it should not have come as a surprise to anyone. The Tablighis just stayed where they were as the lockdown began, and train, bus and air travel were suspended.

Those fighting what they consider to be the jihadi danger like to blur the lines between poor Muslims and Tablighis, between well-off Muslims and the Tablighis, and between Tablighis and the jihadi extremists

gathering for spreading the virus, which is a half-truth at best. But half-truths have their diabolical uses. The Tablighis are looked down with contempt by the genteel classes of Muslims because of the inevitable class bias. Most of the Tablighis come from lower income groups. The poor among the Muslims have no use for the Tablighis because of no consequence in the larger Muslim community. But those fighting what they consider to be the jihadi danger like to blur the lines between poor Muslims and Tablighis, between well-off Muslims and the Tablighis, and between Tablighis and the jihadi extremists.

There is no room or time to make distinctions when you are fighting a propaganda war. Interestingly and surprisingly, or perhaps not so surprisingly, the anti-Tablighi media combatants are partly fighting the religious fanaticism of the jihadis from a secular standpoint. And the same combatants are also fighting secularism and all those who are secular as they believe in the right-wing Communist conspiracy. While appearing to be fighting against the religious superstitions of the Tablighis, the anti-Tablighi media warriors are fighting for undeclared Hindu piety in the name of nationalistic sentiment. It is more than a slight of hand. It is as a matter of fact transparent majoritarianism.

These neo-liberal trends led to another cycle of dislocation in the 21st century, with post-9/11 global terrorism and the 2008 recession. The terrorism-related violence did not compare with that of the two world wars; nor did the economic turmoil of 2008 with that of 1929. The result was thus not a move towards equity, but towards the bigoted politics we see spreading today at a slightly slower pace than Covid-19.

Clear lessons emerge from these eras of less changes based on the inputs and outputs of existing systems then. The least dislocation is when a system's inputs and outputs are temporarily disrupted. A higher level of dislocation is when system processing units are damaged temporarily.

LETTERS RANDOM TESTING

In India, second most populous country, controlling the virus is a big challenge. Along with draconian measures like lockdown, it would be better to do random tests (one person per home) to find out the number of cases and boost the confidence of people.

Sharath Kasarla Hyderabad

EMPATHY NEEDED The panic, blame game and hate over coronavirus saddens me. Can't we deal with a calamity that is not manmade with more maturity and compassion? Why are suspected positive cases being hounded, blamed, ostracised? Those suspected of carrying the virus are already suffering by being kept away from loved ones with the possibility of testing positive or even death. I am sure they will come forward to get tested and treated.

Fatimahashen Shikho Hyderabad

TAKING IT EASY We see many vehicles on roads without masks as described by Mr Trump as the "Chinese virus", and he later came out in support of the American Chinese. Until now no responsible political leader from the government has bothered to clarify this matter. RSS joint general secretary Manoj Kumar Vaishya has blamed the Tablighi leaders for not putting off the meeting, but he clarified that the Muslim community had nothing to do with the Tablighi Jamaat's indiscretion.

Samatha Masinani Secunderabad

RIGHT PRIORITIES The Chief Minister has rightly given priority to jobs over the economy right now. If lockdown is extended, it will be tough to control people leading to rise in cases. The efforts of government, doctors, police and others over the last two months will go in vain. In this critical situation, a visionary leader like Chandrababbar Nair is also required to save the nation.

D.N. Rao Hyderabad

India's foreign policy widely accepted

—Dinesh THE External Affairs Minister Mr. Dinesh Singh, said in the Lok Sabha today that there was a growing consensus on India's independent foreign policy based on peaceful co-existence, non-alignment and self-reliance.

Winding up the House debate on the demands of his Ministry for budgetary grants, the Minister said the super powers had during the past year moved forward in discussions over areas of primary concern to them.

Dr Niaz Murtaza

Will the novel coronavirus give rise to a fairer world?

While the world is still reeling from Covid-19's ravaging, idealistic revolutionaries are already looking beyond it. They envision this crisis as a catalyst to cause major wealth redistribution and produce a fairer world. How valid is this view?

