



Terrorist attack on Sikhs in Afghanistan Invites worldwide condemnation

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No Dollar Value on Human Lives, Please: Opt for Total Shut down of America



by Prof I.S. Saluja

Please don't provoke Nature, anymore. Be fearful of the approaching catastrophe. Now is the time to get out of the way of a devouring monster of Coronavirus.

President Trump should impose a nationwide lock down, a COMPLETE lockdown, not a partial, half hearted one, which is not of much help. Let him take a cue from India and stop all wheels of movement from Air to Land to Sea for at least 4 weeks until the virus finds no prey and turns away in despair. The 100,000 strong Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) has also made the demand. President Trump may please not be dismissive of the professional prowess and expertise of doctors. "If it were up to the doctors they may say, 'Let's keep it shut down, let's shut down the entire world."

Brave Americans should not shy away from paying a little price now to secure their lives and those of their loved ones and communities.

Economies can be rebuilt with a little extra effort over a period of time. But the human lives lost can never be brought back to life. Americans opt willingly for the discipline needed to combat the monster of Coronavirus and follow the advice of health experts. It applies to all, including President of America.

Just look at the speed at which Coronavirus is advancing in the worst hit New York. The number of cases in 1 day, from March 25 to 26 rose by 3101 to reach a total of 23112. The number of deaths has risen to 365, increasing day by day.

At the time I am writing this comment, I get the news that the global number of Coronavirus cases has crossed 500,000, and the US has surpassed all nations, including China and Italy in the number of Coronavirus cases. It now has 82,400 cases, with more than 1,170 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University. China and Italy had 80,000 cases. Do not

forget, in the US, Coronavirus is yet to peak. Imagine the loss of life awaiting us.

Hospitals do not have the required number of beds. They do not have equipment for daily surges of patients. Health workers do not have the protective gear and are exposed to the deadly virus themselves. We know health officials the world over succumbing to death while treating patients. And, on top of it, there is no antidote to the pandemic.

Please do not believe in rumors about drugs / antidotes having been discovered or being available until the health authorities of America announce the drug. And, also remember drug that can kill or keep the virus away will not be available immediately after announcement, and surely not to all 300 million Americans simultaneously. Between the Eureka and the availability of the drug, there may be a significant period of wait. Americans surely cannot go off the guard during this period.

All talk about economy- markets, job losses, revenue losses are of concern mainly to the rich who stay insulated

Take a cue from India. If 1.3 billion people can survive under a total nationwide shut down, so can America, with just 300 million

away from the scene of production of wealth and are safe and secure. They are not the ones working in restaurants and stores. They are not among the first responders. They are not cab drivers, train drivers and construction workers. They are not the producers of wealth. They are managers and keepers of wealth. Those who produce on an hourly basis are the ones exposed to the deadly virus. Those who are talking about economy and wealth creation are out of the way of harm by Coronavirus in the sanitized, secure environs of their mansions. The question is why the lives of common Americans be put at stake for creating wealth for the comfort and luxury of the few.

Now is the time to decide whether economy is above human wealth of America. Surely, Americans will not want dollar value to be put on their precious lives. We are and will always remain the greatest nation on the Earth for the values we cherish, not for the wealth we may have.

God bless America!



Andy Singh

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NEW YORKERS: STAY HOME TO STOP THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS

New Yorkers working together and staying home can slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in New York City. When you go out for essential needs, work or to get fresh air, keep distance between yourself and others and take the following precautions.



PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.



IF YOU ARE SICK

- Stay home.
- If you have a cough, shortness of breath, fever, sore throat and do not feel better after 3-4 days, consult with your doctor.
- If you need help getting medical care, call 311.
- NYC will provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.



PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE

- Stay home if you have lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system.
- Stay home and call, video chat or text with family or friends who have one of these conditions.



REDUCE OVERCROWDING

- Stay home.
 - Telecommute if possible.
- If you do go out:**
- Stagger work hours away from peak travel times.
 - Walk or bike.
 - Do not gather in crowds.

Text COVID to 692-692 for real-time updates or visit nyc.gov/coronavirus.

Call 311 to report harassment or discrimination. Call 888-NYC-WELL, text "WELL" to 65173 or chat online at nyc.gov/nycwell to connect with a counselor.

*Messages and data rates may apply. Check your wireless provider plan for details.

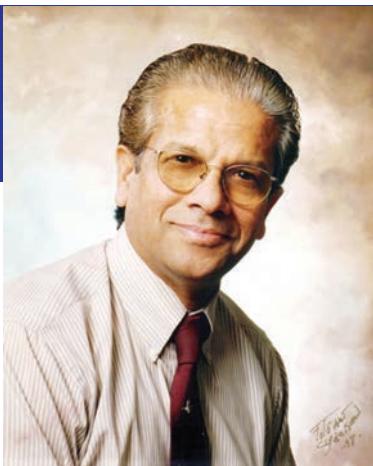


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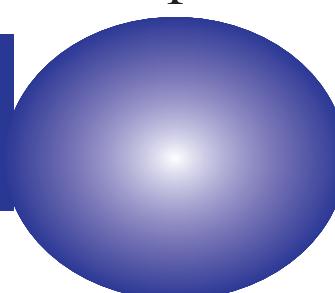


CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE

Dr. VK Raju and Dr. Leela Raju of the Eye Foundation of America will be glad to answer any eye related concerns of the readers of The Indian Panorama during this difficult period of Coronavirus onslaught



DR. VK RAJU IS A CLINICAL PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY AT WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY



They can be reached at
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DR. LEELA RAJU IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY AT NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER



Terrorist attack on Sikhs in Afghanistan invites worldwide condemnation



Afghan security personnel inspect the gurudwara in Kabul, Afghanistan.
Photo / Courtesy PTI / Reuters

KABUL/ NEW YORK (TIP): At least 25 worshippers were killed and eight others injured when a heavily armed suicide bomber stormed his way into a prominent Gurudwara on Wednesday, March 25, in the heart of Afghanistan's capital of Kabul, in one of the deadliest attacks on the minority Sikh community in the strife-torn country.

The Islamic State (IS) terror group, which has targeted Sikhs before in Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for the attack on the Gurudwara in Shor Bazar area at about 7.45 a.m. (local time) as 150 worshippers were inside the building.

This was the second major attack on Sikhs in Afghanistan after the earlier 2018 attack in which 12 members of the Sikh and Hindu communities were killed.

The dastardly attack has been condemned worldwide.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo condemned the attack which killed over two dozen people and wounded eight others.



The United States condemns the horrific ISIS-K claimed attack on a Sikh temple and community center in Kabul

Pompeo said in a statement, "I want to address the ISIS-K claimed attack in Afghanistan. The United States condemns the horrific ISIS-K claimed attack on a Sikh temple and community center in Kabul this morning which took the lives of more than two dozen innocent people. The Afghan people deserve a future free from ISIS-K and other terrorist activity".

A statement from UN chief said that attacks against civilians are unacceptable and those who carry out such crimes must be held accountable. and the world body emphasizing that there can be no justification for the killing of civilians at a religious house.

"The Secretary-General condemns the attack in Kabul on a Sikh-Hindu temple in which dozens of civilians were killed and injured. He expresses his deepest sympathies to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured", Secretary General Guterres' spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The United Nations stands in solidarity with the people and the Government of Afghanistan and will continue supporting efforts to bring peace to their country, the statement said.

In a tweet, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said it is "outraged" by the attack.

"There can be no justification for the killing of civilians at a religious house. Our condolences to the victims and their families."High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) Miguel Angel Moratinos expressed his "dismay" at the terrorist attack at the Gurudwara, which killed 25 victims, including a child.

The "despicable attack comes at a time when the world is facing a pandemic which adversely impacts all of us, requiring us to stand together as "One Humanity", Moratinos said.

India, America, United Nations call for holding the attackers accountable

He stressed that attacks targeting sacred sites and worshippers are intolerable and have to stop. Recalling the UN Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites, he called on all governments and relevant stakeholders to support the implementation of the plan to guarantee the sanctity of worship places and the safety of worshipers.

Moratinos said the latest attack adds to an expanding number of attacks targeting various faith communities around the world. He reiterated that such outrageous acts of terror should not dissuade us from working together to promote solidarity, respect, and peace globally.

On behalf of the UNAOC, the High Representative expressed his condolences to the victims' families and conveys his solidarity to the people and the Government of Afghanistan.

India's Ambassador to Afghanistan Vinay Kumar on Thursday , March 26, visited the Sikh gurudwara and offered condolences to families of the victims of the horrific attack.

"Amb @vkumar1969 visited the gurudwara and met community leaders, elders and families of the victims of terrorist attack. He shared their grief and offered condolences. He was told that the injured are receiving satisfactory treatment," the Indian embassy in Afghanistan said in a tweet.

The embassy also said it was working for the return of the mortal remains of Tian Singh, one of the deceased from Delhi, whose family wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help them bringing back the mortal remains.

"@IndianEmbKabul is working for the return of the mortal remains of Shri Tian Singh. @IndianEmbKabul will continue to provide all assistance to the community and families as may be required in these difficult days," it said. Prime Minister Modi said on Wednesday that he was "saddened" by the attack on the gurudwara when 150 worshippers were inside the building.

"I am saddened by today's terror attack at Gurudwara in Kabul. I express my condolences to the families of all the deceased," he said in a tweet.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted:"I'm shocked by the news of a terror attack on a Gurudwara in Kabul, Afghanistan in which over 25 people have died.

My condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives. I pray that the injured make a speedy recovery."

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also condemned the attack that lasted for about six hours, terming it cowardly and reflective of a "diabolical mindset". "Such cowardly attacks on places of religious worship of the minority community, especially at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, is reflective of the diabolical mindset of the perpetrators and their backers, it said in a statement. The MEA said India stood in solidarity with the people, the government and the security forces of Afghanistan in their efforts for bringing peace and security to the country. The American Federation of Muslims of Indian Origin (AFMI) in a statement to The Indian Panorama said the organization strongly condemns the barbaric attack on the gurdwara in Kabul. "The American Federation of Muslims of Indian Origin (AFMI) condemns the barbaric attack on the Sikh community in their Gurudwaras in Kabul that resulted in the killing of 25 men, women, and children.

"It is unthinkable that a house of worship full with unarmed and peaceful devotees would come under the attack of terrorists who reportedly belonged to the previously unknown so-called Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), said Dr. Abdur Rehman Nakadar, the trustee of the organization. "Sikhs are peaceful people and known throughout the world for their humanitarian work, especially in areas where Muslims have suffered persecution. An attack on them is an attack on humanity," he further explained. "By attacking the Sikh in Kabul, the terrorists have attacked Islam and hurt the Islamic ideas

on the sanctity of life. The organization offered its condolences to the bereaving families and assured the Sikh community that Muslims and Sikhs are together in their fight against violence and terror.

Afghanistan once had over 50,000 strong Sikh communities in the 1960s. However, during the last few decades, their number has come down to 3,000 as most have migrated to India and other parts of the world.

AFMI has asked its members to donate to the Sikh community to rehabilitate the families who have lost their loved ones. The organization believes that the ones who committed this heinous crime are not only the enemies of peace but of the faith of Islam as well. AFMI hopes that the government of Afghanistan and Afghan civil society would reassure the Sikh community of their safety and security. The Afghan government must punish those who are behind the barbarism.

"We commend the brave Afghan security forces for their valorous response to the attack and their exemplary courage and dedication to protect the Afghan people and secure the country," it said. New York based eminent attorney and Chair; National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs has written an open letter to President Trump urging him to destroy the bases of Islamic State which claimed responsibility for the attack.



The letter reads as follows:-

"Unique Crime need Unique Punishment for: Kabul Gurudwara attacked by ISIS during Covid Natl Emergency. Eliminate ISIS and use Nano Nuke.

Respected President Donald J. Trump:

First, I have Grief for the innocent worshipers, the dead, the wounded, and a fractured family, including the human family across the world.

Second, my thanks to Afghan and security forces, who bravely swung into action to protect and limit the carnage, even as they had little or no Jello gelatin Peace process, which I

role in the recent support.

Third, this Crime of Terror - reaches new evil. As the world know we are all in a fight to survive against an enemy that remains attractively disarming to easily attach to every host, invisible and equally tenacious as the "old man" of the river in Sinbad the Sailor story. Yet, Terror struck a Kabul Gurudwara & community center.

Fourth, the punishment I fear has to be unique. The whole world is in a "no war" mode, because we are in a "Covid war" mode to save humanity Sharing our scientific and medical knowledge, as if it was "open source." Our time is too precious to deviate. Millions of lives hang in the balance.

Finally, so the unique punishment I propose, with a heart heavy of pain embedded in history, to the Hon President of the United States, H E Donald John Trump, is to identify all ISIS Centers, mark them for immediate destruction, and if there be a main one, for that mother load of evil, we go back to WWII decision-making, and for even better reasons now, roll out our Nano Nuke and eviscerate this evil. We can then continue to fight and beat Covid. It is a liberal lunacy to think compassionately about terrorists who have none. Right now, Mr President, your job is to defend the public safety, and the greater good. The deterrence of the punishment I propose will leave you free to address the national emergency that you are.

I, along with my family in New Rochelle, are Covid19 positive and in quarantine and individual isolation. Today is Day 12 of my Fever War.

Respectfully,

Ravi Batra, Chair, National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs".

Indian American Rashmi Vinayak Wins NSF CAREER Award



Rashmi Vinayak is an assistant professor in the Carnegie Mellon University Computer Science Department

NEW YORK (TIP): Rashmi Vinayak, an assistant professor in the Carnegie Mellon University Computer Science Department, has won a five-year, \$650,000 Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Award, the National Science Foundation's most prestigious award for young faculty members.

The award will support Vinayak's work to improve the resource and energy efficiency of large-scale data centers, which together serve as the backbone for internet-based services, cloud services and data analytics platforms.

"Such large-scale systems are prone to failures and unavailability, and therefore have a high degree of redundancy built into them to provide resilience against such events," she noted. "While redundancy provides resilience, it comes with a significant overhead in terms of resource and energy requirements. The overarching goal of this project is to design resource- and energy-efficient redundancy algorithms for data centers using tools based on information theory and coding theory."

Vinayak earned her Ph.D. in electrical engineering and computer science at the University of California at Berkeley, where she also worked as a postdoctoral researcher before joining CSD in 2017. Her previous awards include the Eli Jury Award from Berkeley's EECS Department, a Google Faculty Research Award, Facebook Communications and Networking Research Award, and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research Memorial Lecture Award.

Indian American Former MTA Supervisor Pleads Guilty to Obstructing Investigation



NEW YORK (TIP): Paresh Patel, a former MTA manager, pled guilty March 11 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Ona T. Wang to obstructing a federal investigation into bid rigging and fraud in connection with contracts awarded by the MTA for Superstorm Sandy-related subway repairs.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Patel was a program manager at the MTA and was responsible for awarding contracts and exercising oversight of Superstorm Sandy-related subway repairs.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American Vivek Murthy Named to Biden's COVID-19 Advisory Panel

WASHINGTON (TIP): Vivek Murthy, former US Surgeon General of Indian origin, has been named a member of Democratic contender Joe Biden's presidential campaign's "Public Health Advisory Committee" to advise on steps that Biden, his staff and his supporters can take to reduce the threat to reduce the threat of the novel coronavirus, which causes COVID-19. The panel is made up of six doctors and former government officials.

Vivek Murthy became the first graduate of the Yale School of Medicine and the first American of Asian descent to be confirmed as the U.S. Surgeon General. Then Vice President Joe Biden swore him in during a ceremony on April 22, 2015 as nation's 19th surgeon general.

After graduating from Yale, Murthy founded TrialNetworks, social networking platforms for clinical trials that enhance communication, collaboration, and overall efficiency. During the 2008 presidential campaign Murthy and colleagues founded Doctors for Obama. After the election, the group became Doctors for America, a



Then Vice President Joe Biden swore Vivek Murthy in during a ceremony on April 22, 2015 as nation's 19th surgeon general

grassroots organization of doctors and medical students working to improve access to health care. In 2011, President Obama appointed Murthy to the national Advisory Group on Prevention, Health

Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health. The following year Murthy served as co-chair of the health care advisory committee for Obama's re-election campaign.

Indian Origin Celebrity Chef Floyd Cardoz dies of Covid-19 in New Jersey



Cardoz had shot to fame in the mid-1990s when he opened a famous restaurant called Tabla in New York



The ace chef at work

Photo / Mohammed Jaffer / SnapsIndia

the passing away of Chef Floyd Cardoz (59 years), Co-Founder, Hunger Inc. Hospitality, on March 25, 2020 in New Jersey, USA," it said. He is survived by his mother Beryl, wife Barkha and sons Justin and Peter.

Cardoz was born in Mumbai and grew up between that metropolis and his ancestral state of Goa. He took up cuisine against the wishes of his father. After training in Bombay and later in Switzerland, he came to New York. In 1998, he opened an influential fusion restaurant in Manhattan called Tabla with restaurateur Danny Meyer - the first in a string of innovative dining spots in both New York and Mumbai. Cardoz was a four-time James Beard Award nominee and the writer of two cookbooks.

Ambassador Sandeep Chakravorty, Consul General of India in New York termed the passing away of Floyd as "shocking" and offered his condolences to the family.

Indian American UT-Arlington President Resigns amidst Controversy



HOUSTON (TIP): Vistasp Karbhari, The University of Texas at Arlington's president resigned and has set his sights on a job at a Florida school amid an investigation into the school's online recruitment practices and a pending retaliation lawsuit, according to media reports.

Vistasp Karbhari announced last week that he will leave UT-Arlington on Aug. 31. In a statement, Karbhari touted the heightening of research activity and an improved school reputation under his tenure.

Karbhari took office in June 2013 as the eighth president of The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). As president, he was committed to advancing UTA's national and international profile while strengthening excellence in research and teaching and ensuring the success of UTA's students in campus-based and online degree programs in Texas and around the world. In the 2017-18 academic year, UTA served almost 60,000 students through these programs. Under his leadership, UTA has achieved Carnegie R-1 status, was named a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and is ranked as the top educational institution in the State of Texas for Veterans and Adult Learners, in addition to having nationally ranked programs in each of UTA's schools and colleges.

Prior to joining UTA, President Karbhari served at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (2008-2013), the University of California San Diego (1995-2008), and the University of Delaware (1991-1995).

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Protecting The Elderly & The Vulnerable

AVOIDING COVID -19: OT STUDENT'S COMPASSION KEEPS ELDERLY SAFE

By Mabel Pais

"My grandmother told me that she was apprehensive about going out to get groceries after family members in New York encouraged her to avoid public spaces, but she felt she didn't have any other option."

- **Etana Edelman, Graduate Student, SHU-SHMS, NJ**

I have heard about people ordering online but never thought I would be able to do it. Once I got the hang of it, it was easier to use."

Grandma Estelle Epstein

As officials advise the public to socially isolate with warnings of the specific dangers to the elderly, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the elderly population to safely and independently perform necessary Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs), including socializing, exercising and shopping.

On Sunday March 14, 86-year-old Estelle Epstein told her granddaughter, Etana Edelman, 26, that she was stepping out of her beach community apartment in Florida to pick up some groceries and supplies from her neighborhood shopping center.

Under normal circumstances, this would not have caused an alarm to Etana. However, in March 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, such a trip could unnecessarily expose her to the dangerous pathogen.

For 26-year-old Etana, soon-to-graduate with a degree in Occupational Therapy from Seton Hall University's School of Health and Medical Sciences (SHU, SHMS) New Jersey, buying necessary supplies such as perishables, groceries and even toilet paper could easily be accomplished with a few taps and swipes on her iPhone. For her grandmother who is not as tech savvy, online shopping does not come as naturally.

Etana then had the idea to set up an online shopping account for her grandmother with her local grocery store. After making the account, she guided her grandmother through downloading the app on her phone and taught her how to search for specific items, add them to her cart and order

them to be delivered to her apartment. Although it was difficult at first, her grandmother became excited by the new opportunity. She said, "I have heard about people ordering online but never thought I would be able to do it. Once I got the hang of it, it was easier to use."

But, some of the challenges that they faced was the limited online stock of certain items, and that orders would not be delivered for more than five days due to high order volume. Etana helped her grandmother anticipate what she would need by that time to make an appropriate order.

By the next day, her grandmother had told her friends about the website and they were all interested in learning about it as well.

Teach Your Clients

Online resources are crucial tools in helping the elderly population avoid breaking isolation to go to shopping centers. One of the main barriers to using these resources is knowledge of how to use them effectively. This presents an opportunity for Occupational Therapists (OTs) and other healthcare professionals to help their clients through these difficult times by creating guides to make these available online resources accessible to this aging population.

Sharing these guides through community center mailings and emails can enable these older adults to access the education that they need. A simple video tutorial itself could be a game changer, and Google, Microsoft or any number of tech companies, especially those that cater to older adults could play an important role in fighting COVID-19. These interventions would help at-risk clients avoid unnecessary exposure to COVID-19 and could potentially save lives.

Identify grocery stores in the area that deliver "search online grocery delivery (insert zip code)"

Create account, including email address and password

Record login information for later use

Input location information to see if the store will deliver

Search for specific items

"milk", "eggs", "bread", "tomatoes"

Select specific item and quantity

Click "add to cart"

Go to checkout by selecting the grocery cart icon in the top right

Input credit card information

Input delivery address information

Click "submit order"

Not Just Food

Health care delivery and everyday life increasingly relies on internet access and this was trending before COVID-19. Older adults under 70 with higher education levels and socioeconomic status adopt technology at similar rates



to the general population, with two-thirds of older adults now using the internet. However, individuals 80 and older are disproportionately not accessing e-technology (Pew Research Center, 2017) and this population represents some of the most vulnerable individuals to the pathogen.

