



AMERICA UNITED AGAINST COVID-19

KEEP SAFE

- Follow President Trump's Guidelines on Coronavirus
- Observe Social Distancing
- Wash Hands Frequently
- No Panic Buying
- No Price Gouging

KEEP AMERICA SAFE

**Visa, OCI card
suspension prevents
several Indians in
US from flying
back home**

Story on Page 13

Narendra Modi announces 20 lakh crore economic stimulus package

Gives a call for being 'vocal for local' and for self-reliance

NEW DELHI (TIP) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, May 12, said a new-look Lockdown 4.0 beyond May 17 was in the offing, while announcing an economic stimulus package for ₹20-lakh-crore (estimated at 10% of the GDP), with a clearly defined leap towards economic reforms that will, in his words, lead to Atmanirbhar Bharat, or a self-reliant, resilient India.

This amount includes packages already announced at the beginning of the lockdown incorporating a slew of measures from the RBI and the payouts under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation, May 12 Photo / Courtesy DD-PTI



China stealing US research on COVID-19: Pompeo



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.
File picture

WASHINGTON (TIP): U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday accused China of "stealing" U.S. intellectual property and data related to COVID-19 research.

Mr. Pompeo's allegations came a day after the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security claimed that organizations conducting research into COVID-19 may be targeted by computer hackers linked to the Chinese government. The U.S. condemns attempts by cyber actors and

contd on page 12

U.S. Senator Richard Burr steps aside as committee chair in view of FBI stock trades probe



WASHINGTON (TIP): U.S. Senator Richard Burr will step aside as chairman of the powerful Senate Intelligence Committee, after the FBI seized his mobile telephone in a major escalation of a probe of his stock trades before the downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

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Senator Burr has denied wrongdoing and said he relied solely on news reports to guide decisions on stock sales, amid reports he and other senators sold shares after private briefings from intelligence on the risks of the coronavirus crisis.

Thousands of Indian Nationals Return Home from USA in First Phase of Vande Bharat Mission



India's Consul General in New York Sandeep Chakravorty, Deputy Consul General Shatrughna Sinha supervising the boarding of passengers at EWR Airport, Newark when second evacuation flight for Mumbai and Ahmedabad left on May 10th

NEW YORK (TIP): The first Air India special flight, which took off from San Francisco May 9 with 225 Indians on board, landed in Mumbai on Monday, May 11th, under the Government of India's Vande Bharat mission. The passengers departed from San Francisco International Airport on Saturday under Supervision of India's Consul General in San Francisco Sanjay Panda. "First AI spl flight from the US brings in 225

Indians from San Francisco to Mumbai. Thank @airindia @MoCA_GoI and Maharashtra Govt for support and coordination. Great work by CG Sanjay Panda and Team @CGISFO," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar tweeted.

The second evacuation flight for Mumbai and Ahmedabad left on May 10th, 2020 from EWR Airport, Newark, NJ. India's Consul General in New York

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC BECOMING CHILD RIGHTS CRISIS AS 6,000 CHILDREN COULD DIE DAILY: UNICEF



UNITED NATIONS (TIP): The UN's children agency has warned that an additional 6,000 children could die daily from preventable causes over the next six months as the COVID-19 pandemic weakens the health systems and disrupts routine services.

As the coronavirus outbreak enters its fifth month, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) requested USD 1.6 billion to support its humanitarian response for children impacted by the pandemic.

The health crisis is "quickly becoming a child rights crisis. And without urgent action, a further 6,000 under-fives could die each day," it said.

With a dramatic increase in the costs of supplies, shipment and care, the agency appeal is up from a USD 651.6 million request made in late March – reflecting the devastating socioeconomic consequences of the disease and families' rising needs.

"Schools are closed, parents are out of work and families are under strain," UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said on Tuesday.

"As we reimagine what a post-COVID world would look like, these funds will help us respond to the crisis, recover from its aftermath, and protect children from its knock-on effects." The estimate of the 6,000 additional deaths from preventable causes over the next six months is based on an analysis by researchers from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, published on Wednesday in the Lancet Global Health Journal.

UNICEF said it was based on the worst of three scenarios analysing 118 low and middle-income countries, estimating that an additional 1.2 million deaths could occur in just the next six months, due to reductions in routine health coverage, and an increase in so-called child wasting.

Around 56,700 more maternal deaths could also occur in just six months, in addition to the 144,000 likely deaths across the same group of countries. The worst case scenario, of children dying before their fifth birthdays, would represent an increase "for the first time in decades," Fore said.

"We must not let mothers and children become collateral damage in the fight against the virus. And we must not let decades of progress on reducing preventable child and maternal deaths, be lost," she said.

Access to essential services, like routine immunisation, has already been compromised for hundreds of millions of children and threatens a significant increase in child mortality.

According to a UNICEF analysis, some 77 per cent of children under the age of 18 worldwide are living in one of 132 countries with COVID-19 movement restrictions.

The UN agency also spotlighted that the mental health and psychosocial impact of restricted movement, school closures and subsequent isolation are likely to intensify already high levels of stress, especially for vulnerable youth.

At the same time, they maintained that children living under restricted movement and socio-economic decline are in greater jeopardy of violence and neglect. Girls and women are at increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

Countries with highest number of cases and fatalities

Global deaths linked to the novel coronavirus passed 300,000 on Thursday, while reported cases of the virus are approaching 4.5 million.

About half of the fatalities have been reported by the United States, the United Kingdom and Italy.

The first death linked to the disease was reported on January 10 in Wuhan, China. It took 91 days for the death toll to pass 1,00,000 and a further 16 days to reach 2,00,000, according to the Reuters tally of official reports from governments. It took 19 days to go from 200,000 to 300,000 deaths.

Here's a look at the countries with high incidence of Covid-19 deaths in the world:

United States

With over 1.3 million total coronavirus cases, the US leads the global Covid-19 tally. According to the World Health organisation, the country has reported 80,695 Covid-19 fatalities which is the highest in the world.

United Kingdom

More than 33,000 people (33,186 to be exact) have succumbed to death in the United Kingdom so far; the World Health organisation data showed. Over 2.29 lakh cases of coronavirus have been reported in the UK till date.

Italy

The country has the third-highest number of Covid-19 fatalities in the world, and is just behind the UK. Italy has recorded 33,106 deaths due to Covid-19. Italy has more than 2.22 lakh coronavirus cases.

Spain

The country has over 2.28 lakh Covid-19 infections. The country has seen 27,104 deaths due to the deadly disease.

France

The country has witnessed over 27,029 Covid-19 fatalities till date. With nearly 1.4 lakh total coronavirus cases, it is among the top 10 worst hit nations in the world.

Brazil

The Latin American country has emerged as the new global hotspot of the

TRACKING THE VIRUS

GLOBAL

Cases	Deaths
4,526,850	3,03,405

INDIA

Cases	Deaths
81,970	2,649



UK RESEARCHERS TRY TO CRACK GENETIC RIDDLE OF COVID-19

LONDON (TIP): British researchers will study the genes of thousands of ill COVID-19 patients to try to crack one of the most puzzling riddles of the novel coronavirus: why does it kill some people but give others not even a mild headache?

Researchers from across the United Kingdom will sequence the genetic code of people who fell critically ill with COVID-19 and compare their genomes with those who were mildly ill or not ill at all.

The hunt for the specific genes that could cause a predisposition to getting ill with COVID-19 will involve up to 20,000 people currently or previously in hospital intensive care with COVID-19 and about 15,000 people with mild symptoms.

Scientists caution that their knowledge of the novel coronavirus, which emerged in China last year, is still modest though they say it is striking how it can be so deadly for some but so mild for others.

It is, as yet, unclear why. "We think that there will be clues in the genome that will help us understand how the disease is killing people,"



Kenneth Baillie, an intensive care doctor who is leading the study at the University of Edinburgh, told Reuters.

"I would bet my house on there being a very strong genetic component to individual risk," Baillie said.

Health minister Matt Hancock called on people to sign up to the programme. "If you're asked to sign up to the genomics trial which is being run by Genomics England, then please do, because then we can understand the genetic links. It's all part of building a scientific picture of this virus."

The genome is an organism's complete set of deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, and in humans it contains about 3 billion DNA base pairs.

Covid-19 disease. It has seen 1,77,589 cases and 12,400 deaths due to coronavirus disease.

Belgium

The country has 53,981 Covid-19 cases and has recorded 8,843 deaths to date.

Germany

Germany has 1,72,239 coronavirus cases and recorded 7,723 deaths due to the coronavirus disease.

Iran

Iran is where one of the early outbreaks of Covid-19

was reported. It has now recorded 1,12,725 cases of coronavirus disease and 6,783 deaths.

Canada

Canada has recorded 71,486 cases of Covid-19 and 5,209 deaths, according to WHO.

Thousands of Indian Nationals Return Home from USA in First Phase of Vande Bharat Mission



India's Consul General in Chicago Amit Kumar saw off the passengers, drawn mostly from jurisdictions of Indian Consulates in Chicago, Atlanta and Houston



First Air India special flight took off from San Francisco May 9 with 225 Indians on board

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Sandeep Chakravorty, Deputy Consul General Shatrughna Sinha and other consular staff saw off the passengers. Medical screening of passengers was done before boarding the flight and only asymptomatic

passengers were allowed to travel.

The 3rd Special Flight from USA under #MissionVandeBharat took off with 334 passengers on board from Chicago to Mumbai and Chennai on 11 May around mid-night. Consul General Amit Kumar saw off the passengers, drawn mostly from jurisdictions of Indian Consulates in Chicago, Atlanta and Houston.

On May 12 Vande Bharat Mission in the US moved to Day 4 with Indian citizens boarded Air India flight bound for Delhi-Hyderabad from Washington Dulles International Airport. India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu took special initiative to facilitate smooth return of the passengers.