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## quick BITES

### INDICATORS %

|                        |           |       |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Sensex                 | 29,893.96 | -0.58 |
| Nifty 50               | 8,748.75  | -0.49 |
| S&P 500*               | 2,722.80  | 2.38  |
| Dollar (₹)             | 76.35     | -0.94 |
| Pound Sterling (₹)     | 93.92     | -0.70 |
| Euro (₹)               | 82.85     | -0.83 |
| Gold (Oz) (₹)          | 1,669.60  | 0.29  |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)   | 32.24     | 1.16  |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield    | 6.441     | 0.357 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.752     | 2.452 |

\*As of 9:30 PM IST

## Global trade to plunge by a third in 2020: WTO

Global trade growth could plummet by up to a third in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the World Trade Organization said, warning that the numbers would be "ugly". "World trade is expected to fall by between 13 per cent and 32 per cent in 2020 as the pandemic disrupts economic activity and life around the world," the WTO said. The downturn "may well be the deepest economic recession," it said.

## Maruti Suzuki cuts production by 32% in March



Maruti Suzuki India has cut production by 32.05 per cent in March, the company said in a regulatory filing. It produced 92,540 units in March against 1,36,201 units a year ago. Passenger vehicle production stood at 91,602 units against 1,35,236 units, a dip of 32.26 per cent YoY. Production of mini and compact segments stood at 67,708 units against 98,620 units, down 31.33 per cent.

## Registration rules for FPIs relaxed

The Sebi has eased rules for offshore funds seeking to get registered under the properly regulated foreign portfolio investor (FPI) category. At present, funds from jurisdictions that are Financial Action Task Force-complaint are permitted to get a licence under properly regulated category or Category I. Sebi said now funds coming from non-FATF-complaint nations can also obtain FPI licence if the Centre allows.

## India takes US to WTO's safeguard panel

India has sought consultations with the US, under the WTO's safeguard agreement, against its decision to increase import duties on derivatives of steel and aluminium products. In January this year, the US issued a presidential proclamation stating that steel and aluminium derivatives would be subject to tariff increase. A WTO communication said India considers this measure of the US to be a safeguard measure.

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## Economic design to tackle crisis drawn by NITI Aayog

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

The central government's next big economic stimulus package hinges largely on when the lockdown ends or at least partially lifted. With the government still weighing the pros and cons of lifting the lockdown and many states insisting on an extension of the lockdown period, sources say the talked about stimulus package is unlikely anytime soon. At the same time, the government is learnt to have prepared a balanced economic design to tackle the post-lockdown crisis and reviewing developments during the lockdown period on a daily basis. The government is keen to ease the lockdown impact on the finance ministry and revive the economy.

The proposed package, sources said, will focus on continuity of the recent economic measures and the welfare of the labour force. Also, the government may redesign some welfare schemes for the farmers. It is expected that the focus on this will be taken by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in consultation with the finance ministry and other key ministries.

"What is worrying us is the rising number of Covid-19 positive cases and hence, the possibility of an extension of the lockdown as there are most of the states are unwilling to lift the lockdown. Our prime focus is to save the lives first and



then the economy. The economic booster package is still under consideration but it may not happen any time soon. The decision of giving relief to corporates, especially travel, tourism, hospitality and MSME sectors, among others, may be taken after lifting the lockdown, if not fully but even partially," a top government source said on Tuesday.

"We are constantly monitoring and reviewing each and every economic activity on a day-to-day basis," the source said. "For the economic measures, there have been 10 empowered groups of senior bureaucrats, which were constituted by the Prime Minister to prepare India's response to Covid-19 and one such group is assigned to take stock of the economic situation for the post lockdown consequences," the source said.

Elaborating the steps taken by the government, another official source said, "The government has been asked by the PMO to prepare a business continuity

plan before announcing the status of the current lockdown scenario. Some key ministers as well as NITI Aayog officials are in regular touch with industry bodies to assess the impact in their respective sectors and taking stock of their financial situation."

India Inc is learnt to have held several rounds of discussions with multiple industry bodies have given suggestions for a calibrated exit of lockdown and economic measures to cushion its impact. Chandrajit Banerjee, director general, CII, said, "The government should extend additional support to the people at the bottom of the pyramid through various schemes. Support to the industry could come through the banking system. Besides, the government should focus on sectors that provide mass employment, first to protect low-wage employment and limit the opening of places like malls, restaurants and cinema halls."