In addition, changes associated with the typical aging process, such as decreases in vision, auditory, sensory and cognitive skills, can interfere with the person-website interface. The digital divide remains firmly in place for those in the oldest-age-categories, as well as for those with lower incomes and less education.

Telehealth

Medicare announced recently that they are paving the way for increased access to telemedicine to meet physical and mental health needs and to maintain social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic (modernhealthcare.com, March 17, 2020).

However, Medicare relaxing regulations assumes

1. The digital skills and capability; and understanding of health literacy of older adults; and
2. That older adults do not have sensory, physical or cognitive challenges

What We Can Do Right Now

Ask, but do not assume that our oldest adults can participate in the online environment. Start with family and neighbors and look after the most vulnerable during this difficult time.

Call people on their preferred communication device first, whether that be a landline or cell phone.

Determine whether there is a concrete need for assistance with grocery shopping or pharmacy medication orders. If distance is not an issue, then shop for them when you complete your own limited trips to the supermarket but be careful to not unnecessarily expose them to any illness. Online shopping, as Etana noted, requires advance planning due to temporary stocking shortages, but is preferred.

If the older adult has a health concern, encourage them to call their physician's office if they are unable to use the Internet. Prior to the call, help them create a list of symptoms to enable medical staff to triage them appropriately.

Ideally, we would follow Etana's model and guide the person to learn to use the technology to meet daily household and medical needs. This solution assumes that there are underlying skills to build upon.

ABOUT SETON HALL UNIVERSITY (SHU.EDU)

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Seton Hall embraces students of all religions and prepares them to be exemplary servant leaders and global citizens. In recent years, the University has achieved extraordinary success.

To learn more, visit shu.edu

(Mabel Pais writes on Health & Wellness, Social Issues, Spirituality, and The Arts and Entertainment)

Coronavirus Help: Resources, Hotlines, Unemployment, Covering Bills and More

The coronavirus pandemic continues to spread throughout the Tri-State Area, with new cases and restrictions announced each day.

Lawmakers have launched special websites and hotlines to keep the public up to date.

SITES AND HOTLINES BY REGION

NEW YORK STATEWIDE: Official coronavirus website or call 1-(888)-364-3065.

New York City: Official coronavirus website or call 311, or text "COVID" to 692-692

Westchester County: Official coronavirus website or call 211 for general information, or 1-(866)-588-0195 if you are under self-quarantine or were exposed to a known case

Nassau County: Official coronavirus website and map of confirmed cases or call 1-(516)-227-9570, or text "COVID19NC" to 888777

Suffolk County: Official coronavirus website or text "COVIDSUFFOLK" to 67283

NEW JERSEY STATEWIDE: Official coronavirus website or call 211 for general information, or 1-(800)-962-1253 for clinical questions, "NJCovid" to 898-211.

NJ.gov New Jersey COVID-19 Dashboard

New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund (non-governmental grant organization)

Bergen County: Official coronavirus website or call 1-(201)-225-7000, or 1-(201)-785-8505 after hours and weekends

CONNECTICUT STATEWIDE: Official

coronavirus website or call 211.

NATIONAL RESOURCE GUIDES

Centers For Disease Control And Prevention COVID-19 Information
Coronavirus.gov Federal Resource Site
John Hopkins University & Medicine
Coronavirus Resource Center
John Hopkins University COVID-19 Interactive Map

BUSINESS AND INCOME TOPICS

DID YOU LOSE YOUR JOB AMID THE OUTBREAK?
New York: Filing An Unemployment Claim
New York City: Help With Energy Bills
New Jersey: Filing An Unemployment Claim
New Jersey: Jobs Portal To Find New Work
Connecticut: Filing An Unemployment Claim

ARE YOU WORKING BUT NEED TO TAKE PAID SICK LEAVE?

New York: If You Are Quarantined Yourself
New York: If Your Minor Dependent Child is Quarantined
New York: If You Need Time To Take Care Of Family Members
New Jersey: All Cases
Connecticut: All Cases
WHAT IF YOU OWN A SMALL BUSINESS AND NEED HELP?
U.S. Small Business Administration
Guidance & Loan Resources
Economic Injury Disaster Loan

Program
NYC Employee Retention Grant Program

New York City Small Business Continuity Fund Survey
Facebook Small Business Grants Program

WHAT IF I'M BEHIND ON PAYMENTS OR CANNOT COVER MY STUDENT LOAN? Contact your federal student loan provider's online or by phone.

CornerStone: See website or call 1-800-663-1662

FedLoan Servicing (PHEAA): See website or call 1-800-699-2908

Granite State - GSMR: See website or call 1-888-556-0022

Great Lakes Educational Loan Services, Inc.: See website or call 1-800-236-4300

HESC/Edfinancial: See website or call 1-855-337-6884

MOHELA: See website or call 1-888-866-4352

Navient: See website or call 1-800-722-

1300 Nelnet: See website or call 1-888-486-

4722 OSLA Servicing: See website or call 1-866-264-9762 ECSI: See website or call 1-866-313-3793

FOOD AND SAFETY TOPICS

ARE YOU RUNNING OUT OF FOOD?

Food Banks Across New York State

Food Banks In New York City

Food Banks On Long Island

Food Banks In New Jersey

Food Banks In Connecticut

Applying for SNAP Assistance in New York

Applying for SNAP Assistance in New Jersey
Applying for SNAP Assistance in Connecticut

WHAT IF I HAVE LEGAL ISSUES RIGHT NOW?

NYC Legal Aid Society (status of criminal, family, housing, immigration and civil court access)

Legal Services of New Jersey (status of court access, finding help)

Connecticut Network for Legal Aid (status of court access, finding help)

ARE YOU OR SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU SUFFERING FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

New York State And NYC Domestic Violence Hotlines And Shelters

New Jersey Domestic Violence Hotlines And Shelters

Connecticut Domestic Violence Hotlines And Shelters

DISTANCE LEARNING AND HOME TEACHING

See CBS2's Distance Learning Tools And Links For Parents Teaching At Home.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE: DAILY DIARIES

COVID-19 Survivor Corps Facebook Page

Do you have a Facebook Group or blog about living through the outbreak? Let us know on our Facebook page - click here.

NYC Census 2020 Releases New PSA Featuring Multi-Platinum, Award Winning Rapper Cardi B Urging New Yorkers to Fill Out the Census

New York City officials encourage all New Yorkers to take the census from their home today by visiting my2020census.gov or by calling one of 15 different phone lines

NEW YORK (TIP): The New York State Division of Consumer Protection (DCP) is alerting consumers about scammers taking advantage of the novel coronavirus. Scammers are using techniques that typically arise with a major global event such as: falsely claiming to be online sellers of popular goods; setting up fake charities; sending fake emails and texts that contain harmful links designed to steal your personal information; and using robocalls to pitch novel coronavirus treatments and work at home schemes. People should be on the lookout for scammers looking to take advantage of public fears surrounding this issue.

"Unscrupulous scammers never take a break and they are now trying to cash in

on the news of the novel coronavirus by trying to lure people into unknowingly providing their personal information," said Secretary of State Rossana Rosado.

"During this public health emergency, there are simple steps you can take to avoid

novel coronavirus scams that can help protect your hard-earned money and your identity."

"New York State's coordinated multi-agency response to managing the novel coronavirus includes raising awareness about deceptive and dishonest attempts to

take advantage of people during this outbreak," said Commissioner of the New

York State Department of Health Dr. Howard Zucker. "The best ways to prevent the

spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses involve proven precautions,

like washing your hands, sneezing or coughing into your elbow and staying

indoors when you feel sick to help prevent the spread of infection all year."

Given the spread of COVID-19, the NYC Census 2020 campaign is focused on

encouraging New Yorkers to self-

respond to the census now. If New

Yorkers take a few minutes to self-

respond now from the safety and

security of their own homes, they will



avoid a knock on their door during the door-to-door enumeration period over the summer.

"Every New Yorker should listen to Cardi B and take a few minutes to fill out the Census right away, either via phone or online," said Julie Menin, Director of NYC Census 2020. "When you take a few minutes to fill out the census, you make sure that your community in New York City is counted and that it receives its fair share of critical resources for children's health insurance, hospitals, senior centers, and more. While the U.S. Census Bureau has delayed their field outreach by two weeks, by filling out the census now, you are ensuring that no Census Bureau workers will need to visit your home later this summer."

"2020 is a huge opportunity to make our voices heard. This year, we have the power to decide our city's future not just for the next four years but for the next ten," Cardi B says in the new PSA.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Consumer Protection



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(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Businesses Indulging in Price Gouging

NEW YORK(TIP): Despite of administration's strict warning against Price Gouging, Indian businesses, particularly grocers are taking advantage of the situation and indulging in price gouging . It is really a shame they are hoarding and selling essential items at 5 times to 10 times of the original price. They may have made some extra money but at the cost of the fair name of India. A white guy wondered why he was being asked to pay @\$4 for a small bottle of sanitizer when its original price is \$1. And the receipt does not mention the item. It simply says grocery.

Same with other essential items , like water bottles. A case of water bottles normally costing 3.99 max was being sold by a Hicksville grocer for \$14.99. The receipt says grocery.



The same grocery store charged \$1.00 for a roll of tissue paper, which normally sells for 50 cents.

Many Indian grocery stores (fairly big ones) in Hicksville and Richmond Hill have raised prices on a variety of items, like lentils, flour, rice etc. from 25% to

50%, adding to the woes of people already suffering under the difficult circumstances, consequent upon the outbreak of Coronavirus.

An Indian grocery store in Jersey City charged \$6.99 for a bottle of sanitizer which normally sells for \$1.00.

Stores like Costco and Walmart may not have certain items available, but they haven't indulged in price gouging.

One finds no price tags. Receipts do not mention the commodities for which higher prices are charged.

Instead, the receipt says "grocery".

We urge consumers to not submit to their being fleeced and report the matter to Consumer Affairs department or call 311 in New York City and 211 elsewhere.

Readers will find the Helpline on another page in this edition.

Report price gouging, in your interest and in the interest of America.

Follow administration's advisory to keep yourself and America safe.

God bless America!



QUEENS LAUNCHES 'FUEL THE FRONTLINES' INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT WORKERS

Local Entrepreneurs to Prepare Thousands of Meals for Workers at Queens' Nine Hospitals

QUEENS, NY(TIP): Acting Queens Borough President Sharon Lee, the Queens Economic Development Corporation (QEDC) and the Queens Night Market , on March 25 announced a "Fuel the Frontlines" joint initiative in Queens to provide thousands of ready-to-go "home-cooked" meals for workers across the borough's nine acute-care hospitals on the frontlines of battling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beginning this Sunday, March 29 and fully funded by Borough President Lee, the week-long initiative aims to both support the tireless medical professionals working long, difficult hours on the frontlines, while also supporting Queens' small businesses facing severe economic disruption stemming from social distancing measures taken to combat the public health crisis. Unemployment claims filed last week reached historic levels, both with 80,334 claims filed in New York State and 3.28 million nationwide in the week ending March 21.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has produced two-front battles waged by heroic frontline workers and business owners," said Borough President LEE. "Fuel the

Frontlines' is one hyper-local yet immediate step to support those trying to stem the tide and bend the curves of this unprecedented public health and economic crisis. In this race against time, our trajectory depends entirely on not just what we do, but when we do it. All across Queens, frontline workers and medical professionals are moving mountains around the clock with extraordinary acts of heroism, using all tools and resources available to save each and every single life. Queens is deeply grateful, and we know every single minute counts."

The meals will be prepared by small businesses either enrolled in QEDC's innovative Entrepreneur Space (E-Space) commercial kitchen incubator in Long Island City or vendors who participate in the seasonal Queens Night Market in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Many of the meals will be transported to each hospital by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

"Fuel the Frontlines" hopes to inspire subsequent funding commitments from corporate and individual sponsors in order to extend or expand the initiative;

potential sponsors can call 718-286-3000 or email info@queensbp.org, with the subject line "Fuel the Frontlines". Both QEDC and the Queens Night Market will waive any administrative costs associated with the "Fuel the Frontlines" initiative.

"I am glad our Entrepreneur Space clients are part of the effort to provide medical caregivers on the front lines with meals that will give them the sustenance to carry on and continue to protect our communities," said Queens Economic Development Corporation Executive Director SETH BORNSTEIN.

"While we're extremely disappointed that we won't be opening up the Queens Night Market in April this year like originally intended, we're committed to making a positive impact while we're all hunkered down during this crisis," said Queens Night Market founder JOHN WANG. "We hope this project can provide some small businesses with a modest but important stream of revenue during these challenging economic times. But most of all, we hope that our collective contributions will be matched by corporations and generous individuals who want to help out those battling this



Acting Queens Borough President Sharon Lee announced, March 25, a program to provide meals for workers

pandemic and caring for those in need on the frontlines."

*Read full story at
www.theindianpanorama.news*



by Dinesh C Sharma

Attention to interdependencies means mapping all inter-linkages in critical sectors. For instance, assuring essential medical supplies during lockdown would depend on the supply of raw materials and components from industries, which by themselves may not qualify as essential.

India has embarked upon an unprecedented experiment in the history of mankind. Never before a country of the size of India has been under complete lockdown, not even in times of wars, internal disturbances and the national emergency imposed in 1975. It is a medical and epidemiological experiment of an unthinkable scale. No scientist can afford or imagine to recruit this large number of subjects - 1.3 billion people - in any study. It is an experiment in inducing mass behavior change and testing of health communication messages targeted at people. The lockdown has put the entire economy in an experimental mode - from service to manufacturing, all industries are going to test their resilience and emergency preparedness during the lockdown and beyond. It is also a challenge for law-enforcing agencies, which for the first time, are facing a situation when the whole country is under legally enforceable curfew. Most important, it is a new experiment in governance, civil liberties and human rights.

The turn of the century brought into public imagination the term - pandemic, a global epidemic. This was a result of a series of epidemics and pandemics which have unfolded in the past two decades - avian influenza, swine flu, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), middle east respiratory syndrome, Ebola, nipah and so on. Some of them caught led to a great loss to humanity and economy. A pandemic can swiftly turn into an economic contagion and cripple economies, resulting in massive losses for countries of their origin. SARS is a classic case where China suppressed information about the initial outbreak, resulting in its spread to dozens of countries. Data is now showing that a

AS I SEE IT

READINESS FRAMEWORK FOR PANDEMICS NEEDED

similar pattern has led to Covid-19 becoming a pandemic. Before containment measures like travel ban and lockdown really kicked in, thousands of infected people from Wuhan had carried the virus to many countries around the globe.

In response to the avian influenza pandemic, the global health community led by the World Health Organisation has been working on strategies to address the challenge. The WHO has been emphasizing that new pandemics need a response not just from the health sector but also from an array of non-health ones. This approach has helped develop a 'readiness framework' based on five tenets - a whole-of-society approach; preparedness at all levels; attention to critical interdependencies; a scenario-based response; and respect for ethical norms. Every country can develop its own strategic response to a pandemic based on these broad principles.

For example, the whole-of-society approach means developing preparedness plans across government departments and involving business and civil society so that economic impacts on the society can be minimized and mitigated. Industry should not be caught off guard when a pandemic occurs. Here, industry does not mean just those engaged in essential services, but also sectors like information technology outsourcing, which is worth \$175 billion. Pandemic preparedness plans should include all such sectors so that they can switch to the emergency mode when the need arises. Each industry should have its own 'business continuity management' plan.

The preparedness plans have to work at all levels - national, state and district. Directing states to follow certain norms only after a health emergency is declared does not yield the desired results. Disaster-preparedness in Odisha and epidemic-preparedness in Kerala (during the nipah outbreak) are excellent examples of proactive states taking a lead. Getting states ready in advance would also ensure more nuanced responses to emergencies based on the situation in every state. Again, Kerala,



Lockdown: Pandemic situations require governments to enforce measures such as travel restrictions.

during the current pandemic, has been ahead of the curve announcing a health package (Rs 20,000 crore) bigger than that announced by the Prime Minister. Most states don't have this level of preparedness capacity and simply look to the Centre for guidelines in case of emergencies. Attention to interdependencies means carefully mapping all inter-linkages in critical sectors. For instance, assuring essential medical supplies during lockdown would depend on the supply of raw materials and components from industries which by themselves may not qualify as essential.

The pandemic situations also require governments to enforce certain regulatory measures such as travel restrictions, visa bans, social distancing, quarantine, isolation and lockdowns through existing or new laws. This has implications for public order, personal liberties and livelihood. In the present situation, the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 was applied in some states to enforce a partial lockdown. The 21-day national lockdown has been imposed by invoking the provisions of the National Disaster Management Act under which Covid-19 has been declared a 'notified disaster'. Some states have also used provisions of the Indian Penal Code to enforce a ban on gatherings and curfew conditions. The use of such provisions in times of a

health emergency is untested and needs utmost caution. There are reports of stickers being posted on Covid-19 suspects and foreign returnees, leading to their social boycott and stigmatization. People were also stamped on their hands at airports. All such steps are a violation of personal liberties and human rights. The preparedness plans must also take care of vulnerable groups of people - migrant labor, daily wage earners, the homeless, people in homes for the aged and so on. Civil society and community-based organizations have to be involved in reaching out to these groups.

While the government has implemented the lockdown and empowered the Ministry of Home Affairs to enforce it, health agencies like the Indian Council of Medical Research and the Ministry of Health need to be transparent about containment and mitigation measures being taken during this period. The government should also share with the nation steps it is taking to strengthen the health system to prepare it for a surge of cases, if it occurs. Lack of transparency can lead to lack of accountability and fuel rumors during the lockdown period. A grievance redress mechanism should also be developed to address complaints and accesses, if any, during the lockdown.

(Dinesh C Sharma is a journalist and an author)

GUEST COMMENT

The attack by suicide bombers on a large gathering of Sikhs worshipping in a gurdwara in Kabul, which left at least 25 dead and many injured, highlights once again the precarious condition of the minority communities in Afghanistan. The violence comes close on the heels of the March 6 attack by Islamic State terrorists on a gathering of minority Shiite Muslims in the Capital city, claiming 32 lives. The targeted attacks bring into sharp focus the US-Taliban deal that was signed in February to pave the way for peace in the war-ravaged country. Peace remains elusive in the current political impasse.

Attack on Afghan Sikhs: Kabul must end religious persecution of minorities

With over 20 terrorist organizations active in the country, this attack on the Sikh devotees - all sitting ducks - must goad the world community, including India, to shore up efforts to counter the threat of terrorism that still looms large in Afghanistan. It is a grim reminder of the July 2018 gory incident when a group of Sikhs and Hindus, on its way to meet President Ashraf Ghani in Jalalabad, was struck by an Islamist State bomber, resulting in the death of 19 people, including Avtar Singh Khalsa, the only Sikh candidate who was

contesting in the parliamentary elections later that year.

The dwindling number of Sikhs who are stoically living in their motherland despite wide-scale persecution and atrocities need to be protected. The once thriving trading community has been reduced to being one selling medicinal herbs or running small cloth shops. The Sikhs are provided security for their funerals as the society opposes their practice of cremation. With their Muslim hardliner brothers increasing the hostilities against them and the

government having little interest in protecting such a small section, it will not be surprising if the remaining few - around 300 families - are also forced to migrate to India or the West, like the over two lakh Sikhs who have fled Afghanistan in the past four decades. The violence stands to cost the country its religious ethnic group, one that has called it home ever since Guru Nanak visited the place over 500 years ago. Already, most of their gurdwaras have been destroyed. Just like the Bamiyan Buddhists. (Tribune, India)

'God's own country' or not? NRIs and Tourists in the throes of Coronavirus crisis



By George Abraham

The world has indeed taken notice of how well Kerala has handled the Coronavirus threat so far and widely applauded for steps the state has undertaken to mitigate the crisis. However, as the virus fear sweeps through Kerala, some of the stories coming out of my home state are very disconcerting. It doesn't bring out the best of humanity, especially from those who have lived and prospered on the largesse of the NRI remittances and significant revenue from the tourism boom.

I am referring here about the treatment some of the Keralites meted out to NRIs and foreign nationals who are either returning from foreign countries or trapped in the state due to state-imposed travel restrictions. Most of the NRIs are Indian citizens, and they have the right to return to their home country. Some of the tourists might have been caught off guard and stranded by these fast-moving developments around the Coronavirus or made the trip regardless due to their long-term planning for a dream vacation or fearing potential losses in terms of prepaid bookings.

Kerala's prosperity in the last five decades can be primarily attributed to the 'money-order economy' where the foreign currency remittances fast-tracked the socio-economic development in the state. According to World Bank reports, India retained its position as the world's top recipient of remittances with its diaspora sending a whopping 79 Billion dollars back home in 2018. Kerala tops in that category, with almost 20% of that remittances directly going to the state. The money the NRIs send home helps not only the families but also the balance of payments of the country.

The flow of that amount of money into the Kerala economy by way of remittances has a very significant impact on the living conditions of its citizens. It is

important to note that 80% of emigrants from Kerala went to the Gulf, and they contribute a large chunk of the remittances that flow into Kerala. According to a previous study done by the Middle East Institute, remittances were 1.74 times the revenue receipts of the state. Remittances in Kerala were 5.5 times the finance received from the central government and 36 times the exporting earnings from cashews and 30 times that from marine products.

The study also pointed out the impact of remittances to Kerala and how it has manifested in household consumption, saving and investment, the quality of houses, and the possession of modern consumer durables. Remittances also played a role in enhancing the quality of life and contributing to a high human development index for Kerala in terms of education and health, along with the reduction of poverty and unemployment.