"Wheels up On Day 4 of #VandeBharatMission in US. Relieved passengers depart for home to Delhi and Hyderabad from DC. Thank you

@airindia

. Team India

@IndianEmbassyUS

is proud to be part of this Mission," Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu said in a tweet.

Government of India had announced on 4 May its decision to facilitate the return of stranded Indian nationals from different countries, who could not travel due to COVID-19 related international travel restrictions, in a phased manner. Under Mission Vande Bharat, around 15,000 Indians are being repatriated through 64 Special Flights from 12 countries in Europe, the North Americas, Gulf and South Asia.

In the first phase of Vande Bharat Mission, there were 7 Air India flights to India with two flights each from San Francisco, New York and Chicago, and one flight from Washington DC. Priority was accorded to those in distress/emergency cases, including workers who have been laid off, short term visa holders faced with expiry of visas, persons with medical emergency/pregnant women/elderly, those required to return to India due to bereavement of a family member, and students.



Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu interacting with passengers bound for Delhi-Hyderabad flight at Washington Dulles International Airport

'Vande Bharat Mission' is a unique and logistically challenging operation coordinated by Ministry of External Affairs. Its implementation requires flexibility and continuous adjustments to respond to evolving situation. In this endeavor, there is deep cooperation among the U.S. authorities, Air India, a number of Ministries/Departments, State Governments and organizations in India.

India Center Foundation Launches 2nd Phase of South Asian Arts Resiliency Fund

NEW YORK (TIP): Twelve artists from multiple disciplines, ethnic backgrounds and geographic diversity will receive the first round of The South Asian Arts Resiliency Fund (SAARF), a grant program created by the India Center Foundation (ICF) for South Asian-American artists and arts workers who have been impacted by the economic fallout of COVID-19. From filmmakers to performance and visual artists to writers and musicians, the grantees trace their roots to South Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan and India) and represent its culture through their art in the U.S.

Grantees are as diverse as the applicants and are chosen on the strengths of their contributions. One such grantee is LA-based MC Seti X (aka Mandeep Sethi), whose politically charged verses have had GQ Magazine call him "India's booming hip hop scene's new voice." Other grantees include curator, painter, educator and advocate Sadaf Padder, who is serving her community of Brooklyn as an Artists-in-Masks Resident with COPE NYC by designing PPE for essential workers along with NYC youth. Included also are tabla player Rajesh Bhandari, whose 20-year career has seen him perform with the likes of Ustad Zakir Hussain, Falu Shah and



Twelve artists from multiple disciplines, ethnic backgrounds and geographic diversity will receive the first round of The South Asian Arts Resiliency Fund

Shakira and, finally, cartoonist Soumya Dhulekar, whose cartoons with themes of grief, memory and coming-of-age have been printed in various anthologies and included in national exhibitions. More information can be found on the ICF website, TheIndiaCenter.us.

"We've had 120 applicants from 19 states so far for round one, and though their contributions to culture and society are invaluable, their reported income loss from this pandemic, collectively, hovers around \$1.5 million," says Raoul Bhavnani, one of ICF's Co-Founders. "Our goal is to provide \$500,000 in grants to South Asian-American artists and arts workers of all disciplines, in order to help them continue creating work that embodies South Asian culture, while also supporting their livelihoods."

The deadline for Round Two of the grant is May 15, with winners being announced May 25th. Although the Fund has reached \$30,000 towards its \$500,000 goal, with ICF providing the initial seed money, "We have a long way to go," adds Bhavnani. "This is very much a grassroots campaign, and although we are gaining momentum, we appreciate all donations no matter how big or small they are."

Indian Origin Chintan Mehta and Munish Kumar on Wells Fargo Expanded Technology Leadership Team

CIOs named to support Corporate Strategy, Digital Platform & Innovation, and Wealth & Investment Management businesses

SAN FRANCISCO (TIP): Wells Fargo & Company (NYSE: WFC) announced, May 8, two new leaders joining the Technology organization. Chintan Mehta was named chief information officer (CIO) and head of Digital Technology & Innovation, and Munish Kumar was named CIO and head of Wealth & Investment Management Technology. Both will have a joint reporting relationship to Saul Van Beurden, head of Technology, and the relevant line of business leaders. Mehta's appointment is effective immediately, and Kumar will join the company in August.

As CIOs, Mehta and Kumar will have responsibility for all technology underlying the company's Corporate Strategy, Digital Platform & Innovation, and Wealth & Investment Management businesses. They will work with business leaders to deliver the tools and maintain the platforms needed to serve Wells Fargo customers, while contributing to the company's technology transformation.

"Chintan and Munish bring extensive technology and business knowledge, making them both uniquely positioned for these roles," said Van Beurden. "In addition, their demonstrated leadership will be an important addition to the organization's ongoing technology transformation. I am pleased to welcome Chintan and Munish to the Technology leadership team."

Most recently, Mehta was CIO of Wells



Wells Fargo, on May 8, named Chintan Mehta as chief information officer (CIO) and head of Digital Technology & Innovation, and Munish Kumar as CIO and head of Wealth & Investment Management Technology



Fargo's digital ecosystem, a position he held since 2017. In this role, he was responsible for leading the delivery of all digital experiences and capabilities for Wells Fargo businesses and its 70 million customers. Previously, he was global chief technology officer at Walgreens from 2015 to 2017, where he was responsible for product management, design, engineering, and operations across retail, pharmacy, and health care businesses. He also held technology leadership positions with increasing levels of responsibility at American Express and Barclays Bank PLC in London. Mehta has an M.S. in Computer

Science from the University of Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom.

Kumar brings more than 20 years of experience and joins Wells Fargo from JPMorgan Chase, where he was managing director of digital sales, marketing and personalization, and analytics technology, a position he held since 2015. In this role, he oversaw a team of 400 technologists responsible for creating personalized experiences for customers through technology. From 2008 to 2014, Kumar held a technology leadership role in the company's asset and wealth management business where he developed and managed the retail and

institutional trading platforms, including Institutional Allocation Platform and Chase Online Trading. Previously, he held technology leadership roles at Bear Stearns and Citigroup. Kumar has a Bachelor of Technology and Computer Science from Punjabi University in India.

About Wells Fargo

Wells Fargo & Company (NYSE: WFC) is a diversified, community-based financial services company with \$1.98 trillion in assets. Wells Fargo's vision is to satisfy our customers' financial needs and help them succeed financially. Founded in 1852 and headquartered in San Francisco, Wells Fargo provides banking, investment, and mortgage products and services, as well as consumer and commercial finance, through 7,400 locations, more than 13,000 ATMs, the internet (wellsfargo.com), and mobile banking, and has offices in 31 countries and territories to support customers who conduct business in the global economy. With approximately 263,000 team members, Wells Fargo serves one in three households in the United States. Wells Fargo & Company was ranked No. 29 on Fortune's 2019 rankings of America's largest corporations. News, insights and perspectives from Wells Fargo are also available at Wells Fargo Stories.

Additional information may be found at www.wellsfargo.com | Twitter: @WellsFargo.

Indian American Yale Student Builds Textbook Library for Needy Students



A political science major, Kushal Dev has founded the Silliman Textbook Library - a communal space housing over 1,000 textbooks

NEW YORK (TIP): Kushal Dev, a second-year student at Yale's Silliman College has founded the Silliman Textbook Library - a communal space housing over 1,000 textbooks that can be used

by Yale students who can't afford them. Students can use them at any time for free.

After struggling to access an especially expensive economics textbook himself, Dev decided to do something to help fellow students who found their textbooks financially prohibitive. A friend, former Yale College Council president Peter Huang '18, had once touted the idea of a textbook library. Dev brought the idea to fruition by soliciting donations from fellow students, alumni, and others at Yale, receiving an initial donation of some 600 books. The books, initially kept in the Acorn - Silliman College's coffee shop - were moved this year to a dedicated space in the residential college's library.

A political science major, Dev is interested in the intersection of technology, pop culture, and politics, as well as in racial and queer politics. (Courtesy: Yale)

Indian American Stony Brook Sisters use GRL PWR to fight disease

NEW YORK (TIP): Ruchi Shah was 15 years old when she noticed a long line of people outside of a tiny clinic waiting to get treatment for mosquito-transmitted diseases during a family trip to India. After returning to her Ronkonkoma, Long Island home, the driven teenager began working in her family's garage and a high school classroom to develop an all-natural mosquito repellent.

In March, almost a decade after her dream began, she was named one of 10 winners of Victoria's Secret PINK's second annual GRL PWR Project, an initiative that provides funding for young female "leaders, trendsetters and go-getters." Ruchi's entry was among those selected from nearly 4,000 video submissions from women across the country ages 18 to 25, winning \$25,000 to put toward her business.

Shah's company, Mosquitoes Be Gone LLC, is a direct descendent of her high school science project, which followed her to Stony Brook, where she majored in biology. In 2015, her junior year as an undergrad, she entered a business plan competition. To her surprise, she won, and a company was born. Her younger sister Nidhi, then a high school senior, became the company's chief operating officer. Nidhi Shah would herself come to Stony Brook the following year as a psychology major. Ruchi, after earning her BS in Biology,



The Shah sisters present their mosquito repellent

continued her studies at the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook.

A champion of helping empower others, Ruchi also created an internship program shortly after founding her company that is a collaboration between Stony Brook's Department of Biology, the College of Business and the WISE Honors program, which offers educational and professional science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) opportunities for undergraduate students.

(Courtesy: Stony Brook University)

Three Indian American Students Win Prestigious DOE Fellowship

NEW YORK (TIP): Three Indian American Students are among 26 recipients nationwide of a Department of Energy Computation Science Graduate Fellowship (DOE CSGF). They are Priya Donti from Carnegie Mellon University, and Dipti Jasrasaria and Amaresh Sahu, both from University of California, Berkeley.