## Centre speeds refunds; states allowed to borrow ₹3.2 L cr

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

In a bid to soften the lockdown impact has speeded up release of pending payments to businesses, individuals and states, besides allowing states to borrow a cumulative Rs 3.20 lakh crore till December.

The Income Tax Department on Wednesday said it will immediately issue pending refunds of up to Rs 5 lakh benefitting around 14 lakh taxpayers. The government will also issue pending GST and customs refunds, amounting to one lakh business entities. The total refund granted will be about Rs 14,000 crore, an official release said.

In a bid to provide further relief to the states, the finance ministry released the second tranche of GST compensation of Rs 14,000 crore to them on Tuesday. The first tranche of Rs 19,950 crore was paid on February 17. The ministry has, thus, released a total of Rs 34,950 crore to states as compensation for their revenue loss in goods and services tax (GST) and cess for October and November.

The finance ministry also allowed states to borrow a cumulative Rs 3.20 lakh crore from the market between April and December 2020. It will be about Rs 1,000 crore demand for higher funds from the Centre.

## Goldman Sachs cuts FY21 growth to 1.6%

ASHWIN J PUNNEEN  
MUMBAI, APRIL 8

With India likely to face an extended period of lockdown, foreign brokerages Goldman Sachs and Nomura have cut the country's GDP growth forecast drastically. Goldman Sachs predicts India's GDP growth to fall to a multi-decade low of 1.6 per cent in fiscal 2021, making it one of the bleakest forecasts on India's GDP yet.

The policymakers have not been aggressive enough in their response to the crisis, and will need to eventually intensify their efforts, economists at Goldman Sachs said. It may be noted that India's GDP growth in Q1, 2020, averaged 3.1 per cent in Q1, 6.1 per cent in Q2, before recovering to 0.5 per cent in Q3 and 1.4 per cent in Q4.

The firm said unemployment will remain elevated, with a potentially longer period of lockdown and larger growth damage.

The Goldman Sachs report said the nationwide shutdown, and rising public anxiety about



the virus are likely to lead to a sharp deterioration in economic activity in March and in the next quarter of the fiscal, but Goldman's is the lowest forecast for the year as a whole yet. Nomura Securities said it has lowered its 2020 real GDP growth forecast for India to 0.5 per cent year-on-year, averaging 3.1 per cent in Q1, 6.1 per cent in Q2, before recovering to 0.5 per cent in Q3 and 1.4 per cent in Q4.

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## Rupee falls to life-time low of 76.38 vs dollar

FALAKNAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, APRIL 20

Weak risk sentiment globally coupled with a stronger dollar weighed on the rupee that plunged to its lifetime low of 76.38 against the dollar on Wednesday.

Also, sustained outflows by foreign investors and absence of regulatory intervention led to further

weakness in the domestic currency.

Growth and unemployment estimates coming from various agencies paint a bleak picture of the Indian economy amidst the 21-day lockdown. Economic activity has come to a halt with no sign of containment of the disease in the short-term.

Forex experts expect the

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## Govt eyes 21-day reserves, to buy up Guf oil

DEBUT CHAKRABORTY & VRISHTI BENIVAL  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

India, the world's third biggest oil consumer, is set to snap millions of barrels of Middle East crude for its strategic reserves, signalling its support for global efforts to rescue the energy market.

The purchases are aimed at taking advantage of low prices, according to officials with knowledge of the matter. But two of them say they're also a signal of solidarity for the campaign to stabilise markets after oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan spoke with his US and Saudi Arabian counterparts and the head of the International Energy Agency.

India has 38.14 million barrels of strategic reserves across the three facilities that can provide crude requirements for about 9.5 days, Pradhan told Parliament on Monday. It plans to add two new strategic reserves with combined capacity of 47.7 million barrels,



which will provide another 11.57 days of its needs.

While India's storage capacity is relatively small, the purchases are an important sign that major consuming countries are trying to play their part in rebalancing a market that's been pumelled by the coronavirus crisis. Earlier this month it would start buying oil for its emergency reserves.

New Delhi's move appears to be part of a broader G-20 response to the collapse in oil prices. Fath Birol, the head of the IEA, has called for a global coalition to use available storage to take advantage of low prices to snap barrels. "Oil consumers can help by filling up tanks for strategic petroleum reserves," Birol said in an interview last week.