The overall result for the state has been quite impressive. Kerala's rating for the Human Development Index (HDI) 0.790, is the highest in India, resulting from the vast improvements state has made in the fields of sanitation, health, education, and poverty reduction. In 2016, the state was also declared 'open defecation free' with toilets in every household. The female literacy rate in Kerala stands at 94%, and it is the only state in the union where the female population exceeds the male population.

Nevertheless, the stories being aired about some of the experiences of returning NRIs and stranded tourists at these difficult times are heart-wrenching. It is critical that the returning NRIs ought to be truthful to the authorities and mindful of their vulnerability in terms of spreading this virus. They need to behave responsibly as per the rules and be accountable for their actions. However, they shouldn't be blamed for the failures of the state from properly screening all arrivals. It is the responsibility of the authorities to ascertain origins of travel and routings and to decide whether anyone should be quarantined. The infrastructure should have been already in place at all airports for health screenings,



God's Own Country- Kerala

and the medical personnel should have been fitted with protective gear.

Instead, what we are witnessing is an act of demonization of some of those who happened to carry the Coronavirus, probably of no fault of their own. Some of them might have contracted the virus during the travel and possibly even asymptomatic upon their arrival. Therefore, there is very little justification for the harassment and name-calling they were subjected to and the contempt with which they have been treated.

The experiences of some of the foreign tourists at the hands of my fellow Malayalees are even more appalling. An alien couple was found to be traumatized and crying incessantly in the middle of a road as they haven't had food for three days. According to the reports, they were denied food or lodging by panicky guest houses and hotels across the state and finally had to be rescued by the Police department. There were stories of tourists sleeping in cemeteries because their reservations to the hotels were not being honored.

It is not only a phenomenon in Kerala but also across the country where foreign tourists are being evicted from their apartments, made to feel unwelcome in Taxis, asked to leave restaurants, and have been subjected to hostile looks in public spaces. Social media also bears some responsibility in spreading this panic-driven disinformation that all foreign tourists are carriers of the Coronavirus.

Even students from Northeast are not spared this time around as many have experienced harassment at the hands of other students, and their interactions were marked by suspicion and rudeness often bordering racism.

Finally, Keralites are one of the largest groups of economic refugees on this planet, constantly exploring opportunities and daring to break barriers to travel to the ends of the earth to better themselves. We do expect those foreign countries and their nationals to treat us fairly, provide us with opportunities, respect our cultures, and honor our religious traditions. Besides, we also request them to transfer part of their wealth to our state so that folks who are left behind may do better with their own lives as well.

Therefore, it is obligatory to keep our end of the bargain in treating foreign tourists as well as returning NRIs fairly in good times as well as bad. We simply cannot have it both ways! I am encouraged to see that the government of Kerala, which saw more than a million tourists set foot in the state in 2018, came out to denounce such attacks on foreign tourists asking locals not to see them as carriers of virus. A national crisis often reveals the character of a people. Kerala is often dubbed as 'God's own country' and not let the world call us 'Devil's own people'!

(The writer is a former Chief Technology Officer of the United Nations and Vice-Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA)

READERS WRITE

Make Shut Down More Effective

The shut down in its present form does not seem to be producing the desired results. There has to be a more effective shut down, maybe a total shut down. I have a couple of suggestions in this regard.

Government may let essential businesses run with few more precautions so that people are not encouraged to step out and risk the ones trying to offer the best even though they are exposed and are in turn risking their own loved ones.

Odd-even days schedule could be more effective. In a particular zip code stores like farmers market, BJ's, Costco etc.

should be allowed to open on odd and even days and for limited hours. People can only shop from their preferred stores on those days during the time granted.

This will need fewer people to work resulting in low risk and will help maintain social distancing.

Government can assign /allow for the benefit of all opening of gas stations, 7 Elevens, Dunkin etc. like chains to be odd even open. The only difference here would be the fact that we do not need a gas station at every 100 meters. Let's say 1 station, 1 Dunkin, or 1 7 Eleven every 2 miles. The business days and hours can be fairly distributed among them.

This would again restrict people from going out for drives and, while in drives, keep hitting stores even though it may not

be required

As a separate mission, looking at the current scenario, Meals can be planned and organized for those quarantined and sick at home from the Gurudwaras. A truck could do the contactless delivery at doorsteps.

All it needs is a basic webpage where in people can request with addresses within the radius of the Gurudwaras

Stores selling dairy, eggs bread and vegetables can be ordered in call or via text or via email or website to be delivered at the doorstep with no extra or bare minimum charge.

Things like paper towels, wipes disinfectants can be delivered, and it would be great when all can get when in stock. Stores will have the right to sell a

limited quantity per person only and could be a weekly delivery.

This way people will value what they have also not flock the stores, rather store after store, collecting sanitizers, disinfectants, kitchen and toilet paper and water.

If a total lockdown is not possible then, at least we can take measures to further limit the people getting out just to play lottery or grab a drink or get gas if nothing else.

They have nothing to do and are always on a mission to go to store after store because they are all open all the time and collect essentials even though their attics and garages are full.

Thank you.
Jaskiran Saluja, Hicksville, New York



Bangladesh to release Khaleda Zia amid coronavirus outbreak

DHAKA (TIP) : Bangladesh on Tuesday initiated a process to "conditionally" release jailed former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for six months amid the coronavirus outbreak in the country, Law Minister Anisul Huq told PTI.

The 74-year-old opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party chief is serving a 17-year prison term in two graft cases since February 8, 2018. "The decision has been taken on humanitarian ground," Huq said. He said the decision was taken in line with Prime Minister Shek Hasina's directives and considering the age of the former prime minister. "...Zia will be released for a period of six months and she must stay in her own house," the minister said. He declined to elaborate immediately but officials familiar with the process said the home ministry would take subsequent steps for the former premier's temporary release under a criminal procedure code (CRPC). Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said his office would take steps for the release of Zia, who is being treated for old-age complications at the prison cell of a state-run specialised hospital, "as soon as" they receive the file from the law ministry. Home ministry officials, however, said the law ministry proposal reached them by now while they were now exhausting the legal procedures to be approved "finally by the prime minister".

The development came a day after Zia's family sought her release in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. "This is a decision we welcome," BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told reporters in brief comments at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University premises here. "I thank Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," Zia's younger sister Selima Islam said.

Zia served thrice as the premier since 1991. Her party suffered a miserable defeat in the 2018 elections bagging only six seats in 300-seat parliament. Her conviction on "moral turpitude" charges debarred her from contesting the polls. She was sent to jail in February 2018 by a local court on charges of embezzling foreign donations meant for an orphanage, named after her slain husband and President Ziaur Rehman, during her premiership between 2001 and 2006. Rehman, a military ruler-turned-politician, was the founder of the BNP. She was convicted in another corruption case later the same year, though her party claims both cases are politically motivated. PTI

Pak suspends domestic flights as coronavirus cases cross 1,000

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan has suspended all domestic flight operations until April 2 to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus after the country reported over 1,000 cases and seven deaths from the COVID-19 infection, authorities said on Wednesday.

The nationwide tally of COVID-19 patients touched 1,037 with 413 cases in Sindh; 115 in Balochistan; 296 in Punjab; 117 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 80 in Gilgit-Baltistan; 15 in Islamabad and one in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, The Express Tribune reported.

The National Disaster Management Authority has said that so far seven people have died due to the coronavirus and 18 recovered.

In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, the country has halted its domestic flights operations.

Abdul Sattar Khokhar, the spokesman of Aviation Division, said that the decision was part of ongoing efforts to contain the deadly coronavirus.

The ban will be effective from Thursday, Khokhar said.

According to a statement on the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority's website on Tuesday, the government has "decided to suspend all types of domestic scheduled/non-scheduled, chartered and private aircraft passenger flight operations with effect from Thursday, March 26, at 6:00am up to April 02, 2020."

Pakistan has already suspended international flights this week. However, cargo flights are exempted from the flight suspension ban.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said that the homegrown cases of coronavirus were very limited but the threat of the spread of the infection was not yet over.

Addressing a meeting of



parliamentary leaders of various parties via video conference, he said: "You would be happy to know that till yesterday only 153 cases were of local transmission and the rest were people who entered the country from abroad", defending the policy of not bringing students from China due to which the country did not witness a single case of coronavirus coming from the neighbouring country.

Khan was still ambivalent on the issue of complete curfew like lockdown, which he said would hit hard the daily wagers and those living below the poverty line. He said the current lockdown in Sindh was a bit too much.

"In the federal government, we were of the view that we need to tailor our response according to the number of cases. Sindh reacted further. Due to the pressure by the media and the people, the provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab also initiated

incremental lockdown," he said.

He asked the provinces to continuously reassess the lockdown as it may have serious impact on the economy.

"Even in the western world, there is a debate on whether coronavirus comes first or the economy," Khan said, adding that the construction industry should not be effected by the lockdown otherwise problems of poor workers would increase.

He said that the national coordination committee on the coronavirus would meet on Thursday to see if there was a need to impose curfew and if the transport across the country should be suspended.

"Only the people can fight this war, no government can," he said.

Meanwhile, there is complete lockdown in the country and people have been told to remain inside of their homes. They are only allowed to go out in case of emergency. PTI

Covid-19: Sri Lanka starts programme to deliver essential goods to homes

COLOMBO (TIP): To encourage physical distancing due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Sri Lankan government has started a special programme to deliver essential goods including medicines and food items, to homes, it was reported on Thursday.

The new program titled "Wait for us, stay at home", will be implemented through a local system in collaboration with Cooperative Societies and supermarket chains. The Daily Financial Times quoted Head of the Presidential Task Force on Continuous Supply, Operation and Coordination of Essential Services, Basil Rajapaksa as saying during the launch on Wednesday.

The entire process should be in line with the coronavirus control initiatives carried out by the health sector. It is imperative to maintain the day-to-day life of the public. Steps have been taken to distribute food items, while protecting domestic farmers and the national

economy," a statement released by the President's Media Division (PMD) said.

The PMD statement said there was no shortage of rice, coconut, vegetables, eggs, and chicken.

In the meeting, Rajapaksa had pointed out the possibility of distributing these items through a combined effort between Cooperative outlets and supermarkets after purchasing from domestic farmers.

A decision was also taken to deliver medicines to the homes of regular patients who have registered at hospitals, with the support of Divisional Secretaries, Public Health Officers, and the security forces, said the Daily Financial Times report.

It was also discussed to implement a system to distribute medicines through a few locally selected pharmacies, to patients who purchase medicines from private pharmacies.

Bangladesh declares public holiday, army to assist in COVID-19 fight

DHAKA (TIP): Due to the increase in the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the country, the Bangladeshi government has declared a public holiday from March 26 to April 4, while the army will be deployed to assist authorities in the fight against the pandemic.

Bangladeshi Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam made the announcement at a press conference in Dhaka on Monday, reports Xinhua news agency.

"Army would be deployed to assist local administration as all the government and the private offices in the country will be closed from March 26 to April 4."

He said the shutdown will not affect emergency services such as law enforcement agencies and hospitals.

Public transport will operate on a limited scale but markets will stay open as usual, Islam added.

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More than 3 million file for Unemployment claims

WASHINGTON (TIP): More than three million people filed for unemployment benefits last week, sending a collective shudder throughout the economy that is unlike anything Americans have experienced.

The report, released by the Labor Department on Thursday, March 26, provides some of the first hard data on the economic toll of the coronavirus pandemic, which has shut down whole swaths of American life faster than government statistics can keep track.

Just three weeks ago, barely 200,000 people applied for jobless benefits, a historically low number. In the half-century that the government has tracked applications, the worst week ever, with 695,000 so-called initial claims, had been in October 1982.

Thursday's figure of nearly 3.3 million set a grim record. "A large part of the economy just collapsed," said Ben Herzon, executive director of IHS Markit, a business data and analytics firm.

The worst could be yet to come. Mr. Herzon said he expected a similarly large number next Thursday, when the Labor Department releases its report on new claims filed this week.

Thursday's unemployment numbers provide only the first hint of the economic cataclysm in progress. Even comparatively optimistic forecasters expect millions of lost jobs, and with them foreclosures, evictions and bankruptcies. Thousands of businesses have closed in response to the pandemic, and many will never reopen. Some economists say the decline in gross domestic product this year could rival the worst years of the Great Depression.

The terrifying speed of the economic collapse has spurred lawmakers to action. Late Wednesday night, Republican and Democratic senators agreed on a \$2 trillion aid package that would provide cash payments to nearly all Americans and would expand the unemployment system, among other changes. The bill is expected to get final congressional approval on Friday.

As staggering as the figures are for jobless claims, they almost certainly understate the problem. Some part-time and low-wage workers don't qualify for unemployment benefits. Nor do gig workers, independent contractors and the self-employed, although the emergency aid package passed by the Senate would broaden eligibility to include many of them. Others who do qualify may not know it. And the sudden rush of layoffs led to jammed phone lines and overwhelmed computer servers at unemployment offices across the country, leaving many people unable to file claims.



Travel Services to India to remain closed until April 14

Advisory for Indian Nationals in USA - COVID 19



WASHINGTON (TIP): According to the latest Travel Advisory, updated on March 26, all scheduled international commercial passenger services to India shall remain closed till 1830 hrs GMT of April 14, 2020. In view of these temporary travel restrictions, all Indian nationals are advised to:

- I. Stay safe and isolated within the residential premises and follow the advisories updated on CDC web site <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/> and other state and federal advisories relevant to COVID19.
- II. Please follow social distancing norms and avoid any non-essential local travel.
- III. Approach the local health department officials in case you or your family member(s) experience any of the symptoms mentioned in the CDC website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>
- IV. /2019-ncov/ For extension of visa in the US during this restriction period, please apply online at USCIS website <https://www.uscis.gov/visit-united-states/extend-your-stay> and <http://uscis.gov/coronavirus>. This is per the advice of concerned US authorities, with whom, the Embassy is also in touch.
- V. Please also continue to check the website of the Embassy of India in Washington DC (www.indianembassyusa.gov.in) and social media (Twitter & Facebook) for latest updates. In case required, please contact the Indian Embassy or one of Indian Consulates depending upon your location in the US at the 24/7 helpline details mentioned below.

USCIS Temporary Office Closure Extended until at least April 7



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

WASHINGTON (TIP): On March 18, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services temporarily suspended in-person services at its field offices, asylum offices, and Application Support Centers (ASCs) to help slow the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). USCIS offices will reopen on April 7 unless the public closures are extended further. Employees in these offices are continuing to perform mission-essential services that do not require face-to-face contact with the public.

USCIS will continue to provide limited emergency services. Please call the Contact Center for assistance with emergency services.

USCIS field offices will send notices to applicants and petitioners with scheduled appointments and naturalization ceremonies impacted by the extended closure. USCIS asylum offices will send interview cancellation notices and automatically reschedule asylum interviews. When the interview is rescheduled, asylum applicants will receive a new interview notice with the new time, date and location of the interview. When USCIS again resumes normal operations, USCIS will automatically reschedule ASC appointments due to the office closure. You will receive a new appointment letter in the mail. Individuals who had InfoPass or other appointments must reschedule through the USCIS Contact Center once field offices are open to the public again.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Department of Justice Requests Citizens to Be Aware of and Report COVID-19 Fraud

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Department of Justice is remaining vigilant in detecting, investigating, and prosecuting wrongdoing related to the crisis. In a memo to U.S. Attorneys, Attorney General Barr said, "The pandemic is dangerous enough without wrongdoers seeking to profit from public panic and this sort of conduct cannot be tolerated."

Be aware that criminals are attempting to exploit COVID-19 worldwide through a variety of scams. There have been reports of:

- Individuals and businesses selling fake cures for COVID-19 online and engaging in other forms of fraud.
- Phishing emails from entities posing as the World Health Organization or the Centers for
- Disease Control and Prevention.
- Malicious websites and apps that appear to share virus-related information to gain and lock access to your devices until payment is received.
- Seeking donations fraudulently for illegitimate or non-existent



charitable organizations.

Criminals will likely continue to use new methods to exploit COVID-19 worldwide.

If you think you are a victim of a scam or attempted fraud involving COVID-19, you can report it without leaving your home through a number of platforms. Go to:

- Contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via email at disaster@leo.gov
- Report it to the FBI at tips.fbi.gov
- If it's a cyber scam, submit your complaint through <https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>

For more information regarding Federal Efforts, Department of Justice Resources, and Coronavirus Fraud News, please visit the Department of Justice COVID-19 Fraud Page at <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>.

Indian American Lawmaker Calls for Two-Week Mandatory Shelter in Place

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna (CA-17), joined by 19 Democratic U.S. Representatives, called for a national shelter-in-place order to combat the spread of COVID-19 across the United States of America. As the infection rate climbs and the strain on the American health care system worsens, the federal government cannot continue to slow-walk its response.

"The total number of COVID-19 cases and deaths have nearly doubled in the last two days," said Rep. Ro Khanna. "We're watching our health care system collapse before us. We're seeing people separated from their loved ones. We're witnessing students shut out from their classrooms and workers let go from their jobs. If we want to demonstrate true American leadership and stop this outbreak, we need a nationwide shelter in place order. Let's listen to the experts who are telling us that step is the only way we can truly mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Months of continued half-measures will cost us far more than two weeks of sheltering in place."

The American health care system typically operates near full capacity and is already experiencing shortages of N95 masks, protective eye gear, and other necessary equipment to protect our doctors and nurses. An influx of patients due to continued spread of COVID-19, some of whom will require intensive care, will likely exceed our supply of hospital beds and ventilators, leading to rationing of care and more deaths.

Given insufficient availability of mass



Additionally, Rep. Khanna is calling on Congress to vote remotely to pass an economic stimulus response bill that will save jobs, replace lost incomes, and lift up all Americans

testing and the ability for asymptomatic individuals to unknowingly spread the coronavirus, the federal government must reduce person-to-person contact to the bare minimum by issuing a two-

Rep. Khanna is calling on Congress to vote remotely to pass an economic stimulus response bill that will save jobs, replace lost incomes, and lift up all Americans. Three Republican Governors have already called for this as well; Ohio, West Virginia and Indiana.

week nationwide shelter-in-place order immediately. It is the only proven way to limit the growth of confirmed cases, insulate our health care system, and prevent catastrophe.

Additionally, Rep. Khanna is calling on Congress to vote remotely to pass an economic stimulus response bill that will save jobs, replace lost incomes, and lift up all Americans. Three Republican Governors have already called for this as well; Ohio, West Virginia and Indiana.

Preventive action will save trillions of dollars in the long run and many priceless lives.

Co-Signers of the letter are: Anthony Brown (MD-04), Jim Cooper (TN-05), Susan Davis (CA-53), Veronica Escobar (TX-16), Tulsi Gabbard (HI-02), Jesús G. "Chuy" García (IL-04), Vicente Gonzalez (TX-15), Barbara Lee (CA-13), Andy Lowenthal (CA-47), Stephen Lynch (MA-08), Debbie Mucarsel-Powell (FL-26), Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC-AL), Mark Pocan (WI-02), Jamie Raskin (MD-08), Mary Gay Scanlon (PA-05), José E. Serrano (NY-15), Darren Soto (FL-09), Rashida Tlaib (MI-13), Lori Trahan (MA-03),

Stimulus Checks: Who Is Eligible and How Much Will They Be?



Senate plan would send \$1,200 checks to many, including Social Security recipients

(Picture of Check for Representation purposes only)

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Senate voted unanimously late Wednesday night to approve a \$2 trillion economic stimulus package that would send most Americans checks of up to \$1,200, as a way to put money directly in the pockets of families struggling to manage the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

The legislation, which still needs to be passed by the House of Representatives and signed by the president, would give single adults who reported adjusted gross income of \$75,000 or less on their 2019 tax returns a one-time check for \$1,200, according to draft legislation. Married couples who filed jointly would receive \$2,400. Families would get an additional \$500 for each child.

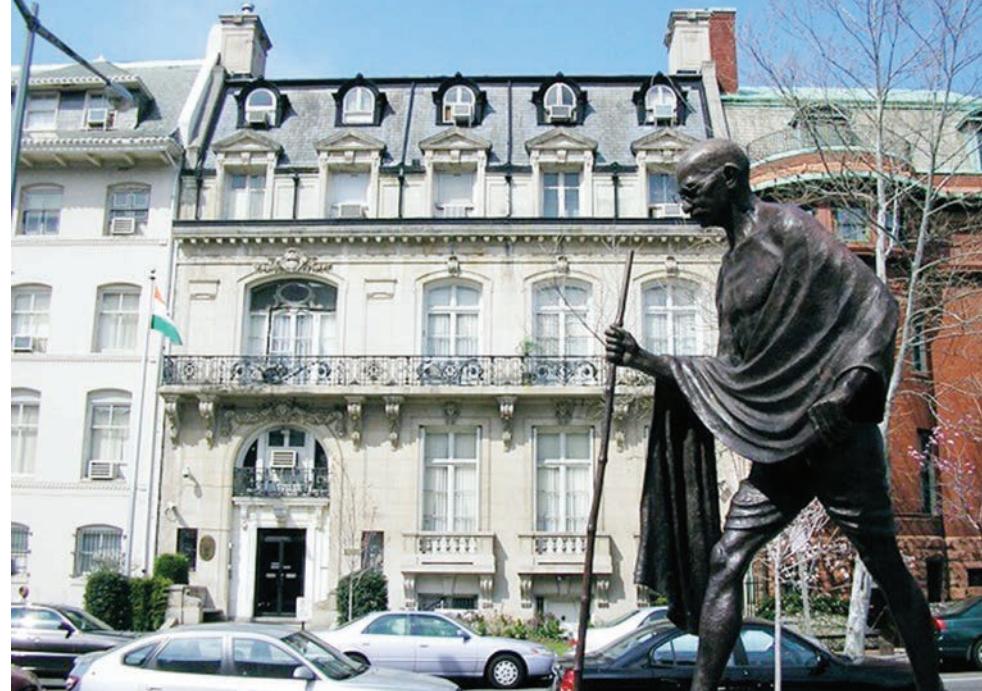
The Senate bill does not set a date for when the checks would start to go out, saying only that the Treasury secretary would send the payments "as rapidly as possible." The money could be sent either by mail or direct deposit.