The program, established in 1991, trains top leaders in computational science. As part of the program, fellows receive exceptional benefits including a yearly stipend; full payment of university tuition and required fees (during the appointment period); and an annual academic allowance.

Donti earned her B.S. degree in Computer Science and Mathematics from Harvey Mudd College in 2015. Her work seeks to develop machine learning, optimization, and control methods for robust, emissions-minimal energy system management that are powerful enough to cope with the system's large-scale nature.

Jasrasaria did M.Phil. Scientific Computing from University of Cambridge in 2017 and B.A. Chemistry from Harvard University in 2016.



Priya Donti from Carnegie Mellon University, and Dipti Jasrasaria and Amaresh Sahu, both from University of California, Berkeley are among 26 recipients nationwide of a Department of Energy Computation Science Graduate Fellowship (DOE CSGF)

Sahu did his B.S. Chemical and Biological Engineering, from Princeton University in 2013. His research focuses on using a variety of techniques from statistical mechanics, continuum mechanics, and finite element methods to develop models that better explains cell membrane behavior.

Indian American Historian Rohit De Named One of 27 Carnegie Fellows



Rohit De is a legal historian who studies South Asia, postcolonialism, and the role of lawyers in politics

NEW YORK (TIP): Rohit De, an associate professor of history at Yale University, has been named a 2020 Andrew Carnegie Fellow. He joins a class of 27 fellows, each of whom receives up to \$200,000 to pursue a writing

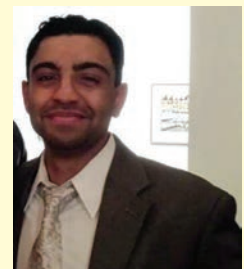
and research project.

De is a legal historian who studies South Asia, postcolonialism, and the role of lawyers in politics. Among other topics, his research has explored the significance of political trials in Asia and Africa in the 1950s, and constitutions in South Asia.

Professor De's book *A People's Constitution: Law and Everyday Life in the Indian Republic* (Princeton University Press) explores how the Indian constitution, despite its elite authorship and alien antecedents, came to permeate everyday life and imagination in India during its transition from a colonial state to a democratic republic. Mapping the use and appropriation of constitutional language and procedure by diverse groups such as butchers and sex workers, street vendors and petty businessmen, journalists and women social workers, it offers a constitutional history from below. He continues to write on the social and intellectual foundations of constitutionalism in South Asia.

He is current research focuses around two major strands: the histories of political lawyering and the nature of the postcolonial state in South Asia.

Indian American Attorney Shot Dead in Georgia



Rajesh Mehta, 45, was shot multiple times by 29-year-old Terrance Scott outside the home on Hansen Drive

ATLANTA (TIP): An Indian origin senior staff attorney at Cobb County Magistrate was shot and killed May 9 morning while confronting a gunman outside a home in Locust Grove, a report in Atlanta Journal Constitution

reported.

Rajesh Mehta, 45, was shot multiple times by 29-year-old Terrance Scott outside the home on Hansen Drive, said police.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian Origin Texas Man Admits Role in Nearly \$5 Million Health Care Fraud Scheme

HOUSTON (TIP): A 57-year-old Houston man has entered a guilty plea in Corpus Christi federal court for conspiring to commit health care fraud, announced U.S. Attorney Ryan Patrick.

Ravinder Syal admitted he engaged in a scheme that resulted in the false billing of \$4,878,530.92 for services never provided to patients. From Feb. 1, 2018, until March 1, 2020, he acquired physicians' practices throughout Texas and assumed control of their billing department. He then brought in a company located in India to bill false claims to Medicare, Medicaid and various insurance providers.

Syal would submit false claims for services that were never performed, for nutritional services that were never provided and even for office visits that occurred over holidays when the clinics were actually closed. He would also bill for services that could not even be performed at the clinics he acquired due to lack of equipment.

Syal altered the billing information and added these fraudulent services without the knowledge of the physicians at the respective practices.

As a result of his scheme, Medicare, Medicaid and various insurance providers were billed \$4,878,530.92 for services never performed. Syal was overpaid \$553,068.65 on the fraudulent claims.

Sentencing has been set for Aug. 10 before U.S. District Judge David S. Morales. At that time, Syal faces up to 10 years in federal prison and a possible \$250,000 maximum fine.

Syal was permitted to remain on bond pending that hearing.

Indian Grocery Store Owner in California Faces Price Gouging Charges



A nine-count misdemeanor complaint has been filed against Apna Bazar, a large grocery store in Pleasanton, and Rajvinder Singh, the store's owner, with price gouging

NEW YORK (TIP): On May 7, Alameda County DA O'Malley and California Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced that their offices have jointly filed a nine-count misdemeanor complaint charging Apna Bazar, a large grocery store in Pleasanton, and Rajvinder Singh, the store's owner, with price gouging.

This prosecution marks the first ever price gouging action in Alameda County.

Customers began voicing complaints about the increase in prices of food items at the Pleasanton store shortly after the state of emergency was declared in California. A chorus of complaints from shoppers reached the DA's Office through phone calls, e-mails and postings on social media platforms. "The law prevents businesses from profiteering when we are in a state of emergency. All businesses throughout Alameda County must be on notice that we will not sit idly by and allow consumers to fall prey to price gouging. My office will ensure that businesses adhere to the law and do not exploit consumers," says District Attorney O'Malley.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian American Engineer Charged in Texas with COVID-Relief Fraud

HOUSTON (TIP): An Indian origin engineer has been charged in the Eastern District of Texas with allegedly filing bank loan applications fraudulently seeking more than \$10 million dollars in forgivable loans guaranteed by the Small Business Administration (SBA) under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Shashank Rai, 30, of Beaumont, Texas, allegedly sought millions of dollars in forgivable loans guaranteed by the SBA from two different banks by claiming to have 250 employees earning wages when, in fact, no employees worked for his purported business. Rai is charged by way of a federal criminal complaint with violations of wire fraud, bank fraud, false statements to a financial institution, and false statements to the SBA.

"As alleged, Rai fraudulently pursued millions of dollars in loans intended for legitimate small businesses suffering the economic hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. "The department and our law enforcement partners will remain vigilant in our efforts to protect critical CARES Act relief programs from fraud and abuse."

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

New York Gov. Cuomo extends the state's stay-at-home order until June 13

NEW YORK (TIP): In an executive order on Thursday, May 14, Cuomo said the state would continue the "New York State on PAUSE" policy put in place in March in response to the coronavirus outbreak. The statewide shutdown was set to expire on May 15.

Cuomo said in a tweet that some regions have met his criteria and can begin to reopen on Friday.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced on Thursday that the state's stay-at-home order would be extended until June 13.

In an executive order on Thursday, Cuomo said the state would continue the "New York State on PAUSE" policy put in place in March in response to the coronavirus outbreak. The statewide shutdown was set to expire on May 15.

"Both travel-related cases and community contact transmission of COVID-19 have been documented in New York State and are expected to continue," the order states.

"All enforcement mechanisms by state or local



New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced on Thursday, May 14 that the state's stay-at-home order would be extended until June 13.

governments shall continue to be in full force and effect until June 13, 2020, unless later extended or amended by a future Executive Order," he added.

On Wednesday, Cuomo said four New York regions meet his criteria to begin lifting lockdown. In his order on Thursday, he said certain regions that meet public health and safety metrics will be eligible for reopening.

"The Finger Lakes, Southern Tier, Mohawk Valley, the North Country, and Central NY are ready to begin Phase 1 of reopening tomorrow," Cuomo said in a tweet on Thursday. "The others can be UN-PAUSED the moment they hit their benchmarks."

New York has been the state hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic. As of Thursday evening, the state had confirmed more than 343,000 cases and more than 27,000 deaths.

As part of the "New York State on PAUSE" policy, all non-essential businesses statewide have been closed, and non-essential gatherings have been canceled. The policy also states that individuals must maintain a social distance of at least six feet apart and should limit outdoor activity.

(Source: Business Standard)

Immigrants Donate Hand-Sewn Masks To Naacp & Nycha Residents

STATEN ISLAND, NY (TIP): As the coronavirus spread throughout New York City, bringing with it strict restrictions on local businesses, many Staten Islanders lost their jobs. Undocumented workers have been the hardest hit by the economic crisis that the COVID-19 created. To compound the financial struggle, undocumented workers are ineligible for unemployment benefits or federal emergency relief because of their lack of citizenship status.

Nevertheless, undocumented immigrants have found a way to keep a stable income for their families, while also helping others -- by sewing masks to sell and to donate to first responders. A few weeks ago, undocumented women who are making the masks donated to the New York City Police Department, nurses, and MTA bus drivers.

La Colmena and the immigrant women who are making the masks donated to the NAACP and public housing residents at the Richmond Terraces Houses. Black and Latino city residents have died from coronavirus at twice the rate of white or Asian New Yorkers, data released by the New York City Department of health shows.

"We share a struggle for the right for dignity and respect. If we can't rely on the government to watch out for us, then we will support each other as neighbors and communities," said Yesenia Mata, executive director of La Colmena.

Cesar Vargas, immigration attorney, who was honored by the NAACP for his work in the building bridges with communities assured that "our ongoing efforts to donate masks, meals, and other essential is not just about providing PPE but about showing solidarity with other communities who have been forgotten. We are here to support each other now and beyond."

"It doesn't matter whether you were born here or not. COVID-19 doesn't care. We are seeing the disproportionate impact that this virus is having on black and brown communities, exacerbated by the health disparities already present. That is why we are working together to support each other during this crisis, as we see that we are often forgotten and misunderstood. The only way for all of us is to move forward together", said Sarah Blas - NYCHA resident and Founder of Staten Island Therapeutic Gardens.



All Nassau Essential Workers Can Get Rapid Coronavirus Tests Now



Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said all essential workers - symptomatic or not - are encouraged to get tested

MINEOLA, NY (TIP): Nassau County is expanding testing for the new coronavirus and all essential workers can now get tested, officials announced Thursday.