A spokesman for the oil ministry declined to comment. Major oil producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia are currently trying to stitch together a deal to call off their price war and cut worldwide oil output by around 10 million barrels a day ahead of a meeting of the Opec+ alliance and other producers on Thursday. Minister Pradhan is also set to take part in a meeting of G-20 energy ministers the following day.

The Indian government may ask Opec+ oil refiners to buy the crude upfront from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iraq and reimburse them later, the officials said, ask-

ing not to be named as the information is private. The country has space for an additional 15 million barrels of crude across its three strategic reserves at Mangalore, Padur and Visakhapatnam. The finance ministry has approved a request for funds from the oil ministry, the officials said.

India is seeking to buy around 5.5 million barrels of the UAE's Upper Zakum crude for Mangalore and about 9.2 million barrels of Saudi oil for the Padur and Visakhapatnam. It will also buy some of Iraq's Basrah Light grade for Visakhapatnam. Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd, which has drawn out some Iranian crude stored in Mangalore last year, will likely be asked to fill the tanks back up with barrels from Abu Dhabi, said one of the officials.

Tanks at Padur and Visakhapatnam will likely be filled with Saudi crude and Iraq's Basrah Light, respectively.

The state governments have also been asked to notify warehouses registered by Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) as deemed markets to facilitate online trading via the electronic National Agriculture Market (eNAM). Union agriculture secretary Sanjay Agarwal said in a communication to chief secretaries of all states and Union territories.

It said the outlook for the next three months is bleak and the first half, remains weak.

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## Let bulk buyers, big retail buy directly from farmers: Centre



New Delhi, April 8: The Centre has asked states to allow bulk buyers, processors and cooperatives to directly buy agri-produce from farmers, farmer producer organisations (FPOs) and cooperatives, for the next three months. The move is aimed at ensuring supply to consumption regions.

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## Market swings wildly on speculative trading

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, APRIL 8

Despite negative global cues and a rise in coronavirus cases in India to over 5,000, stock market indices Sensex and Nifty 50 soared higher in opening trade. The Sensex rose above 31,000 and Nifty 50 above 9,000 levels but later traders booked profit, leading to sharp fall from the day's high.

In the absence of authentic data about coronavirus impact on the economy, traders call for the short-term market direction is leading to irregular trading in a highly volatile market, causing huge up and down moves in the indices as well as stocks.

Market sources said, such volatile market movement could cause huge losses to retail investors, who could get caught easily by short-term market direction. After 2500 points up move on Tuesday, the Sensex on Wednesday fell over 1000 points from its intra-day high of 31,277.97 to close in the red. The

Sensex finally closed at 29,893.96, down 173 points or 0.58 per cent. Similar volatile movement in NSE's Nifty-50 took the index above the 9,000-mark to the day's high of 9,131.70 but it proved a temporary spike as the index finally closed at 8,748.75, down by 45.45 points, or 0.49 per cent.

Provisional stock exchange data showed foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,943.41 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 1,757.79 crore.

However, there was no correlation to FPIs net buying on the rupee, which fell sharply. Paras Bothra, president of research firm Ashika Stock Broking, said, "Volatility in the markets is on account of speculation that the central government is mulling over lockdown term extension from April 14 amid the spread of coronavirus. Barring Pharma, FMCG and select auto stocks, other sectoral indices remained under pressure."

## CV sales may contract 8-10% in FY21: Icrta

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, APRIL 8

Ratings agency Icrta on Wednesday said commercial vehicles (CV) sales volumes, a barometer of economic activity in India are likely to contract further by 8-10 per cent in FY2020-21 as the near-term outlook of the sector is weighed down significantly by the coronavirus pandemic.

Icrta said that a positive outlook for the CV segment over the near-term due to current economic growth, slowing overcapacity in the CV ecosystem and not-so-benign financing environment, with challenges further aggravated by the rapid spread of novel coronavirus in the country.

"The demand headwinds are expected to continue over the near-term given the macroeconomic challenges, especially a negative outlook for the CV segment over the near-term due to current economic growth, slowing overcapacity in the CV ecosystem and not-so-benign financing environment, with challenges further aggravated by the rapid spread of novel coronavirus in the country."

According to a Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy (CMIE) report, the unemployment rate stood at 23.4 per cent during the week amidst labour participation rate (LPR) of 51.1 per cent and employment rate of 27.7 per cent.