Who qualifies for a stimulus check?

The size of the check would decrease based on income for individuals who earned more than \$75,000 based on their tax return for last year (or their 2018 return if they have not filed yet). The rebate check for individuals would shrink by \$5 for every \$100 earned over \$75,000. For couples who filed jointly, the reduction would start once they earn more than \$150,000; for heads of household, at \$112,500.

Individuals who earned more than \$99,000 and couples who earned more than \$198,000 jointly would not receive checks.

According to the legislation, people who do not typically file taxes because their income is very low will need to file a 2019 tax return in order to receive a stimulus check. That may be a challenge for some, however, because many services that help low-income taxpayers file tax returns for free have suspended in-person operations to deter the spread of the coronavirus. Most low-income taxpayers are eligible to file tax returns online for free through the IRS Free File program.



WASHINGTON (TIP): The Embassy of India has taken the following decisions with immediate effect in light of the

existing advisories associated with the coronavirus and movement restrictions in several States,

1. OCI applications, Indian citizenship renunciation applications and GEP applications will not be accepted, including by postal mail, until further notice.
2. Passport applications will not be accepted, including by postal mail, until further notice. However, applicants requiring passports on emergency basis may kindly send an email to cons4.washington@mea.gov.in explaining their emergency situation. Once the request has been approved, the applicant will be informed to complete the application process and send the papers by postal mail to CKGS for further processing.
3. Miscellaneous consular services shall continue to be accepted only by postal mail until further notice. Applicants should factor in that it may take longer and there could be delays in providing miscellaneous services due to the current situation.

GOVT ISSUES SOP FOR AVAILABILITY OF ESSENTIAL GOODS DURING LOCKDOWN



NEW DELHI (TIP): The Union Home Ministry on Thursday issued Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on availability of essential goods during the lockdown period and asked state governments to ensure smooth functioning of people involved and services.

The ministry said there should be no interruptions in the services of small retail shops, large organised retail stores and e-commerce companies.

In the two-page SOP, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said essential commodities are available to people through small local retail shops, large organised retail stores and e-commerce companies.

The SOP said in order to ensure smooth functioning of these three types of operators, it is important that constituents of the supply chain, are also allowed to operate.

These constituents include suppliers of essential goods, including restaurants supplying home delivery of cooked food items; and facilities for storage of such essential goods which, may be known as warehouse, godown, etc.

It also allowed movement of transporters, drivers, loaders, etc., of essential goods from the place of manufacture to wholesalers or retailers.

The SOP said such transportation may involve intra-city, inter-city in same state or union territory or inter-state movement of essential goods; and manufacturing units of essential goods, including drugs, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, their raw material and intermediates.

The home secretary said the purpose of the lockdown is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 epidemic by ensuring social distancing while maintaining supply of essential goods, including health infrastructure and home delivery of food.

He said several services were exempted from the lockdown that include ration shops, shops dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk products, meat and fish, animal fodder, seeds and pesticides and home delivery of these essential goods shall be encouraged.

"It is also provided that delivery of all essential goods including food, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment through e-commerce will remain operational," the letter said.

Bhalla said those enforcing authorities must note that these strict restrictions fundamentally relate to movement of people, but not to that of essential goods.

"It is therefore, important that availability of essential goods is ensured to relieve the hardship faced by people during the period of lockdown" he said. The SOP said all facilities in the supply chain of essential goods, whether involved in manufacturing, wholesale or retail of such goods through local stores, large brick and mortar stores or e-commerce companies should be allowed to operate, ensuring strict social distancing.

All such facilities as registered with the state governments or union territories under the shops and establishment registration regime, which can be used to randomly verify the veracity of documents produced.

While warehousing facilities with wholesalers and retailers of essential goods might have non-essential goods, they should not be closed down for the fact that non-essential items are also stored.

Sitharaman unveils Rs 1.7 lakh crore package for poor

TRACKING THE VIRUS

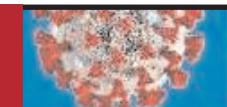
GLOBAL

Cases
510,644

Deaths
23,028

INDIA

Cases
724



Food-Related Benefits

PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana will provide free ration to 80 crore individuals (1/3rd of the population) over the next three months.

Each individual will get 5 kg of rice or wheat, over and above the current monthly 5 kg given under the public distribution system (PDS). Additionally, 1 kg of pulses per household will be given according to the receiver's regional preference. Beneficiaries can avail this in two installments.

This food subsidy scheme will cost the government INR 40,000 crore, as per the statement.

Cash Support

Cash support through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), is aimed at eight broad categories—farmers, MGNREGA, widows, pensioners and divyang, women under Jan Dhan Yojana and Ujjawala scheme, women in self-help groups, organised sector workers, construction workers and utilization of district mineral funds.

- Farmers – About 8.7 crore farmers will get the first installment of INR 2,000 under PM Kisan Yojana in

To soften lockdown blow

- Rs1.70 lakh crore relief package under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana
- Rs 50 lakh Insurance cover for health workers
- 80 crore to get 5 kg wheat/rice and 1 kg of pulses free for next three months
- Free gas cylinders for 8 crore poor families for next 3 months.
- 20.4 crore women Jan Dhan account holders to get one-time relief of Rs1,500
- Poor senior citizens, widows and disabled to get direct cash transfer of Rs1,000
- EPF to allow non-refundable advance of 75% of the amount or three months of the wages, whichever is lower
- Govt to bear PF costs for small units with mostly low salaried workers
- Increase in MNREGA wage to benefit 13.62 crore families
- First instalment of PM Kisan Yojana frontloaded
- Lending limit doubled for women self-help groups
- States told to draw on district mineral development fund

April. Under this scheme, all eligible small and marginal farmers get INR 2,000 every fourth month (total INR 6,000 annually) as minimum income support.

- MGNREGA – Daily wages under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), has been hiked by INR 20, from INR 182 to INR 202. This will be effective from

April 2020 and is expected to benefit about 5 crore workers.

- Widows, senior citizens and Divyang: In a relief to poor widows, senior citizens and divyang or disabled people, a one-time ex-gratia of INR 1,000 will be given in two installments. A total of INR 3,000 crore will be spent for this purpose under PM Garib Kalyan Package, the statement said.

Maharashtra cops stop a container truck, find over 300 migrant workers

MUMBAI (TIP): Maharashtra Police on Thursday found over 300 migrant workers crammed inside two container trucks which were ostensibly carrying essential commodities from Telangana to Rajasthan.

The shocked officials found that the workers, who hailed from Rajasthan, had chosen this surreptitious and dangerous mode of travel as they wanted to return home.

Reports of desperate migrant workers heading home amid lockdown on account of coronavirus pandemic are emerging from many parts of the country.

A team of police and revenue department officials stopped two container trucks coming from Telangana in the border district of Yavatmal for inspection.

"The officials at Pandharkavda toll booth found something was fishy as the drivers could not give a satisfactory answer as to what the trucks were carrying and where," said a senior official.

"Inside, they found some 300 daily wagers in two containers. Some of them said they wanted to go back to their home state, Rajasthan and could not find any other mode of transport," he said.

Action will be taken against the drivers of the trucks, but officials are at a loss as to how to deal with the hapless workers.

"We do not know what to do with them. They need to go home for survival. We will take a decision soon," he said.

Migrant labourers walk for days to reach home

On Tuesday night, a group of 50 migrant labourers in Ahmedabad embarked upon a 150-km journey to their native village in Rajasthan's Dungarpur district. Of course, this wasn't the first time they were travelling home from Ahmedabad. But unlike other times, this journey was to be made on foot.

The reason: all modes of public transport were shut due to the 21-day nationwide lockdown imposed to



combat the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Radheshyam Patel, a native of Dungarpur district who was part of the group, says he has been working as a daily wager in Ahmedabad but there was no point in staying back in the city when there was no income due to the lockdown.

"Most of us work here (in Ahmedabad) at tea stalls or food joints. Since everything is shut, our employers have asked us to come back only after things get normal, as they don't have money to pay us," he said.

No work for 21 days would mean no income. And surviving in a city like Ahmedabad without any income would be a tough task for Patel and others.

"Since buses and other modes of transport are not available, we have decided to walk to reach home," he was quoted as saying by news agency PTI.

Speaking about the novel coronavirus and the nationwide lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Patel said they know the virus is dangerous but they are helpless.

"I know there is the threat of coronavirus, but we are helpless. How would we survive without any income for three weeks?" he asks.

At 8 pm on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced

that the entire country would be going under a 21-day lockdown. He said this lockdown is very important for India to fight against novel coronavirus and control its spread. The World Health Organisation and health experts have said social distancing, self-quarantines and lockdowns can help in containing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

But while the lockdown is necessary, migrant labourers like Patel are hit hard financially as the lockdown means no work and income for 21 days. A long 21 days.

Authorities in bordering districts of Rajasthan are making travel arrangements for the migrant labourers returning on foot from Gujarat.

"We don't have money to pay to our landlord. It's better we move back to our native places," said Mangi Lal, a native of Rajasthan's Udaipur district. He was part of a group of 100 people who started walking from Gujarat's Mehsana district to return to their homes.

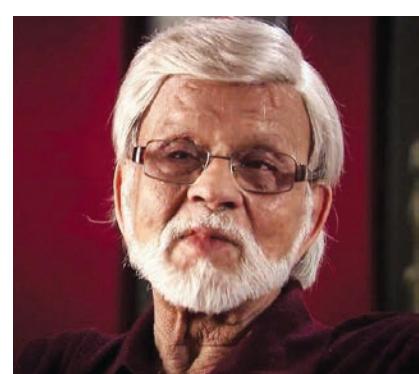
Speaking to PTI, Inspector General, Gandhinagar Range, Mayank Chavda said the state police is providing food packets and water to the migrant workers on humanitarian grounds. "We are trying our best to discourage them from moving to Rajasthan. This will defeat the purpose of nationwide lockdown," he said.

REKNOWNED ARTIST SATISH GUJRAL DIES IN DELHI

Delhi.

Gujral's artworks were heavily inspired by the turbulence of his early years, including the illness that impaired his hearing as a child and the Partition of the subcontinent.

"Unlike many of his peers, who went to Paris or London in the early 1950s, Gujral went to Mexico City to study with Diego Rivera and Siqueiros. Gujral's was a versatile practice spanning painting, sculpture and architecture. RIP," Hosote tweeted, expressing his condolences.



of the Delhi High Court. He also designed the Belgian Embassy in



INDIA'S BANKS CONSIDER CLOSING MOST BRANCHES DURING COVID LOCKDOWN

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI (TIP): India's central bank and major lenders are working on a plan to close most branches during the country's lockdown, aiming to prevent tens of thousands of employees from becoming infected with the coronavirus, four sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The world's second most populous nation with 1.3 billion people are still very much a cash society and banks have been exempted from a 21-day lockdown that began this week as they are considered an essential service.

Under the plan, there would likely be only one bank branch open every five km (three miles) in major cities, the sources said, declining to be identified as the discussions about the closures have not been publicly disclosed.

A finance ministry official, however, said 90 percent of banks and ATMs were functioning normally and that he was not aware of any plan to shut them down. "The government is monitoring the situation daily," the official said.

Kanpur IIT to develop portable ventilators



NEW DELHI (TIP): With the number of Covid-19 cases rising in the country, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kanpur is developing portable ventilators, which will be significantly cheaper than the ones available in the market. Professors at IIT, Kanpur, claim that while invasive ventilators are available at around Rs4 lakh per unit in the market, this ventilator will be made at a cost of Rs70,000 per unit as all the components have been sourced from India only. Besides, Mahindra & Mahindra on Thursday said it expected to come up with a sophisticated ventilator at just Rs7,500, which otherwise costs up to Rs10 lakh, as it seeks to assist in combating coronavirus pandemic.

Airtel gives free access to e-book platform

NEW DELHI (TIP): Bharti Airtel on Thursday announced free access to its e-book platform Juggernaut Books to support people in staying home during the lockdown. "As India stays at home to support the government's efforts to contain the spread of Covid-19, readers can now access thousands of top books and novels on Juggernaut Books (formerly known as Airtel Books) for free by simply downloading the app (Android/iOS) on their smartphones," Bharti Airtel said in a statement.

Covid-19 cases soar past 500,000 as virus batters US, Europe

WASHINGTON/LONDON (TIP): More than a staggering 500,000 people have been infected by the coronavirus across the world while at least 22,000 have died as the Covid-19 pandemic continued to batter Europe and the US.

On the European continent, Italy and Spain reported 662 and 498 single-day deaths respectively on Thursday, while across the Atlantic, the US saw its death toll shoot past 1,000. More than 15,000 new infections were confirmed in the US over a 24-hour period.

China, Italy, the US, Spain and Germany are now the five worst-hit nations in terms of confirmed cases. Spain reported 498 new fatalities on Thursday as its death toll climbed to 4,145, while the Netherlands confirmed more than 1,000 new cases and 78 single-day deaths.

In the UK, the streets are empty but hospitals are filling up to the extent that health officials describe the registration of new cases as a "continuous tsunami". Deaths in the UK rose to 477 and close to 10,000 cases have been reported.

Britain brought in tough measures on Thursday to curb the spread of the coronavirus. The new powers allow police to issue instant fines to those who leave their homes without good reason or gather in



groups of more than two people.

As the US continued to witness an exponential increase in the number of cases, White House experts warned of a second wave that could come later in the year as demonstrated by previous pandemics of this magnitude.

Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force, at a daily briefing, spoke of the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic that had killed 50 million people worldwide. That epidemic had come in three waves.

Anthony Fauci, another member of the task force, said the coronavirus could become a "seasonal cyclic thing".

These warnings came as the US continued to deal with a ballooning crisis that caused 1,080 deaths until Thursday and infected over 70,000 people.

New York City continued to be the hardest hit with at least 280 reported dead. The spiralling cases are severely straining medical supplies such as ventilators and masks and hospital beds, despite government support.

New York state has had the highest number of confirmed cases with more than 33,000, which was nearly half of the nationwide cases, with nearly 400 deaths. The adjoining state of New Jersey is next with over 4,400 cases, followed by California with more than 3,100 cases and Washington with 2,600 cases.

New Orleans, where large crowds celebrated Mardi Gras a month ago, was on track to become the next US epicentre, as Louisiana's Gulf Coast metropolis recorded the world's highest growth rate in cases.

In new restrictions ordered to slow down and stop the spread of the coronavirus, the Pentagon on Wednesday barred all overseas travel for its troops for the next 60 days. "The purpose is to make sure that we're not bringing the virus back home, infecting others, that we're not spreading it around the military," US defence secretary Mark Esper said. He added that an exception would be made for the drawdown under way in Afghanistan.



Germany boosts coronavirus test rate to 500,000 a week

BERLIN (TIP): Germany has boosted its coronavirus test rate to 500,000 a week, a virologist said Thursday, adding that early detection has been key in keeping the country's death rate relatively low.

"The reason why Germany has so few deaths compared to the number of infected people can be explained by the fact that we carry out an extremely large number of laboratory diagnostic tests," said Christian Drosten, who heads the Institute of Virology at Berlin's Charite University Hospital.

"Estimates from the last days show that we are carrying out half a million tests a week," he added.

Drosten also highlighted Germany's dense network of laboratories spread across its territory as a factor contributing to early detection.

Meanwhile, the research ministry said it would commit 150 million euros (\$164 million) to improve communication between hospitals and laboratories about coronavirus patients' health data, hoping the information exchange could feed into development of a vaccine. Official data compiled by the disease control agency Robert Koch Institute show that 36,508 people have been infected in Germany, including 198 who have died from the disease.

At 0.54 percent, Germany's death rate is far lower than the 7.3 percent in Spain where 4,089 deaths were recorded for 56,188 confirmed cases.

France has also recorded 1,331 fatalities of 25,233 confirmed infections -- a death rate of 5.2 percent.

Besides the large-scale testing, experts in Germany also said that the virus has largely affected a younger, healthier section of the population compared to elsewhere.

Coronavirus could become seasonal: US scientist

WASHINGTON (TIP): There is a strong chance the new coronavirus could return in seasonal cycles, a senior US scientist said Wednesday, underscoring the urgent need to find a vaccine and effective treatments.

Anthony Fauci, who leads research into infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health, told a briefing the virus was beginning to take root in the southern hemisphere, where winter is on its way.

"What we're starting to see now... in southern Africa and in the southern hemisphere countries, is that we're having cases that are appearing as they go into their winter season," he said.

"And if, in fact, they have a substantial outbreak, it will be inevitable that we need to be prepared that we'll get a cycle around the second time."

"It totally emphasizes the need to do what we're doing in developing a vaccine, testing it quickly and trying to get it ready so that we'll have a vaccine available for that next cycle."

There are currently two vaccines that have entered human trials -- one in the US and one in China -- and they could be a year to a year-and-a-half away from deployment.

Treatments are also being investigated -- some new drugs and others that have



been repurposed, including the antimalarials chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine.

"I know we'll be successful in putting this down now, but we really need to be prepared for another cycle," Fauci concluded. Fauci's comments suggesting the virus does better in colder weather than it does in hot and humid conditions follows a recent Chinese research paper -- still preliminary and awaiting peer-review -- that reached the same conclusion.

The reasons are thought to include that respiratory droplets remain airborne for longer in colder weather, and that cold weather weakens immunity.

Another potential reason is that viruses degrade more quickly on hotter surfaces, possibly because a protective layer of fat that envelops them dries out quicker. But reduced infection rate does not mean the virus gets eliminated -- Australia has had almost 2,500 confirmed cases and 8 deaths, for example.

WHO to launch COVID-19 app

The total number of coronavirus cases around the globe has already crossed the 4.8 lakh mark. As the total number of cases increase, the World Health Organisation is planning to launch an app that will not only give users tips to safeguard themselves against the virus outbreak but also detailed statistics of cases around the world.

According to a report by 9To5 Google, WHO is developing an app for Android, iOS and Web platforms that will provide alerts, news, tips and other information that will keep users updated about the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO's COVID-19 app is likely to be called MyHealth app, a source code available on GitHub has revealed. It was originally proposed by a team of volunteer experts called the WHO COVID app Collective.

As per the current roadmap of the app, the group plans to launch the initial version of the app on March 30. And it will have the content provided by WHO's WhatsApp chatbot on Android and iOS along with localised information that is served in the organisation's 6 official languages, that is Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. In addition to that, the app will feature the ability to push notifications in the future.

Scientists identify 69 drugs that may help fight Covid

NEW DELHI (TIP): An international team, including scientists of Indian origin, has identified 69 drugs and experimental compounds which may be effective in treating Covid-19.

According to the researchers, some of the medications are already used to treat diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, and repurposing them to treat Covid-19 may be faster than trying to invent a new vaccine.

In the new study, published on the pre-print website bioRxiv, the scientists investigated 26 of the 29 coronavirus genes, which direct production of the viral proteins.

"The team took a different approach, targeting host proteins, not viral proteins. Twenty-six out of 29 SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins were studied in human cells to find out what human proteins they interact with," Gina T Nguyen, Assistant Director of Communications & Events, Quantitative Biosciences Institute, University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) in the US, said. Around 332 human proteins were found to interact with the SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins, the researchers, including Advait Subramanian, Srivats Venkataraman and Jyoti Batra, all from UCSF, said.

These are the proteins that the virus, which has killed over 21,000 people and infected more than 4,71,000 globally so far, relies on to reproduce and carry out the infection in people, they said.

"69 drugs were identified that can target these proteins, of which 25 are already US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved



26 OF 29 VIRUS GENES INVESTIGATED

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- Around 332 human proteins were found to interact with the SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins, researchers say
- These are the proteins that the virus relies on to reproduce and carry out the infection in people
- 69 drugs were identified that can target these proteins, of which 25 are already US FDA approved and could be used off-label

and could be used off-label. The drugs identified include those that are safely taken to treat conditions such as: Type II diabetes, cancer and hypertension," Nguyen said.

Some viral proteins seemed to target just one human protein, while others are capable of targeting a dozen human cellular proteins, the researchers explained.

They noted that there are currently no anti-viral drugs with proven efficacy, nor are there vaccines for preventing Covid-19.

"Unfortunately, the scientific community has little knowledge of the molecular details of SARS-CoV-2 infection," the team wrote in an abstract.

The identification of host dependency factors mediating virus infection may provide key insights into effective molecular targets for developing broadly acting antiviral therapeutics against SARS-CoV-2 and other deadly coronavirus strains, according to the researchers.

Italy's slowing infections boost case for lockdowns

ROME (TIP): Italy's coronavirus infections rate slowed for a fourth successive day Wednesday as fresh evidence emerged that long and painful lockdowns against pandemics will work.

The latest data from the epicentre of the once-in-a-century outbreak comes with more and more nations weighing whether to shutter their own stores and factories -- and for how long.

Analysts at one of the big US investment banks said evidence from Italy this week could determine whether much of the United States "will diverge or follow the Italian trajectory".