At a news briefing outside a community clinic in Westbury, Laura Curran, the county executive, encouraged anyone with symptoms to get a diagnostic test at one of the clinics. Essential workers who are not symptomatic can also get tested, she said. This includes first responders, health care workers law enforcement personnel and grocery store workers. "Anyone who interacts with the public, who is out there working, can get a test," she said. "You don't have to be symptomatic to have it done." The tests can deliver results in five to 15 minutes, she said.

The clinics will soon offer antibody testing as well, Curran added. She warned that a lot remains unknown about those

who have the antibodies, but stressed even those who do have them can still spread the virus, even if it gives them temporary immunity. The antibody tests will also give officials a better idea of how many people have been infected.

"That will help us also in containment," she said. To make an appointment at a clinic which are located in Hempstead, Elmont and Freeport - people should call 516-396-7500. Same-day appointments are available, and tests are performed outside. The clinics are open Monday through Friday.

Those who do not have insurance will not be charged and workers will not ask about immigration status, Curran said. "So please don't let that stop or prevent you from getting a test," she said. Wednesday's data showed a slight uptick in the number of COVID-19-related hospitalizations and

patients. An additional 15 patients tested positive, bringing the total to 712. Three more patients were placed on ventilators, bringing the total in the county to 193. Even with the slight uptick, Curran stressed the county has seen a downward trend. "The change, while it may seem dramatic, may not be as dramatic as when you're talking about larger numbers," she said. The rate of infection continued to show signs of slowing. While the percent of patients testing positive had been at 50 percent during the peak, that number has fallen to about 6 percent. "That's the lowest we've seen so far," Curran said.

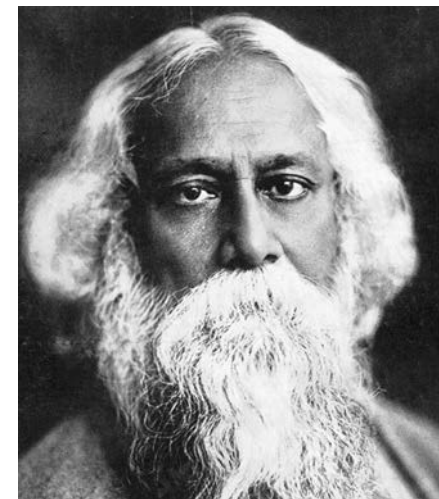
The rate of infection continued to show signs of slowing. While the percent of patients testing positive had been at 50 percent during the peak, that number has fallen to about 6 percent. (Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Remembering Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore on his 159th birth anniversary

Rabindranath Tagore, Bengali Rabindranath Thakur, (born May 7, 1861, Calcutta [now Kolkata], India-died August 7, 1941, Calcutta), Bengali poet, short-story writer, song composer, playwright, essayist, and painter who introduced new

prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing Indian culture to the West and vice versa,

and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of early 20th-century India. In 1913 he became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.
(Encyclopedia Britannica)



A Poet's Fight against Epidemic

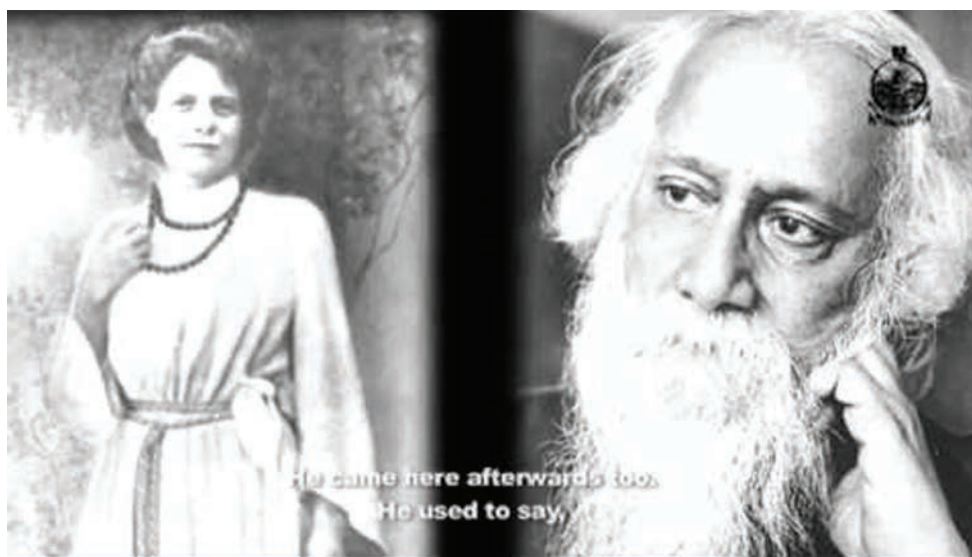
Between 1897 and 1906, the plague in India became huge. Its influence in Calcutta in particular became severe. People started leaving their house in groups. There was more fear than infection. And at that crucial time, a poet came down on the streets of the city to fight the disease - none other than Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

Tagore was keenly aware of death from an early age, having lost his mother when he was young and, shortly after, his beloved sister-in-law Kadambari Devi. Moreover, epidemics like cholera and smallpox recurred in his time.

In the 1860s and 70s, when the poet was an adolescent, cholera and the plague, along with smallpox, were the most aggressive killers. In undivided India, ruled by the colonial government, the healthcare system was skewed in favor of the rich, like the Tagore family, the upper-castes, and the British. The poor, both in urban and rural areas, faced the ire of epidemics like the bubonic plague of 1896-98.

Tagore was acutely aware of this injustice. In his 1916 novel Chaturanga, an affluent man turns his home into an infirmary for the destitute as the plague breaks out, and eventually succumbs to the disease that he contracts while nursing the sick.

In the year when the first plague appeared in the city of Calcutta, the people were busier than the plague for fear of the king-wearing chaprasi The plague appeared in the neighborhood. People did not want to call a doctor lest he be taken to the hospital. Jagmohan



himself came to see the plague-hospital and said, "People have not committed a crime just because they have become paralyzed."

- In describing the death of Jagmohan in 'Chaturanga', Rabindranath has narrated about the horrors of the epidemic.

In this horror of the plague, Rabindranath did not stop at writing literature, he came down to the streets. That time Sister Nivedita had just arrived in Calcutta and two had become friends. The two philanthropists set out together that day to deal with the epidemic.

Rabindranath's nephew Abanindranath Tagore wrote in his book 'Jorasanko Dhare', "At that time there was a plague in Calcutta. Epidemics are going on all around, people are dying in

every house. Rabikaka and I have all raised money and opened the Plague Hospital, distributing lime. Rabikaka and Sister Nivedita used to go to different neighborhoods for inspection. The nurse doctor were all kept."

Rabindranath also took initiative to make the citizens of Calcutta aware. Almost all the members of Thakurbari joined it. Nivedita writes in 'Calcutta Notes', "A few great Hindu families, notably the Tagores, stood firm, in the hope of allaying the agitation." When Thakurbari played an important role in curing the plague, Abanindranath Tagore's nine- to ten-year-old daughter died of the plague.

Not only plague but Rabindranath also took an active role to fight against epidemics like cholera and influenza. In 1915, cholera took a serious turn in

Bengal. Death attack also took place in Thakurbari. Rabindranath's son Shamindranath died of cholera. The poet's writing became stronger. He detailed the spread of the disease in different countries in his article titled 'Outbreak of Olautha'.

A few years later, when the influenza epidemic took shape, Rabindranath was already alerted. He realized that the key to fighting disease was to overcome social distances. It is impossible to fight an epidemic without human intervention. The proper antidote to the disease is the cooperative social mind. Rabindranath did a lot of research on the cooperative system in Denmark. He said it was possible to run a cooperative system in Denmark because "the country is not suffering from a huge burden of armaments." All its money can be used for the welfare of the people. It is up to us to release our revenue for tenants' education, health and other resources.'

In Rabindranath's thought, despair, hunger and epidemics are gradually destroying the 'temple foundation' of ancient India. But these are not 'accidental'. "Malaria-plague-famine is just an occasion, they are just an outward sign - the main disease has entered the marrow of the country," he wrote in the article 'Deshnayak'. The whole world will be beautiful only if we can find this root ailment and that would be the befitting homage to one of the greatest men on this earth.

(Acknowledgement: Anandabazar Patrika, Biswajit Roy, Soumen Rakshit, Somak Ghosal)

LETTER TO EDITOR

Take Advantage of Local COVID-19 Testing Resources

DEAR EDITOR:

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, health experts have agreed that robust testing will be an essential component of our regional strategy for safely emerging from stay-at-home orders implemented to slow the spread of this virus.

That is why it is essential for residents of Elmont, Valley Stream, Inwood and the surrounding communities to take full advantage of testing resources that

are available right in our own backyard.

COVID-19 testing is available by appointment only at the Elmont Health Center, located at 161 Hempstead Turnpike. Appointments are available on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and residents can call 516-396-7500 to schedule a test. All are welcome and encouraged to call regardless of your insurance or immigration status.

If you or a member of your family are experiencing common COVID-19

symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, I urge you to get tested as soon as possible.

I am grateful to New York State and Long Island Family Health Centers for committing these life-saving resources to our community. Now that we have these tools at our disposal, we must not squander this opportunity. Get tested, remain vigilant, and stop the spread of COVID-19 so that we can begin writing our community's brighter next chapter

together.

For additional information (available in English, Spanish and Creole), visit <https://www.lifqhc.com> and click on the "learn more" tab in the blue "COVID-19 Information" box on the home page.