## Unemployment rate shoots up to 23%

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, APRIL 8

The lockdown and the subsequent labour migration have the unemployment rate shot up to 23 per cent from 19.5 per cent after hitting a 43-month high of 8.7 per cent in March.

The unemployment rate in March itself was the highest since September 2016. The rate had climbed rather steeply from the 7.16 per cent level in January 2020 and has been rising steadily since the first time that the LPR fell below 42 per cent.

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SHORT TAKES

Windies, England U-19 tour put off

BIPIN DANI MUMBAI, APRIL 7

Cricket West Indies (CWI) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have agreed to postpone the planned West Indies U-19 tour of England, scheduled for August and September 2020. The same has not been postponed for the corona virus fear but due to the scheduling clashes. However, senior team tour of England, which was scheduled to take place next month may be postponed in the current situation. "There has been no word yet. That is a decision for the ECB which they have not made as yet," the CWI president Ricky Skerritt, said. The tour is scheduled to begin from May 22 and three Tests to be played in June. "Several of our member countries have a few cases," the president said. South Africa and India's tours of Sri Lanka may also be affected.

Wisden honours for Stokes, Perry

New Delhi: Swashbuckling England allrounder Elyse Perry has ended India skipper Virat Kohli's three-year run as Wisden's leading cricketer of the year after being named for the honour on the back of his stellar show in 2019. The 2020 Wisden Cricketers' Almanack also coronated Elyse Perry as leading women's cricketer of the year as the Australian reclaimed the title from India's Smriti Mandhana. Stokes is the first Englishman to receive the honour since Andrew Flintoff in 2005. Australian allrounder Perry bagged the honour for her splendid Ashes show. Elyse Perry dominated the women's Ashes like no one before her inspiring Australia to a crushing victory. She was awarded with the ball, claiming 22/7 in the ODI at Canterbury, and remorseless with the bat, in the one-off Test, making 116 and 76 not out. — PTI

Russia, Qatar deny bribery allegations

Doha: Qatar and Russia hit back at allegations of bribery on Tuesday after US prosecutors accused them of paying millions in bribes for the rights to host the 2018 and 2022 tournaments. According to US Justice Department documents released Monday, FIFA officials received bribes of \$10 million in favour of awarding the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 tournament to Qatar. Doha said it "strongly denies the allegation contained within the court papers" while the Kremlin said it "absolutely and legally got the right" to host the 2018 global football spectacle. The US government has accused a total of 45 people and is paying or accepting more than \$200 million in bribes. "Russia absolutely legally got the right to organise the World Cup," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. — AFP

SPURS PULL UP MOURINHO AND PLAYERS

London: Tottenham Hotspur have reminded players of their responsibilities during Britain's coronavirus lockdown after pictures and video on social media emerged of manager Jose Mourinho and several members of his squad that appeared to show them flouting social-distancing rules. Portuguese boss Mourinho was pictured training with Tangny Ndombele on Hadley Common, while Davinson Sanchez and Ryan Seassegnon were seen running side by side in the same public park in north London. Spurs full-back Serge Aurier also posted a video of himself jogging alongside another person on Instagram. The Premier League has been suspended since mid-March due to the spread of Covid-19. The outbreak has seen the British government announce a strict series of measures. — AFP

Spurs full-back Serge Aurier also posted a video of himself jogging alongside another person on Instagram. The Premier League has been suspended since mid-March due to the spread of Covid-19. The outbreak has seen the British government announce a strict series of measures. — AFP