Almost everything across the Mediterranean country has been closed for over two weeks.

Public gatherings have been banned and much of the economy is set to remain in a state of suspended animation for an indefinite time to come.

Analysts think Italy is sliding into its deepest recession in generations as a result.

But it is the price Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has decided to pay to slow the spread of a disease that has now killed 7,503 in Italy and infected almost 75,000.

"History will judge us," the increasingly popular Italian leader told parliament on Wednesday.

"We must all contribute to the common good," Conte said. "The government has acted with the utmost



determination and speed."

Figures showed deaths staying within the high but relative narrow range they had reached at the end of last week.

Health officials reported 683 new fatalities and 5,210 infections.

The overall rise in daily deaths among confirmed COVID-19 cases slowed to 10 percent.

It had been as high as 57 percent when the illness was still spreading exponentially on March 8.

The daily infections growth rate fell to a record low of 7.5 percent.

NEARLY 90% OF WORLD'S POPULATION COULD BECOME A COVID-19 PATIENT: EXPERTS

NEW DELHI (TIP): The findings present what is the first significant global projection, taking into account population demography, social contact patterns and health care infrastructure as well as the infection and mortality rates seen in the Covid-19 pandemic till now.

Nearly 90% of the world's population could become a Covid-19 patient this year and at least 40 million of them could die if there are no interventions to stop the pandemic, a projection released by the Imperial College of London showed on Thursday, underscoring the need to take strong steps against a pathogen that has already brought much of the world to a standstill.

The findings present what is the first significant global projection, taking into account population demography, social contact patterns and health care infrastructure as well as the infection and mortality rates seen in the Covid-19 pandemic till now.

"The world faces a severe and acute public health emergency due to the ongoing Covid-19 global pandemic. How individual countries respond in the coming weeks will be critical in influencing the trajectory of national epidemics," said the report by the Imperial College Covid-19 Response Team.

According to the report, in the absence of interventions – such as social distancing and shutting down of cities – the pandemic "would have resulted in 7.0 billion infections and 40 million deaths globally this year".

The virus, Sars-Cov-2, has infected close to 500,000 people and caused at least 22,000 fatalities till Thursday.

According to estimates, the current global population is 7.8 billion. The most severe pandemic in history was the 1918 H1N1 outbreak -- commonly known as the Spanish Flu -- which is estimated to have infected close to a third of the population at the time.

Taking cue from South Korea, ICMR seeks 5 lakh antibody kits

NEW DELHI (TIP): As part of efforts to step up testing for coronavirus, the Indian Council of Medical Research has invited manufacturers to supply 5 lakh antibody kits for diagnosis of infection. Experts in the government point out that the serological test will act as a screening process, as was done in South Korea, one of the few countries which has been able to flatten the pandemic curve.

Dr V Ravi, Head and Senior Professor, Department of Neurovirology, NIMHANS, who specialises in public health virology and development of indigenous kits, told The Indian Express that considering the large number of suspected patients being quarantined in the country through contact tracing of just a single patient, the antibody testing for COVID-19 will act as a "screening test" that will give quick results in a few hours.

"The conventional RT-PCR test (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) being done in India detects the virus genetic material, which is the RNA. The antibody test will detect the body's response to the virus. The former is direct evidence and the latter the indirect evidence. Therefore, the antibody test will be used as a screening test where large number of people are being quarantined and where everybody cannot undergo RNA test."





HRITHIK, SUSSANNE TEMPORARILY LIVE TOGETHER TO TAKE CARE OF SONS

Hrithik Roshan became emotional after his former wife Sussanne Khan temporarily moved back with him to take care of their sons together, amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Taking to his social media, Hrithik penned a lengthy 'thank you' note for Sussanne.

"It is unimaginable for me, as a parent, to think of having to be separated from my children at a time when the country is practicing lockdowns.

"It is heartwarming to see the world come together as one in this time of deep uncertainty and possibility of months of social distancing and potential lockdowns for several weeks perhaps.

"While the world talks about humanity coming together, I think it represents more than just an idea especially for parents sharing custody of their kids. How to keep their kids close to them without infringing on the right of the other who also has an equal right to be with his/her children," he wrote.

Along with the post, he uploaded a picture of Sussanne sitting in bed, sipping off a coffee mug.

SHAHID REVEALS WHAT KABIR SINGH WOULD DO DURING 21-DAY LOCKDOWN

Prime minister Narendra Modi announced that India would be under 21-day lockdown. Soon after, people were wondering what could be done during the home-quarantine period. At this time, Shahid Kapoor hosted a question and answer round with his fans and happened to answer what would Kabir Singh do if he were in the time.

After the user asked Shahid Kapoor the question, he went on to give a sweet yet unexpected answer, because 'rules are rules bro'. Shahid replied writing, "Hug preeti (the dog) and make do. Rules are rules bro."

Kabir Singh marked Shahid Kapoor's highest-grossing film in 15 years of his career. The actor received due as an actor for the Sandeep Reddy Vanga directorial. Shahid Kapoor's on-screen bond with Preeti, played by Kiara Advani, was well-appreciated and memes were made on the same, which went on to become evergreen.

'Kabir Singh' was the remake of Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Telugu directorial film 'Arjun Reddy'. The movie starred Vijay Deverakonda and Shalini Pandey in lead roles. Apart from 'Arjun Reddy' and 'Kabir Singh', the movie was also remade in Tamil as 'Adithya Varma'.



KARTIK AARYAN TURNS RAPPER TO PROMOTE SOCIAL DISTANCING

In an attempt to make his fans stay indoors, Kartik Aaryan shared another video on social media, explaining them the importance of social distancing.

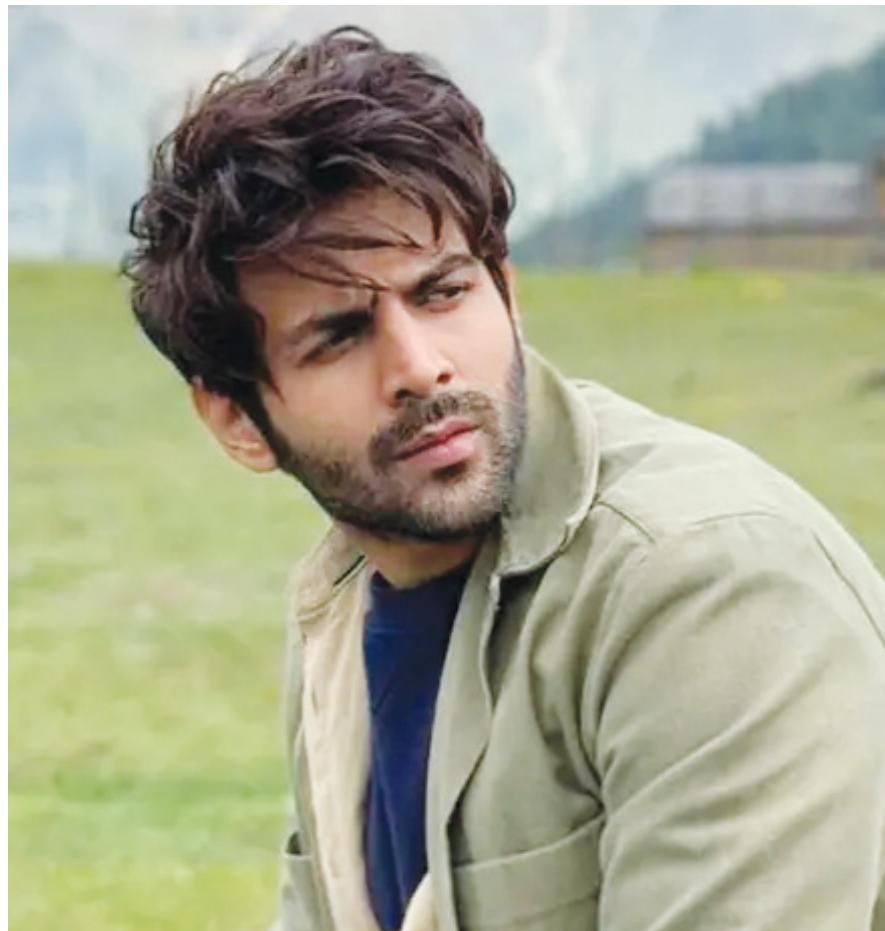
This time, however, instead of performing a monologue, Kartik turned a rapper to motivate social media users to stay home with their families and prevent the spread of novel coronavirus.

Kartik's mother also made an appearance by the end of the video. He captioned it, "Jab tak Ghar nahi baithoge, main yaad dilaata rahunga ! #CoronaStopKarNa #CoronaRapKarNa. Keep spreading the word."

Before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Janta Curfew on March 22, Kartik posted his monologue video, urging fans to stay in isolation and take the pandemic seriously.

He wrote, "My Appeal in my Style Social Distancing is the only solution, yet."

Like Kartik Aaryan, many Bollywood stars, including Akshay Kumar, Amitabh Bachchan, Virat Kohli, Anushka Sharma, Vicky Kaushal and more, have been posting videos, asking fans to stay indoors.



KANIKA KAPOOR TESTS CORONAVIRUS POSITIVE FOR THE 3RD TIME



Bollywood singer Kanika Kapoor has tested positive in her third COVID-19 test, reports of which came in on Tuesday night.

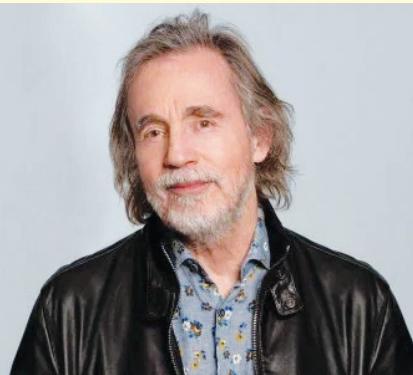
In the second test conducted on Sunday, she had tested positive.

Kanika is undergoing treatment at the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) in Lucknow.

SGPGIMS Director Prof R. K. Dhiman said that the singer continues to test positive for the coronavirus and her treatment will continue until unless at least two tests show her negative.

Meanwhile, Kanika's friend, Ojas Desai, who had stayed with her at the Hotel Taj for two days and had later gone underground, has now tested negative for the deadly virus.

In a statement issued by Ojas, he has said that he had got himself tested for COVID-19 at the Kasturba Hospital for Infectious Diseases at Mumbai and had tested negative.



SINGER JACKSON BROWNE TESTS POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS

American singer Jackson Browne revealed in an interview that he has tested positive for the coronavirus.

On Tuesday, in an interview with Rolling Stone, Jackson said he immediately sought out testing when he developed a cough and started running a fever.

While the singer did test positive, he downplayed the severity of his illness. "My symptoms are really pretty mild, so I don't require any kind of medication and certainly not hospitalisation or anything like that," Jackson said.

The 71-year-old further urged everyone to stay at home just like he is, whether they have symptoms or not. "So many people that have it (coronavirus) aren't going to be tested. They don't have symptoms, but they might have it and might be able to pass it on. That's what younger readers need to understand. They need to take part in the global response to stop the spread. That means not going anywhere, not getting into contact with anybody, not seeing anybody," Browne added.

LEONARDO DICAPRIO, GIRLFRIEND CAMILA MORRONE ARE SELF-QUARANTINING TOGETHER



American actor Leonardo DiCaprio and girlfriend Camila Morrone are self-quarantining together at his Los Angeles home amid the coronavirus outbreak. A source told Us Weekly, on Monday, "They're always together, but like maintaining privacy."

The insider revealed that the lovebirds are "not the type of couple to be posting on social media about each other." The insider further revealed that they are really great for each other and have been enjoying this time together off the grid.

While attending the Golden Globes

ANGELINA JOLIE DONATES \$1 MILLION TO CHARITY THAT PROVIDES MEALS TO KIDS

Angelina Jolie is looking out for children in need of receiving meals at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Oscar winner and activist donated \$1 million to No Kid Hungry, an organization distributing aid so communities can help feed children who relied on school lunches for their meals.

"As of this week, over a billion children are out of school worldwide because of closures linked to coronavirus," Jolie, 44, said in a statement. "Many children depend on the care and nutrition they receive during school hours, including nearly 22 million children in America who rely on food support. No Kid Hungry is making resolute efforts to reach as many of those children as possible."

According to a press release, the charity has already distributed \$2 million to 78 organizations in 30 states across the country and issued new emergency grants to school districts, food banks and community organizations feeding kids nationwide.

"Over the past week, people from all walks of life have risen to the unprecedented challenge of feeding hungry kids during a global pandemic" said Billy Shore, founder and executive chair of Share Our Strength, the organization behind No Kid Hungry. "I've heard stories of heart-breaking



need and immense creativity, but above all persistence – a sense that we won't let any barrier stand between a child and the healthy meals they need."

Giving to No Kids Hungry isn't the only way the mom of six is helping those in need as the coronavirus spreads throughout the world.

WONDER WOMAN 1984 PUSHED BACK, RESCHEDULED FOR AUGUST

One of the last big blockbuster films set to debut in spring, Warner Bros.' Wonder Woman 1984, has been delayed until August as the coronavirus pandemic keeps theatres closed. The superhero movie was scheduled to premiere on June 5 in North America and will now debut August 14.

Warner Bros. also delayed the premieres of the Lin-Manuel Miranda musical In the Heights and Scooby-Doo film Scoob! indefinitely as studio executives try to assess when movie fans will be allowed back into cinemas.

Film-premiere delays are now commonplace, as rules on social gatherings prompted theatres in the US to close. Movie distributors make most of their money at the box office, and have largely opted to delay big-budget films rather than make them available on streaming platforms or take their chances in the few international markets that haven't yet been ravaged by the pandemic.

"In these terrible times, when theatre owners are struggling as so many are, we are excited to re-date our film to August 14th, 2020, in a theatre near you, and pray for better times for all by then," Patty Jenkins, the film's director, said on Twitter.



Wonder Woman 1984 was one of the most anticipated films of the year, according to surveys from film websites IMDb and Fandango. It was one of the last remaining big-budget movies scheduled to premiere in the first half of 2020 that hadn't been delayed, after the new James Bond film No Time to Die and Marvel instalment Black Widow were among those pushed back.

2020, the couple shared a moment of PDA after Leo and his co-stars' win for Best Motion Picture -- Musical or Comedy. Despite a nearly 23-year age gap between them, Morrone isn't worried about what others have to say about her romance with the Titanic actor.

In December, the 22-year-old model said in an interview with the Los Angeles Times, "There's so many relationships in Hollywood -- and in the history of the world -- where people have large age gaps. I just think anyone should be able to date who they want to date."

Water: Our Common Wealth

By Mabel Pais

"Water, thou hast no taste, no color, no odor; canst not be defined, art relished while ever mysterious. Not necessary to life, but rather life itself..." - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (in 'Terre des hommes')

"Water will be more important than oil this century. A water crisis is a global crisis. Given the urgency of the situation, the coming decade needs to be one of action." - Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO

"This year's World Water Day focuses on water and climate change." - António Guterres, UN Secretary General

"I call on all stakeholders to increase climate action and invest in robust adaptation measures for water sustainability. By limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the world will be in a much better position to manage and solve the water crisis that we all face." - António Guterres, UN Secretary General

Water is the essential building block of life.

This #WorldWaterDay, let's show our best hand hygiene moments to fight #COVID19.

#SafeHands on #WorldWaterDay

World Water Day, held on 22 March every year since 1993, focuses on the importance of freshwater.

Message from UN-Water Chair, Gilbert F. Houngbo, on World Water Day

"This World Water Day, we all have a role to play and the United Nations World Water Development Report contributes to paving the way for a sustainable future that leaves no one behind." World Water Day 2020 message by Gilbert F. Houngbo, Chair of UN-Water and President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development

"On World Water Day, 22 March, we release the 2020 edition of the United Nations World Water Development Report.

This year's report focuses on climate change and water. UN-Water's Members and Partners chose this topic for 2020 because, right now, we have an unprecedented opportunity to put water at the heart of climate change negotiations."

Did you know?

Today, 1 in 3 people live without safe drinking water.

By 2050, up to 5.7 billion people could be living in areas where water is scarce for at least one month a year.

Climate-resilient water supply and



Children carrying a water container in Jowhar, Somalia
Photo / Courtesy UN/Tobin Jones

sanitation could save the lives of more than 360,000 infants every year.

If we limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, we could cut climate-induced water stress by up to 50%.

Extreme weather has caused more than 90% of major disasters over the last decade.

By 2040, global energy demand is projected to increase by over 25% and water demand is expected to increase by more than 50%.

Water and Soap Against the Coronavirus

Hand hygiene is essential to containing the spread of COVID-19, as well as other infectious diseases. If you have access to soap and water, [unicef.org/coronavirus/everything-you-need-know-about-washing-your-hands-protect-against-coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/everything-you-need-know-about-washing-your-hands-protect-against-coronavirus-covid-19)

This #WorldWaterDay, let's show our best hand hygiene moments to fight #COVID19.

#SafeHands on #WorldWaterDay

The Importance of Water

World Water Day celebrates water and raises awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water. It is about taking action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

Water and Climate Change

World Water Day 2020 is about water and climate change - and how the two are inextricably linked. The campaign shows how our use of water will help reduce floods, droughts, scarcity and pollution, and will help fight climate change itself.

By adapting to the water effects of climate change, we will protect health and save lives. And, by using water more efficiently, we will reduce greenhouse gases.

Our key messages for this day are clear:

We cannot afford to wait. Climate policy makers must put water at the heart of action plans.

Water can help fight climate change. There are sustainable, affordable and



Gilbert F. Houngbo
Chair of UN Water and President of IFAD
Photo / Courtesy worldwaterday.org/2020

scalable water and sanitation solutions.

Everyone has a role to play. In our daily lives, there are surprisingly easy steps we can all take to address climate change.

History of the Day

The idea for this international day goes back to 1992, the year in which the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro took place. That same year, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution by which 22 March of each year was declared World Day for Water, to be observed starting in 1993.

These observances serve to reaffirm that water and sanitation measures are key to poverty reduction, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.

Secretary-General, António Guterres, Message - 2020

The world's water resources are under unprecedented threat. Today, some 2.2 billion people lack safe drinking water and 4.2 billion people live without access to adequate sanitation. Unless we act with urgency, the impacts of climate change are projected to exacerbate these figures. By 2050, between 3.5 and 4.4 billion people will live with limited access to water, with more than 1 billion of them living in cities.

This year's World Water Day focuses on water and climate change. With 2020 a make-or-break year for climate action, this focus is timely. Water is the primary medium through which we perceive the effects of climate disruption, from extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, to glacial melting, saltwater intrusion and sea level rise.

On World Water Day, everyone has a role to play. I call on all stakeholders to

increase climate action and invest in robust adaptation measures for water sustainability. By limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the world will be in a much better position to manage and solve the water crisis that we all face.

Message from Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of World Water Day 22 March 2020

Water will be more important than oil this century. This prediction, made in 1994 by former Secretary-General of the United Nations Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has alarming resonance in 2020.

Access to water and to basic sanitation infrastructure is already precarious in several regions. Today, four billion people worldwide are forced to contend with water scarcity. Studies predict that accelerated global warming will so exacerbate the problem that by 2050, 52% of the earth's population could be living in areas subjected to water stress. The first victims of this insufficiency will be girls and women, a circumstance which is likely to increase inequality even further throughout the world.

Given the urgency of the situation, the coming decade needs to be one of action. As the ultimate forum for global conversation, UNESCO has a unique role to play calling on States, civil society and regular people.

A safely managed drinking water service is defined as an improved drinking water source that is located on the premises and available when needed, and free of faecal and priority chemical contamination. Improved water sources include piped water, boreholes or tubewells, protected dug wells, protected springs and packaged or delivered water.

To learn more, visit un.org/en/observances/water-day

To learn more about how to protect against COVID-19, visit [unicef.org/coronavirus/everything-you-need-know-about-washing-your-hands-protect-against-coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/everything-you-need-know-about-washing-your-hands-protect-against-coronavirus-covid-19)

(The above information is excerpted from various websites of un.org)

(Mabel Pais writes on Health & Wellness, Social Issues, Spirituality, and The Arts and Entertainment)



Embassy of India
Washington DC

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24/7 Helpline

For queries/clarifications regarding the recent travel advisory issued by the Government of India for travel to India in view of the spread of coronavirus

- (i) For applicants residing in Bermuda, Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia, please send details at cons4.washington@mea.gov.in, Tel: 202-213-1364 and 202-262-0375
- (ii) For applicants residing in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virgin Islands, please send details at cons.atlanta@mea.gov.in, Tel: 404-910-7919 and 404-924-9876
- (iii) For applicants residing in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin, please send an email at visa.chicago@mea.gov.in, Tel: 312-687-3642 and 312-468-3276
- (iv) For applicants residing in Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado and Nebraska, please send an email at enquiriescogi@swbell.net, Tel: 713-626-2149
- (v) For applicants residing in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont, please send an email at visa.newyork@mea.gov.in, Tel: 212-774-0607/347-721-9243
- (vi) For applicants residing in Alaska, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, please send an email at oci2.sf@mea.gov.in, Tel: 415 483 6629

Christchurch mosque attack accused Tarrant pleads guilty

CHRISTCHURCH (TIP): The man accused of the 2019 Christchurch mosque attack on Thursday pleaded guilty to all the 92 charges he was facing, becoming New Zealand's first convicted terrorist.

Australian Brenton Tarrant, 29, appeared via video-link in the Christchurch High Court on the first day of the national lockdown in New Zealand against the coronavirus pandemic.