Carrié Solages
Nassau County Legislator, Third
Legislative District
Valley Stream



By Arun Maira

AS I SEE IT

Pathways to a more resilient economy

Machines do not have the capacity for emergence. Once built, their capabilities inevitably reduce with increasing entropy. On the other hand, living systems evolve and acquire new capabilities over time. Fritjof Capra and Pier Luigi Luisi point out in *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision* that among all living species, humans have a special ability. Only humans consciously develop new concepts, new scientific ideas, and new language in their search for new visions. Institutions of governance are human inventions for directing human endeavors and for providing stability. Thomas S. Kuhn explained in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* why new ideas are invariably resisted by prevalent power structures in societies. The scientific establishment determines which ideas are worthy of admission. The King's advisers do not want outsiders to dilute their influence in the court. The Establishment resists change. Therefore, fundamental reforms of ideas and institutions in human societies are always difficult, until a crisis.

CHALLENGING PRINCIPLES: The COVID-19 catastrophe has challenged the tenets of economics that have dominated public policy for the past 50 years. Here are seven radical ideas emerging as pathways to build a more resilient economy and a more just society.

i) "De-Growth". The obsession with GDP as the supreme goal of progress has been challenged often, but its challengers were dismissed as a loony fringe. Now, Nobel laureates in economics (Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and others) are calling upon their profession to rethink the fundamentals of economics, especially the purpose of GDP. A five-point 'de-growth' manifesto by 170 Dutch academics has gone viral amidst the heightened Internet buzz during the lockdown. Goals for human progress must be reset. What should we aspire for? And how will we measure if we are getting there?

ii) Boundaries between countries are good. Boundarylessness is a mantra for hyper-globalizers. Boundaries, they say, impede flows of trade, finance, and people. Therefore, removing boundaries is good for global growth. However, since countries are at different stages of economic development, and have different compositions of resources, they must follow different paths to progress. According to systems' theory, sub-systems within complex systems must have boundaries around them, albeit appropriately permeable ones, so that the sub-systems can maintain their own integrity and evolve. This is the explanation from systems science for the breakdown of the World Trade Organization, in which all countries were expected to open their borders, which caused harm to countries at different stages of development. Now COVID-19 has given another reason to maintain sufficient boundaries.

iii) Government is good. Ronald Reagan's dictum, "Government is not the solution... Government is the problem", has been up-ended by COVID-19. Even capitalist corporations who wanted governments out of the way to make it easy for them to do business are lining up for government bailouts.



THE REDESIGN OF ECONOMIES, OF BUSINESSES, AND OUR LIVES, MUST BEGIN WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT PURPOSE. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH? WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF BUSINESSES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS? WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR LIVES? WHAT NEEDS, AND WHOSE NEEDS, DO INSTITUTIONS, AND EACH OF US, FULFIL BY OUR EXISTENCE?

iv) The "market" is not the best solution. Money is a convenient currency for managing markets and for conducting transactions. Whenever goods and services are left to markets, the dice is loaded against those who do not have money to obtain what they need. Moreover, by a process of "cumulative causation", those who have money and power can acquire even more in markets. The "marketization" of economies has contributed to the increasing inequalities in wealth over the last 50 years, which Thomas Piketty and others have documented.

JUSTICE AND DIGNITY:

v) "Citizen" welfare, not "consumer" welfare, must be the objective of progress. In economies, human beings are consumers and producers. In societies, they are citizens. Citizens have a broader set of needs than consumers. Citizens' needs cannot be fulfilled merely by enabling them to consume more goods and services. They value justice, dignity, and societal harmony too. Economists' evaluations of the benefits of free trade, and competition policy too, which are based on consumer welfare alone, fail to account for negative impacts on what citizens value.

vi) Competition must be restrained: Collaboration is essential for progress. Faith in "Darwinian competition", with the survival of only the fittest, underlies many pathologies of modern societies and economies. From school onwards, children are taught to compete. Companies must improve their competitive abilities. Nations too. Blind faith in competition misses the reality that human capabilities have advanced more than other species' have, by evolving institutions for collective action. Further progress, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for example, will require collaboration among scientists in different disciplines, and among diverse stakeholders, and collaboration among sovereign countries. Improvement in abilities to share and govern common resources have become essential for human survival in the 21st century.

WHEN COMPLEX SYSTEMS COME TO CATASTROPHES, I.E. CRITICAL POINTS OF INSTABILITY, THEY RE-EMERGE IN DISTINCTLY NEW FORMS, ACCORDING TO THE SCIENCE OF COMPLEX SYSTEMS. THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC IS A CATASTROPHE, BOTH FOR HUMAN LIVES AND FOR ECONOMIES. ECONOMISTS CANNOT PREDICT IN WHAT FORM THE ECONOMY WILL EMERGE FROM IT.

vii) Intellectual property belongs to the public. The earth's resources must be conserved. We are living in an era of knowledge. Just as those who owned more land used to have more power before, now those who own knowledge have more power and wealth than the rest. Intellectual property monopolies are producing enormous wealth for their owners, though many were developed on the back of huge public investments. Moreover, powerful technologies can be used for benign or malign purposes. It is imperative to evolve new institutions for public ownership of technologies and for the regulation of their use.

PURPOSE OF ENTERPRISES: The paradigm shift necessary after the crisis will not be easy. There will be resistance to shifts in social, economic, and political power towards those who have less from those who have more within the present paradigm.

The financial crisis of 2008 was a crisis of liquidity in the system. Recovery was achieved by putting more fuel into the system. The system then moved on; in basically the same shape it was before. COVID-19 has revealed structural weaknesses in the global economy. Putting fuel in the tank will not be sufficient. The vehicle must be redesigned too. While global attention understandably is focused on relief and recovery, this is the time to design for resilience.

The economic system cannot be redesigned by domain experts devising solutions within their silos. Such as, trade experts recommending new trade policies, intellectual property experts recommending reforms of intellectual property rights, and industry experts recommending industry policies. All the pieces must fit together. Most of all, they must fit into the new paradigm, which will be very different to the one in which the experts had developed their domain knowledge.

Innovations are required at many levels to create a more resilient and just world. Innovation is essential in the overall design of the economy. Innovations will be required in business models too, not just for business survival but also to move businesses out of the 20th century paradigm that "the business of business must be only business". Changes will also be necessary in our life patterns, our work and consumption habits, and in our personal priorities. The redesign of economies, of businesses, and our lives, must begin with questions about purpose. What is the purpose of economic growth? What is the purpose of businesses and other institutions? What is the purpose of our lives? What needs, and whose needs, do institutions, and each of us, fulfil by our existence?

(The author is a Former Member, Planning Commission and the author of 'Redesigning the Aeroplane While Flying: Reforming Institutions')

GUEST COMMENT

Mega stimulus package: Self-reliance pitch timely, now for delivery

A new slogan, 'Be vocal about local', has been added by the Prime Minister to his long list of aspirational-inspirational repertoire. How far it goes in infusing the much-required dynamism in the Covid-hit business and industry is the big question. For long, the low share of manufacturing in India's GDP as compared to China has been seen as a huge weakness. So, while the country witnessed high growth numbers over the years, the job opportunities created as a result fell far short. The pandemic

has only accentuated the serious problem. Hence, PM Modi's strong pitch for use of products manufactured in the country and self-reliance could not be more timely.

In a mega stimulus package, the Finance Minister has announced measures to restart the economy, including Rs 3 lakh crore collateral-free automatic loans for MSMEs, revising upwards the investment limit, introducing an additional criteria of turnover and no global tender for government procurement up to Rs 200

crore. Clearance of all pending payments is another big takeaway. The statutory PF contribution has been slashed by 2 per cent to increase the take-home salary. The 25 per cent cut in tax deducted at source for non-salary payments is also a huge relief. A six-month extension has been given to government contractors to finish projects.

It is an undeniable fact that the drive to push manufacturing has met with limited success. The much-touted 'Make in India' has not lived up to potential.

Aware of the ground reality, PM Modi has made clear his commitment to remove all domestic hurdles before manufacturing units and attract from China the global value chain. The vigor and hope reflected in the speech have to be translated into recognizable action. The first tranche of the package would soothe frayed nerves, but the road ahead is long. Forget about adding, will it bring back jobs? Is it a booster shot or a survival kit for the industry?

(Tribune, India)

A plan to revive a broken economy



By Harsh Mander Jayati Ghosh
Prabhat Patnaik

"A combination of wealth and inheritance taxation and getting multinational companies to pay the same effective rate as local companies through a system of unitary taxation will garner substantial public revenue. They will also reduce wealth and income inequalities which have become horrendous. A 2% wealth tax on the top 1% of the population, together with a 33% inheritance tax on the wealth they bequeath every year to their progeny, could finance an increase in government expenditure to the tune of 10% of GDP."

There are clear, implementable steps the Centre can take in fiscal terms to revive the economy and support livelihoods

The Prime Minister has just announced Lockdown 4.0. Despite some resulting increase in economic activity, vast numbers of working people will remain without their regular incomes. He also announced a package of ₹20 lakh crore, but this includes already allocated money of ₹6-lakh crore and monetary policy directives to banks and non-banking financial companies. The announcements by the Finance Minister thus far involve no additional public spending, even though this is urgently required to revive the economy and prevent further contraction. Here we discuss what the government should do immediately in fiscal terms for reviving the economy and supporting livelihoods.

Food and cash transfers first

The immediate need is to provide free food and cash transfers to those rendered incomeless. Providing every household with ₹7,000 per month for a period of three months and every individual with 10 kg of free food grains per month for a period of six months is likely to cost around 3% of our GDP (assuming 20% voluntary dropout). This could be financed immediately through larger borrowing by the Centre from the Reserve Bank of India. The required cash and food have to be handed over to State governments to make the actual transfers, along with outstanding Goods and Services Tax compensation.