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HEROICS

Very few guys to look up to in the Indian team: Yuvi

New Delhi, April 8: India's team culture drew severe criticism from World Cup-winning former allrounder Yuvraj Singh, who told ODI vice-captain Rohit Sharma that there aren't enough role models in the side, which lacks a sense of respect for the seniors and is prone to being distracted by social media. The two were in conversation during an Instagram live chat on Tuesday night. In the context of Yuvraj's observation was Rohit's question on the difference between the current team and the ones in which Singh turned up. "When I came into the team or when you (Rohit) came into the team, our seniors were very disciplined. Obviously there was no social media so there were no distractions," said Yuvraj. "There was a certain behaviour that we boys had to carry, how they talk to people, how they talk to media. Because they were the ambassadors of the game and India," the southpaw added. But it is not the same anymore, feels Yuvraj. "So that is what I had told you guys. After playing for India, you have to be more careful about your image. But I feel the third generation. There are only you two seniors, Virat and you, who are playing all the formats. The rest of the guys are coming and going," he said. "I just said there are very few guys to look up to and I feel that a sense of respect towards seniors, that has become a thin line now. Koi bhi kisiko kuch bhi keh deta hai (anyone can say anything to anyone)," said Yuvraj. Yuvraj said players during his time were more conscious about their image and were perceived by the seniors in the side. "I think juniors, because of social media, party scenes, these things, we could not even think about that in our time. Because we had that fear that if we do some mistake our senior will tell us that do not do this, this is not right," he said. On the midst of the younger generation, Yuvraj said most of the upcoming lot only want to play limited-over cricket. "In this time of crisis, I want to propose a three match series in which for the first time, the people of neither country would be upset at the outcome of the games," Akhtar said from Islamabad. "If Virat (Kohli) scores a hundred, we will be happy, if Babar Azam scores a hundred, you will be happy. Both teams will be winners irrespective of whatever happens on the field," he said. "You are bound to get massive viewership for the games. For a plus first time, both countries will play for each other. And whatever funds are generated through this can be donated equally to the government of India and Pakistan to fight this pandemic," he said.



Rohit Sharma (left) and Yuvraj Singh share a light moment in this photo.

NEHRA BELIEVES IPL CAN BE HELD LATER THIS YEAR

New Delhi, April 8: Former India left-arm pacer Ashish Nehra believes there is a possibility of the IPL taking place in the last quarter of the year, provided the Covid-19 pandemic is brought under control worldwide by the month of October. The IPL 2020, which was scheduled to be played from March 29, has been suspended till April 15 but no clarity yet on whether it would go ahead at all. "Even if the IPL doesn't happen in August, (because) there are a lot of places in India that witness rains and humidity and there are high chances that lots of matches will get cancelled. Nehra for India medium pacer Deepak Chahar as the delay has given him time to regain full fitness from his lower-back injury. Chahar, who plays for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL, is now eagerly waiting to make his return to competitive cricket once the situation normalises. "I am looking forward to bowling again. For now, the idea is to stay fit," the 27-year-old said. Chahar sustained a stress fracture on his lower back midway through the ODI series against the West Indies in December last year, which ruled him out of action till the end of March. He admitted that he would have missed CSK's first few games if the IPL 2020 had started as scheduled on March 29. "When things are not in your control, there is little you can do. So, I focus on what I can do during that time. I am trying to learn new things, focus on my fitness — as you know, the right arm in Super Kings was quoted as saying by the official website of the franchise. "Had the IPL season started on time, I would have missed the first few matches," the right-arm pacer responded when asked about his form. — PTI

Akhtar wants Indo-Pak series for Covid-19 fight

New Delhi, April 8: Former Pakistan pacer Shaohab Akhtar on Wednesday proposed a three-match ODI series against arch-rivals India to raise funds for the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic in both the countries. The two nations have not played a full-series since 2007 due to the terrorist attacks on India by Pakistan-based outfits and the resultant diplomatic tension. They only play each other in ICC events and Asia Cup. "In this time of crisis, I want to propose a three match series in which for the first time, the people of neither country would be upset at the outcome of the games," Akhtar said from Islamabad. "If Virat (Kohli) scores a hundred, we will be happy, if Babar Azam scores a hundred, you will be happy. Both teams will be winners irrespective of whatever happens on the field," he said. "You are bound to get massive viewership for the games. For a plus first time, both countries will play for each other. And whatever funds are generated through this can be donated equally to the government of India and Pakistan to fight this pandemic," he said.



Pakistan pace bowler Mohammad Amir (second from left) and Indian captain Virat Kohli shake hands after a match in this photo.

In this time of crisis, I want to propose a three-match series in which for the first time, the people of neither country would be upset at the outcome of the games. — SHOAHAB AKHTAR

Former Pakistan cricketer wants an Indo-Pak series to raise funds to fight coronavirus

CORONA CAPSULE



Teenaged golfer Arjun Bhatti poses in front of his trophies in this photo.