"The guilty pleas to 51 charges of murder, 40 charges of attempted murder and one charge of engaging in a terrorist act were taken via an AVL (audiovisual) link from Auckland Prison," Police Commissioner Mike Bush said. Tarrant had previously denied all charges and was due to stand trial in June. The hearing was held after the defendant indicated via his lawyers on Tuesday that he wished to appear before the court. "Police appreciate this news will come as a surprise to the victims and the public, some of whom may have wished to be present in the courtroom," Bush said. Two imams from Al Noor and Linwood mosques, where the shootings took place on March 15, 2019, were present in the Christchurch court as representatives of the victims.

After the guilty pleas were entered, a short suppression order was put in place to allow victims to be notified.

Tarrant was remanded in custody until May 1. Sentencing will not take place until all victims who wish to attend can do so. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, New Zealand is currently in full lockdown. Only essential attendees were in at the Christchurch court. In a statement after Thursday's hearing, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, "The guilty plea today will provide some relief to the many people whose lives were shattered by what happened on March 15." — IANS

Quake hits off Russia's Kuril Islands, prompts tsunami alert

MOSCOW (TIP): A 7.2-magnitude quake hit off Russia's Kuril Islands on Wednesday, prompting local residents to seek higher ground due to a brief tsunami threat, authorities said.

The Russian emergencies ministry said the quake's epicentre was 210 kilometres southeast of Severo-Kurilsk, a town of around 2,500 people on the Kuril island of Paramushir.

Officials reported no casualties or damage but said 400 residents of Severo-Kurilsk were taken to higher ground.

The emergencies ministry said a small tsunami wave of about 50 centimetres (1.6 feet) high had hit the shore. The US Geological Survey for its part estimated the strength of the quake at 7.5 magnitude. The quake hit at a depth of 59 kilometres (37 miles), around 1,400 kilometres (around 850 miles) northeast of the Japanese city of Sapporo, USGS added. AFP

TURKEY CHARGES 20 SAUDIS OVER KHASHOGGI MURDER

ISTANBUL (TIP): Turkish prosecutors have charged 20 suspects including two former top aides to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman over the 2018 murder of Riyadh critic Jamal Khashoggi.

Prosecutors accuse Saudi Arabia's deputy intelligence chief Ahmed al-Assiri and the royal court's media czar Saud al-Qahtani of leading the operation against Khashoggi and giving orders to a Saudi hit team.

Khashoggi, 59, a commentator who wrote for The Washington Post, was killed after he entered the Saudi consulate on October 2, 2018, to obtain paperwork for his wedding to Turkish fiancee Hatice Cengiz.

The Saudi insider-turned-critic was strangled and his body cut into pieces by a 15-man Saudi squad inside the consulate, according to Turkish officials. His remains have never been found despite repeated calls by Turkish officials for the Saudis to cooperate. Riyadh insists he was killed in a "rogue" operation.

But the CIA, a UN special envoy and Ankara have directly linked the Saudi crown prince to the killing, a charge the kingdom vehemently denies.

Turkey is a key backer of Qatar, especially after a Riyadh-led economic blockade began against the Gulf state in



2017, and is accused of supporting groups including the Muslim Brotherhood.

Saudi Arabia views the Brotherhood as an existential threat. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed Ankara will not give up the case.

"This happened in my country, how am I not going to follow up on that? Of course I'm going to follow up. This is our responsibility," Erdogan told Fox News last year.

Eighteen other suspects — including intelligence operative Maher Mutreb who frequently travelled with the crown

prince on foreign tours, forensic expert Salah al-Tubaigy and Fahad al-Balawi, a member of the Saudi royal guard — were also charged with "deliberately and monstrously killing, causing torment".

Five unnamed persons were sentenced to death in Saudi Arabia in December while three others were handed jail terms over the killing.

The Turkish prosecutor said a trial in absentia would be opened against the 20 suspects but didn't give a date. The prosecutor have already issued arrest warrants for the suspects. —AFP

Malawi to hold vote re-run on July 2 for electoral commission

BLANTYRE (MALAWI (TIP): Malawians will return to the polls on July 2 for a presidential election re-run ordered by the country's top court, which annulled last year's vote results because of irregularities, the electoral commission announced on Monday.

"Following the Constitutional Court ruling on February 3 that nullified the presidential elections and ordered that there should be fresh elections, the commission... therefore announces that the elections will be held on 2nd July," electoral commission chief Jane Ansah said.

In a landmark ruling last month the Constitutional Court overturned the outcome of the May 21 election, which handed President Peter Mutharika a second term in office. —AFP

Pompeo arrives in Kabul on surprise visit

KABUL (TIP): US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in Kabul on Monday on a surprise visit amid a stalemate in the intra-Afghan talks between the government and the Taliban as it was agreed in the peace deal signed by the militants with Washington.

Pompeo was expected to meet Afghan leaders including President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and his political rival Abdullah Abdullah, reports Xinhua news agency. Afghanistan was also witnessing a political turmoil as both leaders have taken oath as president.

The US-Taliban deal was inked on February 29 to pave the way for the withdrawal of thousands of the US-led coalition forces from Afghanistan, and to secure the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners within 10 days ahead of the intra-Afghan talks.

But the Afghan government was yet on the release of the Taliban detainees, demanding the militants group to observe ceasefire and initiate the talks ahead of the release. Afghanistan's election commission on February 18 declared Ghani the winner of the presidential polls but his rival Abdullah disputed the result. —IANS

RUSSIA PUTS EX-US MARINE ON TRIAL FOR 'SPYING'

MOSCOW (TIP): A Russian court began on Monday the trial of a former US Marine charged with espionage, in a case that has strained already poor ties with the US. Paul Whelan, who turned 50 while in custody this month, was arrested by Federal Security Service agents in a hotel room on Dec 28, 2018, and accused of spying, a charge he denies.

The US national who also holds British, Canadian and Irish passports could be jailed for up to 20 years if found guilty. Moscow says Whelan was caught red-handed with a computer flash drive containing classified information. He says he was set up in a sting operation and thought the drive, given to him by a Russian acquaintance, contained holiday photos.

The trial will be held behind closed doors as it concerns classified information, a spokeswoman for the Moscow District Court said. The court ruled at preliminary hearings on Monday that Whelan would be kept in custody until September 13, she added.

The case, like that of Michael Calvey, a US citizen charged with embezzlement in Russia, has been an irritant in Moscow's testy relations with Washington. —Reuters

Toilet paper calculator to curb buying frenzy

BERLIN (TIP): The Covid pandemic has sent panicked shoppers across Europe into a toilet-paper buying frenzy. But how much do you really need? And what to do if the unthinkable happens and you run out? A German online calculator is here to help.

At www.blitzrechner.de/toiletpapier, curious users can work out how long their stockpile will last.

Just type in how many rolls you have and your individual "usage behaviour" and the calculator will tell you for how many days you'll be covered. For true aficionados, there is an expert mode where you can add the length of your quarantine and your average number of sheets per wipe.

Generally speaking, people tend to wildly overestimate their TP needs, the website says. "Many people use more toilet paper than needed. For a 'number one', one or two sheets should suffice," it adds.

The website also offers some suggested alternatives to toilet paper should the supermarket shelves be bare. Washcloths, strips of old rags and even a quick shower are all good options. But be careful not to flush kitchen roll as it could clog up the



toilet.

Germany, like many European countries, has seen demand for toilet paper spiral since the start of the outbreak. Similar tongue-in-cheek stockpiling calculators have sprung up in other countries too, like the UK site Howmuchtoiletpaper.com.

Videos of scuffles in supermarkets have been circulating widely on social

media — one argument over toilet paper in a supermarket in Mannheim last week even ended in a fistfight that required police intervention.

Chancellor Angela Merkel set a better example when she was photographed doing her weekly shop last Friday with just one pack of toilet paper in her trolley — and four bottles of wine. That's just how Merkel rolls. —AFP

Sikh group opens food bank to tackle shortage in Canada

TORONTO (TIP): A Sikh non-profit organisation has opened emergency food banks in Canada to cater to the increasing demand for food supplies and hygiene products in view of the coronavirus outbreak, which has claimed over 15,000 lives globally.

United Sikhs, a UN-affiliated non-profit, non-governmental organisation, said the food banks aim to help disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, especially seniors citizens and children, the Globe Newswire reported.

All the supplies from United Sikhs are free, the organisation said, which include canned goods, hot meals, dry goods, medicines, the report said.

United Sikhs Chief Executive Officer Jagdeep Singh said, "Those who are financially able should consider donating to United Sikhs today so this free emergency food bank of life essentials can be expanded to everyone who needs it." United Sikhs, which also takes up humanitarian relief and development activities, has appealed to the public against "panic buying", the report said.

The Canadian government has already warned business owners looking to take advantage of the Covid crisis.

"When the general public is asked to stock their shelves for an undetermined amount of time, they overlook a great number of families who cannot afford to



Canada coronavirus death toll jumps almost 50% in less than a day

OTTAWA (TIP): The Canadian death toll from the coronavirus outbreak jumped almost 50% percent to 19 in less than a day, according to official figures released by the federal government on Sunday. Ottawa said late on Saturday that 13 people had died from the respiratory illness caused by the virus, but by 9 a.m. ET (1300 GMT) on Sunday that number had grown to 19. The number of confirmed cases rose to 1,302 from 1,099, with a further 69 people listed as probably suffering from the highly contagious virus. Canada has already closed its borders to all but essential travel, announced a C\$27 billion aid package for the most affected by the health crisis and is urging people to practice self-isolation. Health Minister Patty Hajdu said on Saturday that "Canadians need to understand this isn't about two weeks of social distancing. This is about months of social distancing." - Reuters

Australia book shop gets on its bike to distribute 'hope'

SYDNEY (TIP): As most shopping comes to a halt under shutdown rules meant to slow the spread of the coronavirus, an Australian book shop is getting its goods out by bicycle to readers in quarantine or reluctant to leave their homes.

Gleebooks, which has run a bricks-and-mortar shop in central Sydney for 40 years, said it decided to make its online service free when the government limited public gatherings to curb the spread of the illness that has infected nearly 2,000 Australians and killed eight of them.

From Monday, the restrictions went a step further when the government ordered all retailers to shut except for grocery stores, pharmacists and others deemed essential.

Whether that included Gleebooks was unclear but customers will get their books regardless, its managers decided, with the introduction of free drop-offs in surrounding suburbs.

The shop is among thousands around the world that have been forced to reinvent themselves virtually overnight to survive the biggest disruption to a sector already ravaged by the arrival of large internet rivals more than two decades ago.

"Because we're a bookshop and we're a retail venue, we realised we needed to make it as easy as possible for people to get their books without exposing themselves to any sort of risk," the shop's event manager, James Ross, said.

Customers have embraced the service, with an immediate spike in online sales, said Ross. The demand for craft and children's activity books had risen, not surprisingly given that many schools have closed. Nerida Ross, the store's cyclist, said books offered an escape for those cooped up at home.

"A lot of people I know who have been working from home have been using the time that they aren't commuting to read more or talk to friends or be creative in some way. We're learning a new way of being and I think reading is a part of that." Reuters

Boko Haram militants kill nearly 100 Chadian soldiers

N'DJAMENA (TIP): Boko Haram militants killed nearly 100 Chadian soldiers and wounded dozens more in what President Idriss Deby described as the deadliest attack ever on the country's military. The soldiers were ambushed in the island village of Boma in the swampy Lake Chad zone, where the armies of Chad, Nigeria and Niger have been fighting the Islamist militants for years. "I have taken part in many operations but never in our history have we lost so many men at one time," Deby said. reuters

ALL ABOUT DARK CIRCLES AND HOW TO REMOVE THEM PERMANENTLY

The skin around the eyes is fragile as compared to other parts of the body, and extremely delicate. Any changes happening in the deeper layers of the skin will be easily visible on the surface. Dark circles due to under eye hollowness cannot be gotten rid of with home measures alone.

The dark circles here will respond only to hyaluronic acid filler injections that are placed deep below the muscle that hydrates and rejuvenates the skin. The hyaluronic acid absorbs many times its weight in water and thus helps to eliminate the hollows and shadows, making the skin look bright and reflect light.

Dark circles are a common problem with both genders and all age groups typically above 16 years. We give you natural home remedies and makeup tricks to hide them and make sure your eyes look fresh instantly. Dark circles have multiple reasons such as genetic, volume loss in that area, pigmentations under the eyes due to various physiological and pathological reasons. So ideally only diet modification does not help.

Home remedies to remove Dark Circles

Cold Cucumber Slices

Cucumbers contain antioxidants that can reduce puffiness around the eyes. As a natural astringent and a coolant, cucumber causes the skin tissues to contract. This makes under-eye circles less prominent.

- Place finely cut cucumber slices on each eyelid.
- Leave it on for 5 minutes and rinse.



Cold tea bags

The caffeine present in tea bags shrinks blood vessels and reduces fluid retention in tissues.

This makes the skin around your eyes look vibrant and glowing. Cold tea bags cause skin tissues to shrink, leaving your eyes looking less puffy.

- Take two already soaked tea bags and refrigerate for 10 minutes.
- Remove and place them on each eye for 5-10 minutes.
- Rinse with cold water and repeat 1-3 times a day to see effective results.

Mint Leaves

Mint leaves contain menthol that improves blood circulation and soothes and rejuvenates the skin. It

is natural astringent and contracts the blood vessels around the eyes, reducing the blue tint. The vitamin C in mint makes the skin around the eyes appear brighter.

- Take some mint leaves and crush them gently using your hands.
- Make your mask at home by blending mint leaves and applying them on the affected area.
- Leave it for 10 minutes before rinsing with cold water.

Aloe vera

Aloe vera is an effective moisturiser and has anti-inflammatory properties.

- Clean the under eye area with moist cotton.
- Massage aloe vera pulp under the eyes for 10 minutes.

People with moral values trusted more as partners



How to determine that a person is trustworthy? According to researchers, people who hold onto moral absolutes are more trusted and more valued as social partners, suggesting that people gauge others' trustworthiness based on their moral judgments.

The findings help explain that snap judgements about morality tend to be based on a set of absolute moral rules even if a person makes different decisions when given more time.

"If people who stick to moral absolutes are preferred as social partners, expressing this view will reap benefits for oneself," said lead researcher Jim AC Everett from the University of Oxford.

The team used several variations of moral dilemmas where a person must decide whether or not to sacrifice an innocent person in order to save the lives of many others.

The results indicate that across nine experiments, more than 2,400 participants who took an absolute approach to the dilemmas (like refusing to kill an innocent person, even when this maximised the greater good) were seen as more trustworthy than those who advocated a more flexible approach.

When asked to entrust a person with a sum of money, participants handed over more money and were more confident of getting it back, when dealing with someone who refused to

FOOD CORNER



TAWA CHICKEN FRY

A delicious lip-smacking dish, the Tawa Chicken Fry is easy to make and can be served as a starter or as an appetizer to a meal.

Ingredients

Chicken - 500 gms
Gram Flour - small handful
Juice of 1 Lemon
Ginger Garlic Paste - 2tblsp
Turmeric Powder - 1/3 tsp
Coriander Powder - 1/3 tsp
Curry Leaves - few
Red Chilli Paste - 3 tsp
Saunf - 1/2 tsp
Cumin Seeds - 1/2 tsp
Salt as per taste
Oil as required

Method

- Clean, wash and dice the chicken into bite-sized pieces.
- Combine the gram flour, lemon juice, ginger garlic paste, turmeric powder, coriander powder, curry leaves, red chilli paste, saunf, cumin seeds and salt in a bowl.
- Mix well with a little water.
- Add the chicken pieces and mix until evenly coated.
- Keep aside for 45 to 75 minutes.
- Heat oil in a pan over medium flame.
- Fry the chicken pieces until golden brown and cooked.
- Remove and drain excess oil.
- Serve with mint chutney.

sacrifice one to save many.

"This explains why we appear to like people who stick to these intuitive moral rules -- not because they are sticklers for the letter of the law, but because the rules themselves tend to emphasize the absolute importance of respecting the wishes and desires of others," added David Pizarro from Cornell University in the US. Our day-to-day moral decisions don't fit into the neat categories defined by moral philosophers. Instead, real life morality is suited to the complexity of real life situations, the researchers suggested in a paper that appeared in the Journal of Experimental Psychology: General.

BEST HOME WORKOUTS DURING CORONAVIRUS

Home workouts have largely fallen out of favour over the years. Boutique fitness studios and gyms allow us to get outside, to make friends and to exercise alongside one another, so when pitted against them, home workouts don't always make the cut. But that's all changed.

Push-up

How to do it: Place your hands under your shoulders and lift your body from the ground to reach a plank position. Slowly bend your elbows and lower your body down, ensuring that you keep your core engaged to maintain a straight line. Repeat.



Dumbbell shoulder press

How to do it: Hold dumbbells (a tin of beans or a bottle of milk will also do the job) in either hand and stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Make sure not to lock your knees and press your weights up from your shoulder height until your arms are straight. Hold and slowly move back so that your biceps are at three o'clock from your shoulders before pushing back up. Repeat.

Around the world

How to do it: Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, ensuring not to lock your knees. Hold your dumbbell (or makeshift household weight) in front of your face with your elbows bent, palms facing each other. Circle the weight around your head and keep your elbows in your eyeline as you do it. Repeat.

Squat

How to do it: Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Push your hips back and bend your knees to lower into a squat, making sure that your knees do not hover any further forward than your toes. Repeat.

Reverse lunge

How to do it: Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Step back with your right leg and bend both knees as you lower until both knees are at a 90 degree angle. Push through the heel of your left foot to stand, and repeat on the other side.

Kickback

How to do it: Get onto all fours on your hands and knees. Slowly kick your right leg back until it's straight, making sure that you keep your core engaged and back straight. Slowly bring it back down and repeat on the other side.

Leg raises

How to do it: Lie on your back with your hands placed under your bottom. Raise your legs to 90 degrees, and slowly lower both of them back down without arching your lower back. Repeat.

Mountain climbers

How to do it: Place both hands under your shoulders and push up into a plank position. Bring one knee into your chest and back to the starting position. Do the same with the other leg and repeat immediately on the other side to build speed. Repeat.

Crunches

How to do it: Sit down and hover on your bottom with your legs off of the floor and your back straight at 45 degrees. Extend your legs out straight then bend to crunch in, as you bring your chest to meet your knees. Repeat.

Airborne spread of COVID-19 not reported so far: WHO official

Airborne spread of COVID-19 has not been reported so far and it is transmitted mostly through respiratory droplets and close contact, Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia Dr Poonam Khetarpal Singh said on Monday.

Her comments came in the backdrop of rumours about air borne transmission of the novel coronavirus doing rounds on social media.

"Airborne spread has not been reported for COVID-19. Based on the information received so far and on our experience with other coronaviruses, COVID-19 appears to spread mostly through respiratory droplets (for instance those produced when a sick person coughs) and close contact. This is why WHO recommends maintaining hand and respiratory hygiene," Singh said.

She said Chinese authorities reported that there could be a possibility of aerosol transmission in a relatively closed environment with prolonged exposure to high concentrations of aerosols, like in ICUs and CCUs in hospitals.

However, "more investigations and analysis of epidemiological data is needed to understand this mode of transmission of the virus", she said.



NEW PORTABLE CORONAVIRUS TEST CAN GIVE RESULTS IN 50 MINUTES

Researchers in the UK have designed a portable smartphone-based coronavirus testing kit which they say can provide results for COVID-19 in just 50 minutes after taking a throat swab.

Most current tests take 24-48 hours to provide results because they need to be sent to labs, noted the researchers from the University of East Anglia (UEA) in the UK, who created the test to be rolled out to test National Health Service (NHS) staff in two weeks.

The new molecular test could be used to process 16 samples at a time -- or up to 384 samples if using a lab-based detection machine, they said.

The test kit aims to help self-isolating medical staff return to work as quickly as possible. And it will also ensure that those at work are not spreading the virus, according to the UEA researchers.

"The idea behind this is that we need to test NHS staff more quickly, so they can stay at work if they are well, or go home if they're a risk to potentially very vulnerable patients," said lead researcher Justin O'Grady, from UEA's Norwich Medical School, which began work on the kit earlier this month.

"We want to move very quickly on this, and hope that it could be rolled out nationally to hospitals in around two weeks," O'Grady said. The kit works by sequencing the genetic material (RNA) from a throat swab sample using a rapid three minute RNA extraction -- in order to detect the presence of COVID-19.

"The test is simple to use so it could be carried out by a semi-skilled healthcare professional," said O'Grady.

"We hope it could provide additional capacity within the NHS because only those who are definitely ill with COVID-19 would need to self-isolate. And it will help doctors get back to work as quickly as possible once they test negative," he added.

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SCIENTISTS ARE RACING TO PERFECT A BLOOD TEST FOR CORONAVIRUS

If you feel sick and are able to get a test for the novel coronavirus, it's most likely to involve a mouth and nose swab. The swabs will be sent to a lab technician, who will search them for the virus's unique RNA sequence. If they're present, it means you have an active Covid-19 infection. While counts vary, one estimate suggests 368,000 of these tests have been administered in the US.

But what if you felt sick a couple weeks ago, got over it, and want to know if you may have had Covid-19? For that, the molecular RNA test won't help. Instead, you need a serologic test: One that searches your blood serum for signs of an immune response to the infection.

Serologic tests for the new coronavirus aren't yet widely available in the US, even though processing them is simpler and less tech-intensive than molecular tests. A number of serologic tests are in various stages of development by labs and private companies, mostly in China, some of which are modifications of older tests developed for the 2004 SARS outbreak. Now, immunologists are racing to evaluate these tests, develop streamlined alternatives, and decide how best to use them in the current coronavirus response.