This is easily doable for several reasons. First, food grains are plentiful, as the Food Corporation of India had 77 million tons, and rabi procurement could add 40 million tons. Second, because of

the lockdown restrictions, the multiplier rounds of such expenditure are heavily truncated at present and would not generate as much demand as in normal times. Third, cash transfers in many spheres will only enable current demand to continue (such as payment of house rent to continue occupancy) and not create any fresh demand. Fourth, when greater normalcy finally allows pent-up demand to surface, output could also expand because of resumed economic activity. Finally, putting money in the hands of the poor is the best stimulus to economic revival, as it creates effective demand and in local markets. Hence, an immediate program of food and cash transfers must command the highest priority.

Revamp MGNREGA work

But the post-lockdown world will be different for several reasons. First, millions of migrant workers have endured immense hardships to trudge back home, and are unlikely to return to towns in the foreseeable future. Employment has to be provided to them where they are, for which the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) must be expanded greatly and revamped with wage arrears paid immediately. The 100-day limit per household has to go; work has to be provided on demand without any limit to all adults. And permissible work must include not just agricultural and construction work, but work in rural enterprises and in care activities too.

The revamped MGNREGS could cover wage bills of rural enterprises started by panchayats, along with those of existing rural enterprises, until they can stand on their own feet. This can be an alternative strategy of development, recalling the successful experience of China's Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs). Public banks could provide credit to such panchayat-owned enterprises and also assume a nurturing role vis-à-vis them.

The second change is the palpable unsustainability of the earlier globalization, which means that growth in India in the coming days will have to be sustained by the home market. Since the most important determinant of growth of the home market is agricultural growth, this must be urgently boosted.

The MGNREGS can be used for this, paying wages for land development and farm work for small and medium farmers; apart from government support through remunerative procurement prices, subsidized institutional credit, other input subsidies, and redistribution of unused land with plantations. Agricultural growth in turn can promote rural enterprises, both by creating a demand for their products and by

providing inputs for them to process; and both these activities would generate substantial rural employment.

The urban focus

In urban areas, it is absolutely essential to revive the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Simultaneously, the vast numbers of workers who have stayed on in towns have to be provided with employment and income after our proposed cash transfers run out. The best way to overcome both problems would be to introduce an Urban Employment Guarantee Program, to serve diverse groups of the urban unemployed, including the educated unemployed. Urban local bodies must take charge of this program and would need to be revamped for this purpose.

"Permissible" work under this program should include, for the present, work in the MSMEs. This would ensure labor supply for the MSMEs and also cover their wage bills at the central government's expense until they re-acquire robustness. It should imaginatively also include care work, including of old, disabled and ailing persons, educational activities, and ensuring public services in slums.

These measures are in direct contrast to those that seek to entice private investors by easing labor laws. The humanitarian crisis of the lockdown reveals the imperative for more, not less labor protection. Such measures, far from reviving investment or employment, would also further reduce domestic demand.

The 'care' economy

The pandemic has underscored the extreme importance of a public health-care system, and the folly of privatization of essential services. The post-pandemic period must see significant increases in public expenditure on education and health, especially primary and secondary health including for the urban and rural poor.

The "care economy" provides immense scope for increasing employment. Vacancies in public employment, especially in such activities, must be immediately filled. Anganwadi and Accredited Social Health Activists/workers who provide essential services to the population, including during this pandemic, are paid a pittance and treated with extreme unfairness. We must improve their status, treat them as regular government employees and give them proper remuneration and associated benefits, and greatly expand



their coverage in settlements of the urban poor.

These could easily come within the total package announced by the Prime Minister, which could be financed by printing money. But in the medium term, public revenues must be increased. This is not because there is a shortage of real resources which, therefore, has to be taken from other existing uses through taxation. Rather, since much unutilized capacity exists in the economy, the shortage is not of real resources; the government has to just get command over them.

A combination of wealth and inheritance taxation and getting multinational companies to pay the same effective rate as local companies through a system of unitary taxation will garner substantial public revenue. They will also reduce wealth and income inequalities which have become horrendous. A 2% wealth tax on the top 1% of the population, together with a 33% inheritance tax on the wealth they bequeath every year to their progeny, could finance an increase in government expenditure to the tune of 10% of GDP.

It would be argued that this might cause large financial outflows, which the country can ill-afford. Contrarily, even foreign capital is more likely to be attracted to a growing economy than one in sharp decline because of lack of stimulus. Also, a fresh issue of special drawing rights by the International Monetary Fund (which India has surprisingly opposed along with the United States) would provide additional external resources.

These additional resources, we estimate, would suffice to finance the institution of five universal, justiciable, fundamental economic rights: the right to food, the right to employment, the right to free public health care, the right to free public education and the right to a living old-age pension and disability benefits. The broken economy must be rebuilt in ways to ensure a life of dignity to the most disadvantaged citizen.

(Prabhat Patnaik is Professor Emeritus, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. Jayati Ghosh is a professor of economics at JNU. Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher)

5 die in Taliban suicide attack

KABUL (TIP): A suicide bombing in Afghanistan's eastern Paktia province on Thursday that looked to target a military compound but exploded before its destination killed five civilians and wounded at least 29 others, including civilians and military personnel, Afghan officials said.

The Taliban took responsibility for the bombing, calling it retaliation for statements by President Ashraf Ghani blaming it for an attack earlier this week against a maternity hospital that killed 24 people, including two newborns as well as several mothers and nurses. The Taliban were quick to deny responsibility and condemn that attack on Tuesday. The IS has not taken responsibility for the maternity ward attack but the hospital is located in the Shiite dominated Dasht-e-Barschi area of the Afghan capital where the IS has carried out several bloody attacks including one in 2018 killing dozens of young students taking university entrance exams. — AP

Myanmar's army investigating soldiers over video of abuses

PONNAGYUN (TIP): Myanmar's army said on Wednesday it was investigating soldiers filmed beating and threatening to kill suspected insurgents in the western state of Rakhine, where dozens of people have been killed during an upsurge of fighting in recent weeks.

"It is found out that some of the security force members conducted unlawful interrogations," the army said in a statement posted on its website.

In footage shared widely on social media since Saturday, five men can be seen slumped on the floor of a boat, blindfolded, hands tied behind their backs, as men in military fatigues stamp on their chests and slap and kick their faces. The men whimper and plead that they are civilians.

"I am a civilian, sir," one says, according to subtitles in the video. "What civilian? Why are you fighting against us?" a soldier shouts, grabbing him by the hair and smacking his cheek. "Let them die, let them break," says another. One man is hit repeatedly in the face with a shoe.

Reuters could not determine who filmed the video or independently verify its authenticity. The army said the video was shot on April 27 in Rakhine state's Ponnagyun township.

The military statement said the men who were beaten had been arrested on suspicion of belonging to the Arakan Army, an insurgent group fighting for greater autonomy for the western region. It said they were being transported to the state capital of Sittwe when the beatings happened.

Brigadier-General Zaw Min Tun, a spokesman for the armed forces, known as the Tatmadaw, told Reuters by phone a tribunal had been formed and soldiers had been detained. Reuter

Coronavirus cases in Pak cross over 36,000; PM says country more vulnerable to poverty, hunger

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan is more vulnerable to poverty and hunger than the coronavirus-induced lockdown and it is important to keep a balance between health needs and financial problems of the people, Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Thursday even as the number of COVID-19 cases in Pakistan rose to 36,717 and the death toll to 788.

Khan chaired a meeting of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) to discuss the latest pandemic situation in the country.

Addressing the meeting, Khan said it is important to keep a balance between health needs and financial problems of the people.

"Our population is more vulnerable to poverty and hunger than lockdown. We should take decisions by keeping in mind the ground reality about the problems faced by the people," he said.

Khan said adopting safety measures was a key to fight the disease but instead of forced implementation, the people should be sensitised to adopt them. The meeting also discussed the issue of opening transport and shopping plazas but no decision was taken on the two issues.

Later, Khan tweeted that NCOC reviewed the country's coronavirus situation during its 20th consecutive session.

"The meeting took an in-depth review of existing beds, ventilators and other medical facilities in hospitals, keeping in view the projections of possible spread of #Covid-19 and present data. Purpose of thorough examination of existing



facilities was to gauge the capacity of hospitals," the Prime Minister's Office said. The meeting also reviewed progress on implementing standard operating procedures and guidelines at a provincial level.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Khan joined world leaders in calling for a "people's vaccine" to combat the coronavirus.

The Prime Minister's Office quoted the premier as saying: "We must work together to beat this virus."

Emphasising the need for pooling resources, he added that "no leader can rest easy until every individual in every nation is able to access a vaccine free of charge".

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Pakistan rose to 36,717 on Thursday. Punjab reported 13,561 cases, Sindh 14,099, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 5,423, Balochistan 2,239, Islamabad 822, Gilgit-Baltistan 482 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 91 cases.

Prime Minister Khan will participate in a meeting to be organised under COVID Action Platform of World Economic Forum (WEF), the Radio Pakistan reported.

As lockdown was eased, Pakistan resumed trade activities with Iran at Taftan after two trade gateways were reopened, which were closed two-and-a-half months ago due to the coronavirus outbreak. PTI

Bangladesh lifts curbs on mosque prayers as lockdown eases

DHAKA (TIP): Bangladesh on Thursday allowed Muslims to attend prayer congregations in mosques as the government continues to ease the lockdown restrictions amid the coronavirus outbreak which has infected 12,425 people in the country so far.

However, mosque leaders are not allowed to organise Iftar gatherings on the mosque premises in line with the social distancing rules, the Bdnews24.com reported.

The mosques and devotees have been asked to comply with a set of safety protocols to hold prayer congregations, the Religious Affairs Ministry said.

Bangladesh announced a nationwide lockdown to enforce social and physical distancing norms on March 26 amid a surge in coronavirus cases and deaths.

The government subsequently restricted congregations at mosques to a maximum of five worshippers for the daily prayers, including the cleric and other officials, in an effort to bridle the

escalating coronavirus crisis.

The Friday prayers were limited to 10 worshippers while only 12 devotees were allowed to participate in the Taraweeh prayers during Ramzan.