Teen golfer sells trophies, donates

New Delhi, April 8: He might be just 15 but golfer Arjun Bhatti has managed to raise ₹4.30 lakh to fight the Covid-19 pandemic by selling all his trophies, including three world junior golf championship titles and a national championship. The golfer from Greater Noida, who won the United States kids junior world championship in 2016 and 2018 and FCG All-India junior world championship last year, has donated the money to the CARES Fund. Arjun said he sold all his trophies to his relatives and his friends of his parents to raise the fund. "In the last eight years, the 102 trophies that I won across the world, I have given them to 102 people in this hour of crisis. The total amount of ₹4,30,000 that I received from that, I have donated that today to the CARES Fund," he tweeted in Hindi on Tuesday. "After coming to know about my contribution, my grandmother first cried and then said, you are a real Arjun. At this point of time, it's important to save human lives. Trophies can be won in future," he said. SHUTTLE SAJI GIVES ₹4L

World Badminton Championships bronze medalist B. Sai Praneeth on Wednesday donated ₹4 lakh to help in the fight against the rapidly spreading Covid-19 pandemic. Praneeth donated ₹3 lakh to PM Relief Fund and ₹1 lakh for Telangana CM Relief Fund.

"I contributed ₹3 lakhs for PM relief fund and ₹1 lakh for Telangana state CM relief fund as my part in this fight against covid-19. Hope my contributions will help the nation in this tough situation. @PMIndia @TelanganaCMO

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Ronaldinho is let out of jail, under house arrest

Asuncion (Paraguay), April 8: A Paraguayan judge on Tuesday ordered the release of Brazilian football great Ronaldinho and his brother into house arrest at a hotel in downtown Asuncion. Judge Gustavo Amarilla told reporters that he had ordered the "continuation of house arrest in a hotel for Ronaldinho and his brother." They were jailed exactly a month ago on Monday to await trial on charges of using false passports to enter Paraguay. Lawyers for the men posted bail of \$1.6 million. The ruling means the brothers can swap their grim police cell block — which also housed Paraguay's former football federation chief and the lower house of parliament — for a plush Colonial-style hotel in central Asuncion. The brochure of the refurbished 107-room Palmiraga hotel, located in the capital's historic center. "I have the assurance of the hotel managers that they at their own expense can observe house arrest there," Amarilla told the news conference. Paraguay's appeals court last month rejected a request to release the pair, meaning the two-time world player of the year spent his 40th birthday in lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, the judge communicated his ruling in a cellphone call to the brothers, with prosecutors and defence lawyers — and TV cameras — present. A beaming Ronaldinho, in a black tee-shirt and matching headband, gave a thumbs up sign to show he understood the terms of his release. — AFP



Ronaldinho is embraced by a woman as he arrives at the hotel where he is to stay under house arrest in Asuncion, Paraguay, on Tuesday.

BUTTLER'S WC WINNING JERSEY FETCHES \$80K

London, April 8: England wicketkeeper Jos Buttler has raised more than \$50,000 to help fight the coronavirus by auctioning off his World Cup final shirt. Buttler's shirt, which he wore when completing the last-ball run-out that saw England beat New Zealand at Lord's last year, was sold for more than \$80,000. Buttler said: "It's a very special shirt but I think it takes on extra meaning with it being able to hopefully go to the emergency care."

Three sportsmen succumb to virus

Milan, April 8: Italy's former European indoor champion Donato Sabia has died from coronavirus aged 56, days after the pandemic claimed the life of his father, the Italian athletics federation (Fidal) announced on Wednesday. Sabia won 90m gold at the 1984 championships in Gothenburg, and finished fifth and seventh at the distance at the 1984 Los Angeles and 1988 Seoul Olympics respectively. He had been hospitalised in intensive care for some days in his native Potenza, in the southern Basilicata region. "A tragedy within a tragedy, Donato was a person you couldn't help but love," said Fidal president Alfio Giomi confirming Sabia's death days after that of his father from the Coronavirus disease. Meanwhile, Former ice hockey player Roger Chappot, who played more than 100 games for Switzerland's national team, has died from the virus. Chappot was first treated at a hospital two weeks ago in his home town before his condition became worse on April 1 and he was admitted to an intensive care unit. Elsewhere, Former French rugby player Christophe Priebe has died after getting infected by the coronavirus. Several of his former teammates have also died. He was 35. Pras is survived by his wife and two children. — Agencies