Coronavirus may be killing more men than women

Smoking, drinking, general poor health: Researchers say these are some of the factors that could explain why more men seem to be dying from coronavirus than women.

In countries such as Italy, men represent nearly 60% of people who tested positive for the virus and more than 70% of those who have died, according to the country's National Health Institute (ISS). Even in countries like South Korea, where the proportion of women who have tested positive for the virus is higher than that of men, about 54% of the reported deaths are among men. But while health officials are starting to take note of these staggering numbers, the United States is not releasing the basic nationwide data that is crucial to understanding who is most vulnerable to the virus, according to a CNN analysis.

Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House's coronavirus response coordinator, said at a White House press briefing on Friday: "From Italy we're seeing another concerning trend. That the mortality in males seems to be twice in every age group of females."

Regarding this data on Italy, Birx said in an interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer: "Just having the knowledge of that helps us in the United States so we can be very specific in talking to the American people about who to protect and how to protect them."

CNN has reached out to Birx for additional comment. When CNN asked the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for data split by sex for US cases of coronavirus and deaths by coronavirus, known as sex-disaggregated data, the CDC did not respond.

Comprehensive data about those who have gotten sick could help inform more effective responses to the crisis.

But public health researchers say that when governments such as the United States either don't collect, or don't publish their data, it's impossible for experts to gain an accurate sense of what's going on.

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS STAYS FOR A DAY ON CARDBOARD, 3 DAYS ON PLASTIC: STUDY

The novel coronavirus, responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic, can stay for up to 24 hours on cardboard, and up to two to three days on plastic, according to a study which says even people who do not yet show symptoms of the disease can spread the infection to others.

The research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, described the stability of the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, noting that people may acquire the virus through the air, and after touching contaminated objects.

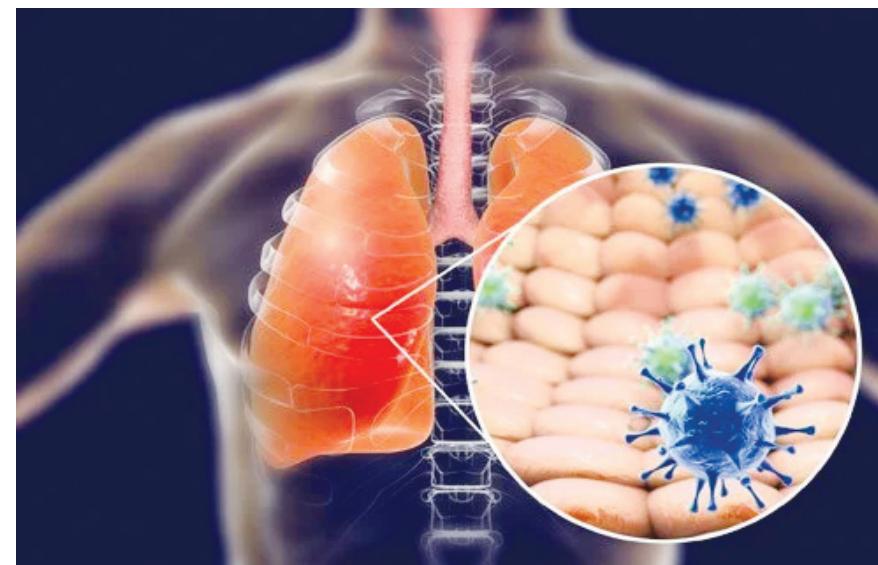
Researchers, including those from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in the US, said SARS-CoV-2 was detectable in aerosols for up to three hours.

They said the virus can also remain stable for about four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard, and for two to three days on plastic and stainless steel.

In the research, the scientists compared how the environment affects SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV-1, which caused the 2002-2003 SARS epidemic.

They said SARS-CoV-1, which was eradicated by intensive contact tracing and case isolation measures, is the human coronavirus most closely related to SARS-CoV-2.

The current study noted that the two viruses behaved similarly, which according to the scientists, fails to explain why COVID-19 has



become a much larger outbreak.

The researchers attempted to mimic virus being deposited from an infected person onto everyday surfaces in a household or hospital setting, such as through coughing or touching objects.

They then assessed how long the virus remained infectious on these surfaces.

According to the scientists, people infected with SARS-CoV-2 might be spreading the virus without recognizing, or prior to recognizing, symptoms.

This would make disease control measures that were effective against SARS-CoV-1 less effective against its successor, they said.

In contrast to SARS-CoV-1, the

study noted that most secondary cases of virus transmission of SARS-CoV-2 appear to be occurring in community settings rather than healthcare settings.

However, healthcare settings are also vulnerable to the introduction and spread of SARS-CoV-2, and the stability of SARS-CoV-2 in aerosols and on surfaces likely contributes to transmission of the virus in healthcare settings, the researchers said.

Based on the findings, they suggested that public health professionals use precautions similar to those for influenza and other respiratory viruses to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

Coronavirus: Pinterest launches new Today tab which will offer advice from health agencies

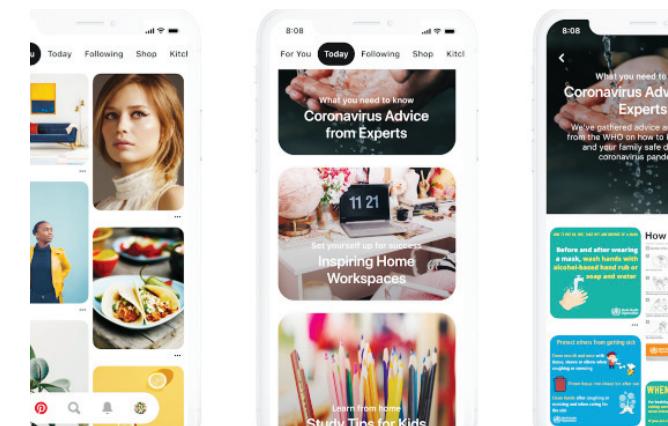
Pinterest saw a record number of users over the weekend as more Americans hunker down and look for at-home inspiration during the advancing coronavirus crisis.

As a result, the microblogging platform sped up the launch of a new feature called Today tab, which refreshes daily to show users curated topics and trending posts. The front launched Tuesday, offering advice from experts and health agencies as well as timely posts like home workspaces and study tips for kids.

"To make the new space as relevant and helpful as possible right now and with the fight against misinformation a top priority, they're launching with expert information from the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control," Pinterest said in a statement.

The online destination is as much a search engine as it is a tool for social networking. People often use the app for inquiries surrounding vacations, recipes, home decor and various other how-to tasks.

The website is also known for offering pins related to self-care, health and wellness. The new Today tab will be curated by the Pinterest team for now. In the future,



guest editors will be at the helm.

Pinterest says searches related to homeschooling, board games and indoor activities for kids were trending over the past few weeks as more people self-quarantined and school districts temporarily shut down.

More people were also looking for content related to working and exercising from home.

China's factories reopen, only to fire workers as COVID shreds global trade

BEIJING (TIP): Shi Xiaomin, who used to export suits and blazers by the thousands to South Korea, the Netherlands and the United States, was luckier than many other Chinese factory owners.

When his factory in the eastern city of Wenzhou reopened last month after an extended shutdown due to the coronavirus outbreak, the local government sent a bus to a nearby province to ferry back more than 20 of his stranded workers. Staff with cars volunteered to fetch colleagues.

In the past week, requests to cancel orders or delay shipments from his European and U.S. clients have flooded in.

Early in the outbreak, China imposed tough travel restrictions and factory suspensions to curb the spread of the virus, squeezing labour supplies and sending exporters scrambling to fulfil orders.

Now the reverse is now happening - overseas orders are being scrapped as the pandemic ravages the economies of China's trading partners.

"The unprecedented shutdown of normal economic activity across Europe, the U.S. and a growing number of emerging markets is certain to cause a dramatic



contraction in Chinese exports, probably in the range of a 20-45% year-on-year drop in the second quarter," said Thomas Gatley, senior analyst at research firm Gavekal Dragonomics.

Shi said his fabric supplier in hard-hit Italy suspended operations on Sunday, meaning no fresh raw materials from May. His stockpile of fabric will last until the end of April.

Shi said he would slow production and might suspend all output soon if business does not improve.

He also told the 50-odd workers who have yet to return from Hubei

province, the epicentre of the outbreak in China, to find jobs elsewhere.

"We know this year is bad and next year would be better, but the question is how many factories can make it to next year?" Shi said.

Economists had initially anticipated a V-shaped recovery for China's economy, similar to that seen after SARS epidemic in 2003. But analysts have since slashed their forecasts to levels not seen since the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976.

China's net exports accounted for 11% of economic growth last year.

World Bank call for suspending debt payments by poorest nations

WASHINGTON (TIP): The International Monetary Fund and World Bank on Wednesday called for governments to put a hold on debt payments from the world's poorest nations so they can battle the coronavirus pandemic.

"The World Bank Group and the IMF believe it is imperative at this moment to provide a global sense of relief for developing countries as well as a strong signal to financial markets," the Washington-based development lenders said in a joint statement. The move aims to help countries that are home to two-thirds of the world's population living in extreme poverty -- largely in sub-Saharan Africa -- and qualify for the most generous, low-cost loans from the International Development Association (IDA) financed by wealthier nations.

"The coronavirus outbreak is likely to have severe economic and social consequences for IDA countries" which will face "immediate liquidity needs to tackle challenges posed by the coronavirus outbreak," the organization said.

The IMF and World Bank called on the Group of 20 nations to support the initiative for "all official bilateral creditors to suspend debt payments from IDA countries that request forbearance." In addition, the institutions called for an analysis of the financing needs these countries will face, and whether their total debt load is sustainable.

Part of the World Bank, the IDA is one of the largest sources of assistance for the world's 76 poorest countries, providing zero or low interest loans spread over 30 years or more, and grants to some distressed nations. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, IDA commitments totaled \$22 billion, of which 36 percent was provided on grant terms, according to the World Bank.

EXPERTS PEG INDIA'S COST OF CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN AT \$120 BILLION

MUMBAI (TIP): Pegging the cost of the COVID-19 lockdown at USD 120 billion (approximately Rs 9 lakh crore) or 4 per cent of the GDP, analysts on Wednesday sharply cut their growth estimates and stressed on the need to announce an economic package.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which is scheduled to announce its first bi-monthly policy review on April 3, is set to deliver a deep rate cut and it should also be assumed that the fiscal deficit targets will be breached, analysts said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a three-week complete lockdown of the country to prevent the spread of the coronavirus infections in the country. The equity markets were in the red early into the trade on Wednesday, down 0.47 per cent. "We estimate that the cumulative shutdown cost around USD 120 billion or 4 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP)," British brokerage Barclays said in a note, revising down its FY21 growth forecast by 1.7 percentage points to 3.5 per cent. It specified the cost of the three-week nationwide lockdown to be alone at USD 90 billion, which is over and above the lockdowns announced by various states like Maharashtra earlier.

They also said that the RBI is most likely to go for a 0.65 per cent rate cut in the April review and will slash interest rates further by 1 per cent during the course of the year.

Domestic brokerage Emkay congratulated policymakers for acting earlier than other countries, but rued that there is not much to cushion the economic impact.



CHINA'S XI CALLS FOR TARIFF CUTS AT G20 VIRUS TALKS

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday urged G20 countries to remove trade barriers in an effort to spur a global recovery after the economic shock of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Xi urged G20 members to cut tariffs, remove barriers and facilitate the unfettered flow of trade" during his remarks at the emergency online summit, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

China has been hit hard by the COVID-19 outbreak since it emerged in the country late last year, with more than 80,000 infected and nearly 3,300 dead nationwide, according to official figures.

The world's second-largest economy ground to a halt in February as authorities shut factories and imposed drastic lockdowns to curb the spread of the disease.

Economic growth had already slowed as a result of the long-running trade war with the United States that saw billions of dollars in tariffs slapped on trade between the two countries.

Facebook eyes multi billion dollar stake in Reliance Jio: Report



MUMBAI (TIP): Facebook Inc is in talks to buy a multi billion dollar stake in Reliance Industries Ltd's (RELI.NS) telecom unit, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday, citing two people with knowledge of the matter.

The report said the social media giant was in talks for a 10% stake in Jio, controlled by India's wealthiest man Mukesh Ambani, but the talks were halted due to global travel bans amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Supply chains disrupted, automakers shut production, jobs at risk

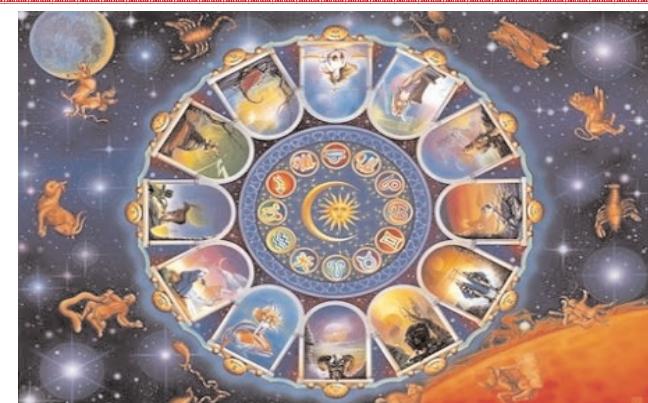
NEW DELHI (TIP): The lockdown across 30 states and Union Territories to prevent the spread of the coronavirus has brought economic activity to a virtual halt. Transportation and logistics system are struggling to get past checkpoints amid varying interpretations across state jurisdictions of what comprises essential services. The country's top manufacturing and services hubs are closing offices amid the restrictions. Construction activity across the major metropolitan regions is crimping to a stop.

While the lockdown started with 75 districts that make up about 10 per cent of the country's population, three-fourths of these figure in the list of 49 high-potential metropolitan clusters that consultancy firm McKinsey & Co has projected will account for about 75 per cent of India's incremental GDP between 2012 to 2025. The shutdown has since been expanded to 30 states and UTs.



Shree Ganeshaya Namah

Bejan Daruwalla is world's most famous astrologer today. He appears regularly on world wide TV shows. Bejan who has been a professor in English, has authored a number of books on astrology. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on March 29, 2012, launched one of Bejan's books, '2012- End of the World? Bejan contributes to a number of journals and newspapers in many parts of the world which include Berkley Communications (London) Times of India (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai) and The Indian Panorama (New York and Texas). Bejan's predictions have mostly been correct and people the world over rely on his predictions.



Bejan Daruwalla is available for astrological consultations. He can be reached at info@bejandaruwalla.com and on phone **011-91-8141234275** www.bejandaruwalla.com

The Indian Panorama brings you Weekly and Birthday Horoscope from the World's most trusted astrologer Bejan Daruwalla. Latest correct prediction: Modi's historic victory

Weekly Horoscope March 30 - April 5, 2020

ARIES: Ganesha says there may be problems with the spouse. All this is, no doubt, worrying. This impacts your life and you will be more reserved than usual and wary about forming new relationships. New people enter your life and assist you in your work as you branch out to new areas of activity. You have kept contact with friends from the past and this networking will help you now when you most need it.

TAURUS: Ganesha says you make steady progress and there is no obstacle that you can't conquer. You will make giant strides in establishing yourself in the world. This is a period when you know who and what you are. Your ambition is stimulated and your desire for power growth. If there is a ruthless side to your personality, it will show itself now.

GEMINI: You know precisely what you need to do to succeed. You will go after it doggedly and share your success with others. You are also shrewd enough to make compromises and carry the team along to share the success. You display a rare, accommodating spirit that takes you where you want to be. You strike hard and the iron is hot. Ganesha is with you.

CANCER: There is love in your life and you enjoy yourself no end. There will be stolen moments with a new friend and a lot of bliss to savour for those who are married. On the work front, there could be competition as you will face opposition from someone who is on a power trip. You may have to stand up for your rights. There could be power struggles, quite possibly with someone in authority.

LEO: There may be some rebellion to what you see around you as you cannot stand injustice of any kind. But, whatever the provocation, keep away from physical violence. Avoid conflicts with others at all cost as it will be futile and you will only emerge the loser. Ganesha urges you to stay calm. Ganesha's blessings are with you.

VIRGO: Despite it all, you make steady progress. This is a very positive time. But it all depends on how you handle it, on what shape you give it. This is a period of culmination in your life. The old order will end and there will be new beginnings. There is very good chance of success in whatever you undertake. You have made enough money and it is time to divert your attention to spiritual needs.

LIBRA: You may be on a buying spree. You indulge yourself and then feel empty. You go after everything that you want in the material world and when you have acquired it all, you feel empty. You have ego issues with people and are arrogant as you assume that you are always right. You need more meaningful encounters where you focus more on mutual growth.

SCORPIO: If you soften your temperament and slow down a bit, this can be an extremely productive and growth-oriented phase. There is a lot to be done and you are filled with energy. How you use it depends on your personal evolution, says Ganesha. Emotions ride high. There are domestic issues to attend to.

SAGITTARIUS: There may be a welcome addition to the family and happy times with birthdays, anniversaries and other group activities. You are in the spotlight and just love it. If you are a performer, like a dancer for example, there may be stage shows and many plaudits. You make big plans which will be the culmination of many ideas that have taken root over a period of time.

CAPRICORN: You think big and attempt what could be termed grandiose and impractical. But this is also an excellent time to sign contracts or to conclude any kind of commercial transactions. But Ganesha cautions you not to overlook the minute details; this helps you avoid deceit and deception which may be on the cards. It is best to see the overall patterns and to plan with foresight and wisdom to avoid any unforeseen incident.

AQUARIUS: The pace of life accelerates. Old projects or plans come to fruition now. It is in your hands to work out the details and leave as little as possible to chance. You must also deal with others tactfully and recognize the fact that it is not proper to be high-handed. There is a danger of alienating people by being self-righteous or arrogant. You need to be more tolerant and generous.

PISCES: Ganesha tells you to remember that you need to carry the team along. Tempers are running high and it may be a good idea to cool off. There is a lot going on in your life right now. You feel optimistic and hopeful about the future. You gain insights that can make your life much better. You feel very idealistic. Truth is very important in your life now; you are keen to know how the universe works.

Birthday Horoscope March 30 - April 5, 2020

March 30: Ganesha says expect a depressing stalemate in connection with home, family, or marital disputes. Aim for areas of known compatibility by emphasizing long-range plans, shared-value based views.

March 31: Creative work could stall. Children could present you with a challenge. Just focus on getting things done without waiting for the right inspiration to motivate you. It helps to talk things out.

April 1: Personal projects, creative pursuits and

expression, fun activities, sports, and children will keep you happily on the move. The only challenge will be to dispel moods and brooding upon awakening.

April 2: Moods can be a problem. As the days gets underway, try your best to clear your mind of problems you can't do anything about just now, and later curb over compensatory indulging.

April 3: There's a graceful stability available today that you can bring up from inner resources and apply to your fiscal world. Purchases, plans,

or paperwork have the smart eye of reason.

April 4: The Moon draws you into the private recesses of your life, your subconscious, sprouting a new sense of self / others, while an outburst, breakaway, or sudden change there or at work disrupts.

April 5: The Moon in your sign increases your desire to have things your way or have someone you want. If it's a morning contact, put out your best manners. Something harsh or rude is off-putting.

Ram Navami is a religious and traditional festival, celebrated every year with great enthusiasm by the people of Hindu religion. It is celebrated to remember the birthday of the Lord Rama, son of the King Dasharatha and Queen Kausalya, of the Ayodhya kingdom. Lord Rama was the 7th avatar from the Dashavatara of the Lord Vishnu, a Hindu God. According to the Hindu calendar, this festival falls every year in the Shukla Paksha at 9th day in the month of Chaitra. Ram Navami is also called as the Chaitra Masa Suklapaksha Navami which ends as nine-day long Chaitra-Navratri celebrations.

Hindu people celebrate it as a 9 days festival by organizing the Akhand Paath of the Ramacharitamanas, religious bhajan, havan, ritual kirtan and distribution of prasad after the puja and Aarti at 9th day. Devotees make the statue of the Lord Rama in infant form and make prayer in front of the God. As Lord Rama was the 7th avatar of the Vishnu born among common people to remove their problems, people decorate temples and other religious places to make the traditional prayers and offerings of fruits flowers in order to get their problems removed and lot of prosperity and success. They get together at this day to chant Vedic mantras, Aarti and lots of religious songs.

Most of the devotees celebrate this festival by making fast for whole nine days or first and last day of the Navratri to get the full blessings. South Indians celebrate this festival as a wedding anniversary of the Lord Rama from Mata Sita. All the temples get decorated throughout the south region to celebrate the Navratri. However, people in the Mithila and Ayodhya celebrate the wedding anniversary at Vivaha Panchami according to the Valmiki Ramayana. A grand celebration of the Ram Navami takes place by the thousands of devotees in the Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh; Sitamarhi, Bihar; Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, Bhadrachalam, Andhra Pradesh and etc. At some places (like Ayodhya, Varanasi and etc), the Rathayatra means the chariot procession (Shobha yatra) of the Lord Rama, Mata Sita, Lakshman and God Hanuman is carried out by the thousands of people after taking a holy dip in the sacred river, Sarayu or Ganga.

Ram Navami History

Ramayana is the great and religious Epic of the Hindu religion, tells the history of King Dasharatha and his son Rama of the Ayodhya. Once, there was an emperor in the Treta Yuga called King Dasharatha who had three wives (Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi). He had no children and was very sorry for a future emperor of the Ayodhya. One day he was suggested by the great Rishi named Vasistha to perform the Puthra Kamesti Yagna to fulfill his desire for a child.