In keeping with the hygiene rules to reduce the risk of contagion, the new guidelines issued by the ministry said mosques are not allowed to use common carpets for prayers while devotees are required to carry individual prayer mats from home, the news portal reported.

Places of worship must be cleaned with disinfectants before every prayer session – five times a day.

Mosque must also install hand-washing facilities equipped with soaps or provide hand sanitisers at the entrances. Devotees must perform their ablutions at home and wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. Worshippers must wear masks to the mosques while maintaining a space of at least three feet between each other when they line up for the prayers. PTI

All-party meet on Lanka polls inconclusive

COLOMBO (TIP): An all-party meeting convened by Sri Lanka's election commission to decide whether to hold Parliamentary polls in June remained inconclusive, party members said on Wednesday.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa dissolved the opposition-controlled Parliament on March 2, six months ahead of the schedule, and called a snap election on April 25 to elect a new 225-member House.

However, the election commission in mid-April postponed the parliamentary polls by nearly two months to June 20. The Elections Commission on Tuesday convened an all-party meeting to decide whether to hold parliamentary polls in June. However, the talks ended without an agreement, the participant said. —PTI

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36 Million Have Sought Unemployment Aid Since Virus Hit

Last week alone, 3 million people filed new claims

WASHINGTON (TIP): Nearly 3 million laid-off workers applied for U.S. unemployment benefits last week as the viral outbreak led more companies to slash jobs even though most states have begun to let some businesses reopen under certain restrictions.

Roughly 36 million people have now filed for jobless aid in the two months since the coronavirus first forced millions of businesses to close their doors and shrink their workforces, the Labor Department said Thursday.

Still, the number of first-time applications has now declined for six straight weeks, suggesting that a

dwindling number of companies are reducing their payrolls.

By historical standards, though, the latest tally shows that the number of weekly jobless claims remains enormous, reflecting an economy that is sinking into a severe downturn. Last week's pace of new applications for aid is still four times the record high that prevailed before the coronavirus struck hard in March.

Jobless workers in some states are still reporting difficulty applying for or receiving benefits. These include freelance, gig and self-employed workers, who became newly eligible for jobless aid this year.

The states that are now easing lockdowns are doing so in varied ways. Ohio has permitted warehouses, most

offices, factories and construction companies to reopen, but restaurants and bars remain closed for indoor sit-down service.

A few states have gone further, including Georgia, which has opened barbershops, bowling alleys, tattoo parlors and gyms. South Carolina has reopened beach hotels, and Texas has reopened shopping malls.

Data from private firms suggest that some previously laid-off workers have started to return to small businesses in those states, though the number of applications for unemployment benefits remains high.

The latest jobless claims follow a devastating job report last week. The government said the unemployment rate soared to 14.7 percent in April, the



highest rate since the Great Depression, and employers shed a stunning 20.5 million jobs. A decade's worth of job growth was wiped out in a single month.

Even those figures failed to capture the full scale of the damage. The government said many workers in April were counted as employed but absent from work but should have been counted as temporarily unemployed. Millions of other laid-off workers didn't look for a new job in April, likely discouraged by their prospects in a mostly shuttered economy, and weren't included, either. If all those people had been counted as unemployed, the jobless rate would have reached nearly 24 percent. **(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)**

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

China stealing US research on COVID-19: Pompeo

non-traditional collectors affiliated with People's Republic of China (PRC) to steal U.S. intellectual property and data related to COVID-19 research, Mr. Pompeo said in a statement.

The United States calls on China to cease this malicious activity, Mr. Pompeo said, adding that the potential theft of this information jeopardizes the delivery of secure, effective, and efficient treatment options.

China on Thursday termed as slanderous the U.S. accusation that hackers backed by Beijing may be attempting to steal COVID-19 related research and vaccine materials and said that "smearing and scapegoating" others will not make the deadly virus go away.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said U.S. officials are shifting the blame on Beijing as they struggled to handle the coronavirus pandemic back home.

The U.S. claims have added fuel to tensions between the two nations, which are engaged in a war of words over the origin of the coronavirus that has killed over 300,000 people globally. Mr. Pompeo alleged that China's behavior in cyberspace is an extension of its counterproductive actions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Pompeo in the strongly-worded statement said while the U.S. and its allies and partners are coordinating a collective, transparent response to save lives, "China continues to silence scientists, journalists, and citizens, and to spread disinformation, which has exacerbated the dangers of this health crisis.

The FBI said that it is "investigating the targeting and compromise of U.S. organizations conducting COVID-19-related research by China-affiliated cyber actors and non-traditional collectors."

"These actors have been observed attempting to identify and illicitly obtain valuable intellectual property (IP) and public health data related to vaccines, treatments, and testing from networks and personnel affiliated with COVID-19-related research," the FBI said.

The potential theft of this information jeopardizes the delivery of secure, effective, and efficient treatment options, it said.

Meanwhile, President Trump, annoyed with China's handling of the pandemic, has ruled out renegotiating a trade deal with China. "The Chinese said somewhere that they would like to renegotiate the (trade) deal. We are not going to renegotiate," Mr. Trump told Fox Business News on Thursday, May 14.

"Look, I'm not happy about anything having to do with

that particular subject (China) right now. Everything I said turned out to be right. You look at other countries they charge us tariffs to do business and we are not allowed to charge them," he said.

Responding to a question, Mr. Trump said the Chinese have always stolen Intellectual Property (IP) from the U.S. "They were never called (out). Now they are being called out," he said.

"We can stop them; they are going to try doing it. I mean you could also stop doing business with them, that is one thing. Look, we have lost a fortune dealing with China. We have rebuilt China," he said.

The President said he does not want to speak to Chinese President Xi Jinping right now. "I have a very good relationship, but I just - right now I don't want to speak to him," he said. (Source: Agencies)

U.S. Senator Richard Burr steps aside as committee chair in view of FBI stock trades probe

Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Burr contacted him on Thursday morning to inform him of his decision to move aside temporarily during the investigation.

"We agreed that this decision would be in the best interests of the committee and will be effective at the end of the day tomorrow," Mr. McConnell said in a statement.

Mr. Burr has denied wrongdoing and said he relied solely on news reports to guide decisions on stock sales, amid reports he and other senators sold shares after private briefings on the risks of the coronavirus crisis.

He told reporters at the U.S. Capitol on Thursday, May 14, he decided to step aside because he did not want the investigation to distract the intelligence committee from its work.

"I thought this was the best thing to do," Mr. Burr said.

Mr. Burr's attorney, Alice Fisher, said in a statement that Mr. Burr was "actively cooperating" with the government inquiry.

Known for bipartisanship, the Senate panel is soon to release an extensive report led by Mr. Burr on Russia's involvement in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. U.S. intelligence determined that Moscow sought to meddle in the campaign to boost the Trump candidacy.

Moscow denies such actions. President Trump dismisses the allegations as a hoax.

Senator Mark Warner, the Democratic committee vice chairman who has worked closely with Mr. Burr, told reporters he thought Mr. Burr had made the right choice in temporarily stepping aside, and hoped the matter would be resolved as quickly as possible.

The Republican senator turned over his phone to FBI

agents after they served a search warrant at his Washington home.

The warrant marked a significant step-up in the investigation of Mr. Burr's stock sales in mid-February, when he and other lawmakers were receiving regular briefings on the coronavirus outbreak and President Donald Trump and some of his political allies were downplaying the threat to the public.

Mr. Trump said he did not know anything about Mr. Burr's decision and had not discussed Mr. Burr's situation with anyone at the Department of Justice.

"I know nothing about it... That's too bad," he told reporters.

A senior Justice Department official said the FBI did not conduct a raid but paid a visit to Mr. Burr's home to collect his cellphone. Approval of the warrant - significant because it was served on a sitting senator - was obtained at the "highest levels" of the Justice Department, the official said.

The Intelligence Committee chairmanship is one of the most important positions in the Senate. The panel approves the president's nominees to lead the country's spy agencies and handles oversight of their operations, conducting most of its business behind closed doors.

It was not immediately clear who would step in as chairman. The three senators next in line for seniority on the Republican-led intelligence committee - Jim Risch, Marco Rubio and Susan Collins - all chair other committees.

The Senate's Republican leadership will decide who will take the position.

Other senators whose stock trades have been scrutinized have denied trading on coronavirus information.

Republican Senator Kelly Loeffler has forwarded documents and information about stock trades by her and her husband to the Justice Department, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Senate Ethics Committee, CNBC quoted a representative for Ms. Loeffler as saying on Thursday.

Ms. Loeffler has denied wrongdoing in connection with her sales of millions of dollars in shares in the weeks after lawmakers were first briefed on the virus.

Senator Dianne Feinstein, an intelligence committee Democrat, has turned over documents to the FBI about stock trades by her husband that show she was not involved, a spokesperson for Ms. Feinstein said on Thursday.

Mr. Burr's decision called to mind the decision of Democratic Senator Bob Menendez to step aside as ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2015 as he faced corruption charges. Those charges were eventually dropped. (Source: Agencies)

Visa, OCI card suspension prevents several Indians in US from flying back home

NEW YORK (TIP): Several Indians in the US, either on the H-1B work visa or Green Card having children who are American citizens by birth, are being prevented from travelling to India aboard the special repatriation flights being run by Air India amidst the coronavirus-linked global travel restrictions.

According to the regulations issued by the Indian government last month and updated last week, visas of foreign nationals and OCI cards, that provide visa-free travel privileges to the people of Indian-origin, have been suspended as part of the new international travel restrictions.

For some of the Indian citizens like the Pandey couple in New Jersey (name and place changed at request), it's a double whammy. Having lost their H-1B job, they have to go back to India within the stipulated 60 days as required by law. The couple has two kids aged one and six, who are American citizens.

In the wee hours of Monday, they had to return from Newark airport as Air India refused to give their kids a ticket to fly to India along with them, despite them having a valid Indian visa. The young mother and father are Indian citizens.