He was suggested to specially invite the Maharshi Rishyasringa in order to perform yagna. After performing the yagna, he was given a bowl of the divine Kheer by the Yagneshwara. He was requested to offer that bowl of Kheer to his all three wives. Some days after eating that Kheer, all his wives get conceived. At the day of Navami (at 9th day) in the Chaitra month at noon Kausalya gave birth to Rama, Kaikeyi to Bharata and Sumitra to twin boys named Lakshmana and Shatrughna.

Kausalya's son Rama was the 7th avatar of the Lord Vishnu who took birth

RAM NAVAMI: THE BIRTH OF LORD RAMA



to come to the Earth to finish Adharma and maintain the Dharma. Lord Rama had protected his devotees from the attack of rascals. He had vanquished Adharma from the earth and maintained the Dharma all over the earth by destroying all the Asura including Ravana. People of the Ayodhya were very happy from his new King Rama and started celebrating his birthday every year with big joy and enthusiasm as Ram Navami which is still traditionally and religiously celebrated all over the India by the people of Hindu religion.

Ram Navami Celebrations

People of the Hindu religion located in the South region of the India generally perform the Kalyanotsavam means marriage celebration of the Lord Rama. They celebrate it at the day of Navami having the statue of Hindu deities called Rama and Sita in their houses. They perform a procession on the streets taking statues of the deities at the end of day to celebrate the Ram Navami. It is celebrated by different names at different place such as in the Maharashtra it is celebrated by the name Chaitra Navratri, in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka or Tamil Nadu it is celebrated by the name Vasanthothsava and etc.

People celebrate this festival by decorating the statues of the Lord Rama, Lakshman, Mata Sita and Lord Hanuman. They prepare the sweets, sweet drinks, prasad to perform the puja, they invite Pandit Ji to perform havan and katha, they read religious songs,

mantras and Aarti at the end of puja to remove the bad powers from their houses and welcome the good power and energies to their house. They also pray for the good future and health of their children and other family members.

They make fast for whole nine days or last day of the Navratri to perform the holy annual puja. They read the holy Hindu religious Epic called Ramayana; worship Rama and Sita to get the peace and happiness in their life. They offer Morning Prayer to the Hindu God, Surya Dev after having a holy bath in the early morning. People offer puja to the Lakshman, Mata Sita and God Hanuman with the Lord Rama as all of them were devoted heartily to each other.

Significance of Ram Navami

Ram Navami festival is the festival of great importance for the people of Hindu religion. Celebrating the festival of Ram Navami on the 9th day of Chaitra month indicates the removal of bad powers and entrance of divine power on the earth. To remove the Asura power on the earth in order to maintain the Dharma, Lord Vishnu had to born on the earth as a son of the Ayodhya King Dasharatha. Ram Navami is a ritual celebration for the people of Hindu religion which they celebrate enthusiastically for their soul and body purification. Lord Rama came to the earth to perform a special responsibility means to destroy the demon Ravana in order to maintain the Dharma.

This festival celebration indicates the victory of goodness and defeat of evil power and establishment of the Dharma after removal of Adharma. Ram Navami festival celebration starts with the Jal offering in the early morning to the Hindu God, Sun to get blessings from the supreme power as people beliefs the God Sun as an ancestor of the Lord Rama. People involve in singing the devotional songs for whole day as well as listening the recitations from the various Hindu religious books. Vedic mantras are chanted by the religious people of the community at this occasion.

Keeping fast at this day has another significance of getting body and mind purified. At some place, people perform a religious and cultural event called Ramlila to reveal the history of Ram Navami in front of people. People play the whole history of the life of Lord Rama through their dramatic performances. Chariot processing is a grand and ritual event of the Ram Navami festival to show the peaceful Ram Rajya in which people decorate the statues of the Rama, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman in a well manner to start processing on the streets. Generally, people like to have a holy bath in the Saryu River of the Ayodhya in the belief of the complete purification of the body and soul. South Indian people celebrate this occasion as a wedding anniversary of the Rama and Sita which symbolizes enhancing the love bondage between husband and wife.

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AT LEAST 15 KILLED IN MULTI-CAR CRASH AFTER CURFEW IN EGYPT

Fatal collision occurred a few hours after Egypt's nighttime curfew took effect to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

CAIRO (TIP): A truck smashed into multiple cars stopped at a checkpoint on a large Cairo road on Wednesday, killing 15 people just a few hours after a nighttime curfew took effect in Egypt to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

A dozen people were reported injured in the incident.

Under the curfew, public transport shuts down after 7pm (17:00 GMT) and people are forbidden from the streets unless they have an exemption.

Authorities said a string of microbuses, trucks and cars were lined up at a checkpoint on a road from southern Egypt into central Cairo waiting for officers to approve their curfew exemptions.

Suddenly, the truck loaded with



construction materials ploughed into the cluster of vehicles at high speed, the state-owned Ahram news agency said.

Officials are still investigating what happened. The injured were taken to El Saff Central Hospital in the province of Giza for treatment.

About 8,000 people die from traffic accidents each year in Egypt, where roads are poorly maintained and traffic laws rarely enforced.

The accident happened on a stretch of the capital's ring road known for hairpin turns and speeding traffic.

In its most aggressive response yet to the coronavirus pandemic, Egypt has imposed an 11-hour nightly curfew for its 100 million people.

Aljazeera.com

contd from page 1

US tops in COVID-19 cases, overtaking China and Italy

In the United States, more than 82,000 people have tested positive for COVID-19, edging out Italy, which has reported the most deaths, and China, where the virus was first detected in December in the metropolis of Wuhan.

In New York, the virus hotbed in the United States, authorities hope to stem the growth of infections as the city needs to more than double the number of available hospital beds.

"Almost any scenario that is realistic will overwhelm the capacity of the current healthcare system," Governor Andrew Cuomo warned.

The state has identified four new sites for temporary hospitals, Governor said at a press briefing on March 26.

"As of this morning, we have lost 385 New Yorkers to Coronavirus-related illnesses. We mourn them and my thoughts are with their loved ones. Tragically, we expect the number to rise as many patients have been on ventilators for weeks. NY will keep fighting to save lives. Help us save lives by staying home", Governor Cuomo added. With fears mounting of a global recession if not depression, leaders from the Group of 20 major economies held crisis talks by video link Thursday, pledging a "united front" to fight the outbreak - along with an enormous financial injection.

"The virus respects no borders," the leaders said in a statement. "We are

injecting over \$5 trillion into the global economy, as part of targeted fiscal policy, economic measures, and guarantee schemes to counteract the social, economic and financial impacts of the pandemic."

They also pledged "robust" support for developing nations, where coronavirus could next take hold after ravaging China and then Europe.

But the unity pledged by the G20 has been in short supply with China and the United States trading barbs over their handling of the coronavirus crisis.

And Italy as well as Spain, which has the second-highest death toll, objected to a draft economic plan by the European Union which they saw as too weak.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte wants a "strong and sufficient" financial response that deploys "innovative financial instruments truly adapted to a war," his office said.

Alarmed by the rapid spread of the sickness in Italy, France has taken aggressive action to stem the virus and went under lockdown on March 17.

But the 365 deaths reported Thursday was its highest in a one-day period and, alarmingly, included a 16-year-old girl - a rare case of a young person succumbing to a virus that has devastated the elderly.

"It is very difficult to estimate when the peak will come," French health official Jerome Salomon said. "People who are ill now were infected before the confinement began."

"Now there is less contact, people are going out less and get infected less. So we hope there will be fewer people getting sick next week and fewer people going to hospital," he told reporters.

With hospitals under severe strain, medical workers in Italy and Spain are making painstaking choices.

"If I've got five patients and only one bed, I have to choose who gets it," Sara Chinchilla, a pediatrician at a hospital near Madrid, told AFP. "People are dying who could be saved but there's no space in intensive care."

In Britain, the National Health Service said London's hospitals are facing a "continuous tsunami" of seriously ill COVID-19 patients, despite a lockdown imposed this week.

The pandemic has already, and rapidly, been catastrophic to the global economy.

In the United States, the world's largest economy, the Labor Department reported that 3.3 million people applied for unemployment benefits last week - by far the highest number ever recorded.

Job losses have swept across sectors from food services to retail to transportation as nearly half of the country has closed to "non-essential" businesses. "It is staggering. We are only seeing the initial numbers; they will get worse, unfortunately," New York Mayor Bill de Blasio told reporters, estimating that half a million people in the city would lose work.

The Senate early Thursday, March 26, unanimously passed a \$2 trillion package that will provide cash payouts of \$1200.00 per adult and \$500.00 per child.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi voiced confidence that the House of Representatives would follow suit on Friday. President Donald Trump, who has been hoping that a strong economy would win him re-election in November, has been one of the few U.S. leaders to

seek a quick return to normal.

The global lockdown - which also hemmed in India's huge population this week - tightened further on Thursday as Russia announced it was grounding all international flights, while Moscow's mayor ordered the closure of cafes, shops and parks.

Tokyo's millions of citizens have been told to stay home, too, just days after the city was forced to postpone the 2020 Olympic Games for a year.

China said it was barring entry to most foreigners, fearing that imported cases were undermining its success in bringing domestic transmissions way down.

And South Africa braced for a nationwide lockdown as its cases climbed to more than 900 - about a third of Africa's 2,975 cases.

The impact of the virus has stretched well beyond frontline health workers, with billions trapped in their homes and facing what experts say could be lasting psychological harm.

In virus-stricken Italy, clergy members have been among the worst affected. Out of Italy's more than 7,500 deaths, 67 have been priests.

But offering a glimmer of hope, both Italy and Spain have seen lower daily rates of new infections this week.

The World Health Organization called Italy's numbers "encouraging signs" but warned it was "still too early to say whether the pandemic is peaking."

A study from Britain's Imperial College provided a grim prediction, saying 1.8 million people could die worldwide this year even with swift action to halt the virus. (Agencies)

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THE WILD SIDE OF GOA

Before you start getting ideas from the heading, let me clarify that we will be discussing a totally different form of wild. Goa is more than just pristine beaches, feni, floating casinos and a happening nightlife. Being a place of immense natural beauty, the state is endowed with breathtaking wilderness and there are more places to visit in Goa, which are perfect for someone who wants to get out of a mundane week and get into something peaceful.

MHADEI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the eastern part of Goa. Spread in around 208 sq km, this sanctuary supports a wide variety of wildlife and is famous as a bird watcher's paradise. It is considered as an International Bird Area, and is home to 255 bird species, including Nilgiri wood-pigeon and crimson-backed sunbird. Visitors can also see over 257-recorded species of butterflies flutter around. Owing to the presence of resident Bengal tigers, the sanctuary has been proposed as a tiger reserve. Along with the diverse fauna, it is also popular for its variety of flora that includes sacred grooves, creepers, evergreen species of Ashoka and colourful flowers, among others. Besides its unique biodiversity, Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary is also popular for its cascades, especially Vazra Sakla waterfalls and Virdi Falls.

SALIM ALI BIRD SANCTUARY

Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary, named after the famous ornithologist, is located on the island of Chorao along the Mandovi River. Spread in an area of 440 acres, the sanctuary is covered with a thick mangrove forest, which is usually a natural nesting ground of birds. Different varieties of swallows, bulbuls, kingfishers, swans, woodpeckers, hornbills, etc. are found in plenty at this place.

The sanctuary has 1km-long pathway on which one can walk as close as possible to see the natural habitat of birds, without disturbing them. One can also choose to hire a boat and go around the place.



COTIGAO WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Located 60 km south of Panaji, Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary is the second largest in Goa. This sanctuary is notable for its dense forest cover with trees as high as 30m and is a haven for tree lovers. The Talpona River flows through the area and the major watering holes are located on its back.

There are fewer big animals in this sanctuary than Mollem, however one can still expect to see bears, wild boars, deer and monkeys. Birds are plentiful in general and some species of eagles, which are not easily spotted elsewhere, can be seen here. Several tribal communities live inside these forests and one can get an insight into their fast fading lifestyle.

DUDHSAGAR FALLS

One of the important destinations within Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary is the Dudhsagar Falls. Of the numerous waterfalls in the Western Ghats, this is one of the most impressive and is the second highest in India after the Jog Falls. The trip involves a short hike on the road and requires a minimum of fitness. The best season to see the falls is in the monsoons, soon after the rains.

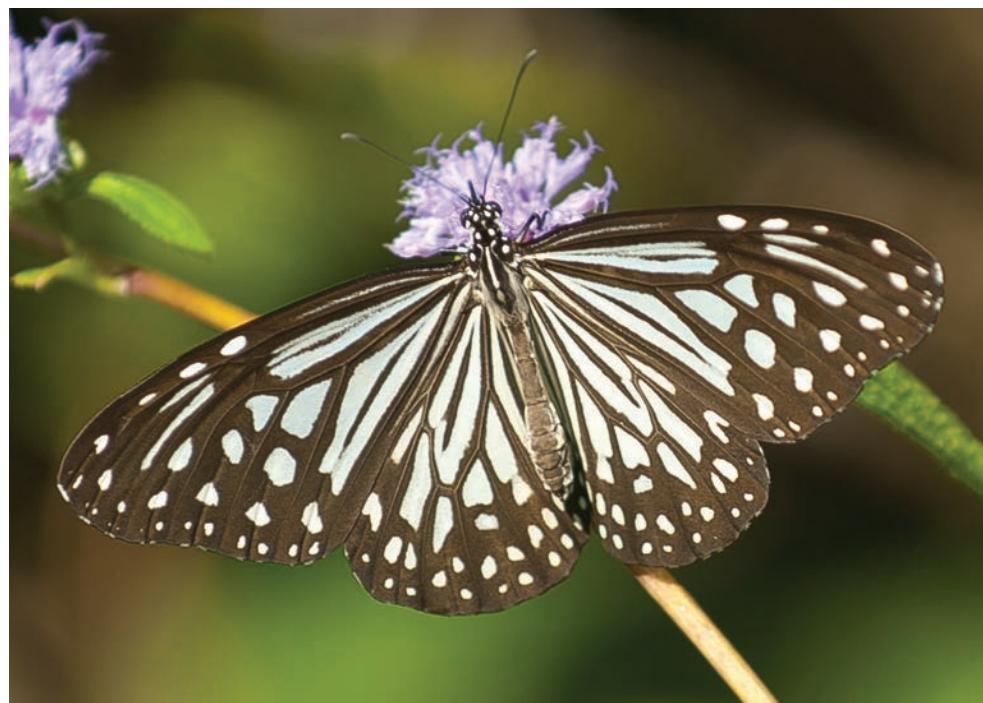
BHAGWAN MAHAVEER SANCTUARY

With an area of more than 240 sq km, this park happens to be the largest wildlife sanctuary in Goa. It was earlier called Mollem Game Sanctuary and was renamed to the current one in 1969. However, the core area is still called Mollem National Park. Nestled in the

Western Ghats, the sanctuary is home to pristine evergreen, semi evergreen and deciduous forests at different altitudes. The fauna includes the rare black panther, varieties of deer, bison, several members of the primate family, porcupines and a number of species of resident and migratory birds. It is also home to a great variety of butterflies.

The sanctuary contains several natural and historical attractions that make this the largest protected area. Some of them are Dudhsagar Falls, Tambdi Falls, Devil's Canyon and ancient Kadamba Temples.

Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary is 63 km from Panaji and can be reached by road or train from the capital or Margao. To go around, vehicles are provided by the Forest Department at economical rates. One can get more idea from Goa tourism.



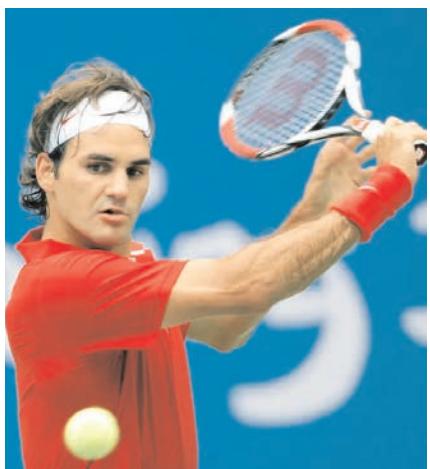
2020 OLYMPICS POSTPONED UNTIL 2021

Six stars for whom Olympics in 2021 may come too late

With the 2020 Olympics postponed until 2021, there are fears the delay will shatter the gold medal hopes of many ageing athletes.

AFP Sport looks at six evergreen stars for whom a delayed Tokyo Games might be a step too far.

ROGER FEDERER



The 20-time Grand Slam champion, who will be 40 in August 2021, won Olympic gold when he partnered Stan Wawrinka to the men's doubles title at the 2008 Beijing Games. Federer was a quarter-finalist in singles in China, silver medallist in 2012 in London before injury forced him skip the 2016 Games in Rio.

In Sydney, in 2000, Federer made the semi-finals in singles but he still remembers Australia fondly as it was the place where he first started his romance with Mirka Vavrinec, who is now his wife.

"Overall it was probably the most unbelievable Olympics I ever had," said Federer, who was also Switzerland's flag-bearer in Beijing and in Athens in 2004 where he exited in the second round.

SERENA WILLIAMS



The US great will be 40 in September next year although her desire to play in Tokyo might not be as pressing as that of Federer.

Williams already has four

Olympic gold medals -- singles at London in 2012 and women's doubles with sister Venus in 2000, 2008 in Beijing and London four years later.

The sisters lost their opening round match in Rio in 2016 while Serena's gold medal defence in the singles was ended by Elina Svitolina in the third round.

TIGER WOODS



Woods, who will be 46 in December next year, would have struggled to make the US team for the Games if they had remained in their 2020 slot. He is currently only the sixth-ranked American with just the top four guaranteed to make the squad.

Woods, the winner of 15 majors, has been fighting a recurrence of a back injury so at least the delay to 2021 for the Olympics gives him renewed hope of a golden swansong.

Organisers would be desperate for Woods to play after he missed the return of golf at the 2016 Games in Rio due to injury.

LIN DAN



The colourful and controversial Chinese badminton superstar will be 37 by the time the next Games roll around.

Lin already has gold from Beijing in 2008 and London four years later, adding to his five world titles.

However, there is a hint of unfinished business for Lin who was defeated in the bronze medal match in Rio in 2016 having been downed in the semi-finals by great rival Lee Chong Wei, the man he had beaten in the 2008 and 2012 Olympic finals.

ALLYSON FELIX

The only female track and field athlete in history to win six Olympic gold medals, Felix had spent the last two years preparing for a golden farewell at the Tokyo Olympics.

Felix, who turns 35 at the end of this year, will be racing against Father Time as she attempts to improve her medal tally in what will be her fifth consecutive Olympics appearance.

The American star can take comfort from the fact she is by no means the oldest woman to chase Olympic glory in sprint events. Merlene Ottey was 40 when she anchored Jamaica's 4x100m relay team to a bronze medal in 2000.

JUSTIN GATLIN



Gatlin had planned to retire in 2020 after competing in his fourth Olympics at the age of 38. However the controversial American star now plans to extend his career in order to compete in the rescheduled Tokyo Games.

"I think a lot of people think that time is against me or against older athletes in this situation, and it's far from the truth," said Gatlin, who has twice served suspensions for drug offences during his career.

Gatlin, the 2004 Olympic champion, though could face a battle to even qualify given the depth of the US men's sprinting squad, with Christian Coleman and Noah Lyles the favourites in the 100m and 200m.

.....But plenty of time for this pair.... Syrian table tennis player Hend Zaza was set to become the youngest athlete at the Tokyo Olympics - at just 11 years old.

She would not have been alone in Japan as professional skateboarder Sky Brown - only five months older - was hoping to compete for Great Britain.



IPL cancellation on cards

NEW DELHI (TIP): The cancellation of this year's Indian Premier League looks inevitable with the Indian cricket board (BCCI) under tremendous pressure after the declaration of a 21-day nationwide lockdown to contain the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. When BCCI postponed the IPL to April 15 earlier this month, it said conducting the tournament could be considered only when the pandemic subsides. However, there hasn't been any remarkable change in the situation.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly did not have much to say on the current scenario, which was made worse by the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics to the summer of 2021, on Tuesday. "I can't say anything at the moment. We are at the same place where we were on the day we postponed. Nothing has changed in the last 10 days. So, I don't have an answer to it. Status quo remains," Ganguly said, his helplessness palpable. Kings XI Punjab owner Ness Wadia was more forthright. "BCCI should really consider postponing the IPL now. As a premier event, we need to act with great responsibility. Contemplation of IPL is inhuman right now," Wadia said.

Kohli & boys handed customised indoor workout routines

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Indian cricketers are all home and spending time with their families. But strength and conditioning coach Nick Webb in consultation with physio Nitin Patel has customised routines for Virat Kohli and his team to ensure they stay in top shape despite the pandemic-induced break.

The duo of Webb and Patel have made player-specific routines for all the contracted players to ensure that they can continue to stay in shape even as the country fights the coronavirus outbreak. "All the players, irrespective of whether they play red-ball cricket or white-ball cricket or all formats have been given fitness routines which they are to follow and give updates to Webb and Patel from time to time," a BCCI official said. "For example, a bowler will have been given exercises which work to make his core and lower-body strong. Similarly, a batsman has been given exercises which also work on his shoulders and wrists," he added.

Keep indoors, it's not a vacation: Tendulkar

"Our government and health experts across the world have requested us to stay indoors and not step outside our houses until there's an emergency. But some people are not taking this advice seriously. Everyone feels that they should go outside and meet friends. But now is not the right time. This is very dangerous for the entire nation. Remember, these days are not holidays. If coronavirus has reached our country, it's because of us only. We need to stay indoors for the doctors, nurses and the medical professionals who are risking their lives for us."

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