They said that the officials from Air India and (Indian) Consulate (in New York) were very cooperative.

But they could not do anything as their hands were tied by the latest regulation issued by the Indian government, a shocked Ratna Pandey told PTI.

"I would like to urge the Indian



government to reconsider their decision on humanitarian basis," said the Indian national who has lost her job but could not leave the US within the stipulated 60 days to avoid any future visa complications.

She now plans to make an appeal to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to extend their stay.

Last month, H-1B visa holders, mostly Indians, launched a White House petition urging US President Donald Trump to extend their permissible stay from 60 to 180 days after job loss. However, there has been no decision from the White House so far. While there is no official statistics of how many Indian H-1B visa holders have lost their jobs, it is believed to be substantial.

The US, due to the coronavirus pandemic, is experiencing an unprecedented unemployment rate and more than 33 million Americans have lost their jobs in the last two months. Given this massive job loss, Indians, who have lost their jobs, are unlikely to get one and

thus many would have no other option but to travel back home.

In the case of single mother Mamta (name changed), the situation is graver as her son is just three-month old. Only she was given the ticket and the infant was not allowed to fly along with her because he carried an American passport.

"I would like to request the Indian government to let us fly back home. I don't want to stay in the US any longer," she told PTI hours after being prevented from boarding her hometown Ahmedabad-bound flight from Newark on Sunday.

"I am alone here. I don't have a relative here. It's a difficult situation," she said.

"Vande Bharat Mission is a humanitarian mission. But this is certainly inhuman," said Rakesh Gupta (name changed) from Washington DC.

An H-1B professional, Gupta has lost his job and needs to return to India within the stipulated 60 days. He and his wife, Geeta (name changed) being Indian citizens, received the confirmation of their seats in the flight but have been told

that their two-year-old daughter cannot travel with them as she carried an OCI card.

"I don't believe this," he said.

Unlike the Pandey couple and Mamta, who had made the payment of USD 1,361 per ticket for their flight back home, Rakesh has not made the payment. Air India has said that the money would be refunded.

All three Indian citizens requested the Indian government to help them travel back home by making necessary changes in the current regulations.

As per a recent government notification, all existing Indian visa holders, and visa-free travel facility, granted to OCI card holders who are not in India, have been suspended till restrictions on international air travel remains.

New York-based community leader Prem Bhandari said the May 5 travel advisory had created multiple painful issues for the OCI card holders in the US and also to Indian citizens who are either on Green Card or H-1B visas and want to travel back home, but cannot leave their kids who are Americans by birth.

"We would like to express our disappointment with the discrimination between OCIs and citizens in respect of entering India at this critical stage when many OCIs have lawfully built their homes, families and businesses in India," Bhandari said in a letter to Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Monday. (Source: PTI)

US immunologist warns of 'darkest winter' if coronavirus rebounds

WASHINGTON (TIP): America faces the "darkest winter in modern history" unless leaders act decisively to prevent a rebound of the coronavirus, says a government whistleblower who alleges he was ousted from his job after warning the Trump administration to prepare for the pandemic.

Immunologist Dr. Rick Bright makes his sobering prediction in testimony prepared for his appearance on Thursday, May 14 before the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Aspects of his complaint about early administration handling of the crisis are expected to be backed up by testimony from an executive of a company that manufactures, respirator masks.

A federal watchdog agency has found "reasonable grounds" that Bright was removed from his post as head of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority after sounding the alarm at the Department of Health and Human Services. Bright alleged he became a target of criticism when he urged early efforts to invest in vaccine development and stock up on supplies.

"Our window of opportunity is closing," Bright says in his prepared testimony posted on the House committee website. "If we fail to develop a national coordinated response, based in science, I fear the pandemic will get far worse and be prolonged, causing unprecedented illness and fatalities."

Bright's testimony follows this week's warning by Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, that a rushed lifting of store-closing and stay-at-home restrictions could "turn back the clock," seeding more suffering and death and complicating efforts to get the economy rolling again.

President Donald Trump has dismissed Bright as "a disgruntled guy," and some of the president's political allies have urged that Fauci be fired, although that seems unlikely.

More than 83,000 people have died in the US, representing more than one-fourth of global deaths and the world's highest toll. On the planet more than 4.3 million have been infected and about 2,95,000 have died.

Eager to restart the economy, Trump has been urging states to lift restrictions, and many governors are doing so gradually, though consumers remain leery of going back to restaurants, social events and sporting competitions.

In his prepared testimony, Bright said, "The undeniable fact is there will be a resurgence of (COVID-19) this fall, greatly compounding the challenges of seasonal influenza and putting an unprecedented strain on our health care system."

"Without clear planning and implementation of the steps that I and other experts have outlined, 2020 will be darkest winter in modern history," Bright wrote.

Bright, who has a doctoral degree in immunology, outlined a path forward that would be based on science, even as researchers work to develop better treatments and an effective vaccine.

The steps include: Establishing a national testing strategy. The White House has urged states to take the lead on testing, even as the federal government pushes to make more tests



Immunologist Dr. Rick Bright who Trump fired has warned that America will face the "darkest winter" ever in case coronavirus rebounds.

and better ones widely available.

Trump says the US has "prevailed" on testing through this strategy, but in Congress Democrats are demanding a federal framework to encompass the whole nation.

(Agencies)

India tally crosses 80k mark, fresh cases in corona-free Goa and Manipur

NEW DELHI (TIP): With 3,967 new cases and 100 new deaths reported in the last 24 hours, the COVID-19 tally in India reached 81,970 on May 15, the Union Health Ministry stated on Friday. And two states, Goa and Manipur, which were declared COVID-19 free, have reported fresh corona positive cases.

Of the total cases, 51,401 are active and 2,649 are fatalities so far while at least 27,919 people have recovered from the disease.

After being COVID-19 free for many days, Goa reported seven fresh cases, that took the total number of cases here to 14. Similarly, in Manipur a fresh case emerged after 26 days, taking the total tally in this Northeast state to three so far.

In Maharashtra, the Covid-19 cases climbed to 27,524 followed by Tamil Nadu, which has reported 9,674 and Gujarat has 9,591 cases so far.

Maharashtra has also reported the highest number of deaths, 1,019, followed by 586 in Gujarat and 237 in Madhya Pradesh.

At least 8,470 people in the national capital have been infected with the highly contagious coronavirus.

Other states which have reported more than 3,000 cases are Rajasthan (4,534), Madhya Pradesh (4,426) and Uttar Pradesh (3,902).

Other major states and Union Territories that have reported more than 1,000 cases are West Bengal (2,377), Andhra Pradesh (2,205), Punjab (1,935) and Telangana (1,414).

Among other major states and



Doubling time of COVID-19 cases slows down to 13.9 days in last 3 days: Vardhan

The doubling time of coronavirus infection cases has slowed down to 13.9 days in the last three days, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Thursday, as the COVID-19 death toll rose to 2,549 and the number of cases to 78,003.

The minister, who visited the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) here and dedicated the COBAS 6800 testing

machine to the nation, said 14 states and Union Territories have not reported any case of COVID-19 in last 24 hours.

These states and UTs are Gujarat, Telangana, Jharkhand, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Goa, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Puducherry.

UTs that have reported a significant number of cases are, Bihar (994), Haryana (818), Jammu and Kashmir (983), Karnataka (987), Kerala (560), Odisha (611), Tripura (156) and Chandigarh (191).

States/UTs that have zero coronavirus cases are Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Andaman

and Nicobar Islands.

After being COVID-19 free for many days, Goa reported seven fresh cases, that took the total number of cases here to 14. Similarly, in Manipur a fresh case emerged after 26 days, taking the total tally in this Northeast state to three so far.



GOVT PREPARES FOR STAGGERED RESUMPTION OF FLIGHTS: STAMPING OF BOARDING PASSES SUSPENDED

NEW DELHI (TIP): The Central government has started work to prepare for resumption of commercial domestic flights, something that may happen in a staggered manner over the next one month, senior government and industry officials said. To this effect, government agencies have begun laying the groundwork in terms of safety and policy measures required to start flight operations.

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security issued a circular Wednesday doing away with security personnel stamping boarding passes of flight passengers at airports. "In view of the prevailing situation of COVID-19 pandemic and countermeasures being taken to contain its spread by touch/contact, it has been decided to dispense with the procedure of stamping the passengers' Boarding Pass...after completion of pre-embarkation security check of the concerned passenger, till further orders," the circular said.

Additionally, the government has also circulated a set of draft standard operating procedures with various stakeholders including airlines, airports and ground handling companies seeking their views on measures for ensuring social distancing and health safety of passengers and staff. These include downloading of Aarogya Setu app, increasing of passenger reporting time at airports, mandatory web check-in, among other such procedures.

Deaths on roads: 14 migrants killed in two accidents

NEW DELHI (TIP): Fourteen migrant labourers were killed and at least 61 others injured in two road accidents on Wednesday and Thursday while they were on the way to their homes in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, police said.

In the first case, a father and his son were among six people who were killed when an Agra-bound UP roadways bus hit a group of migrant workers, who were walking from Haryana to their home in Bihar's Gopalganj, near Rohna toll plaza along the Saharanpur-Muzaffarnagar state highway in Muzaffarnagar.

Four others were injured in the accident that took place late on Wednesday. Two of them are in a critical condition and have been taken to hospital in Meerut.

"These workers were walking along the state highway when the driver of an Agra-bound bus, in an inebriated condition, hit them around midnight on Wednesday. Two died on the spot while four succumbed to their injuries at the district hospital. The accused, Abhishek Yadav, who had managed to escape from the spot has been arrested," Anil Kaparwan, in-charge of the Muzaffarnagar Kotwali police station said. Yadav hails from Firozabad and has been booked for alleged rash driving and death due to negligence.

According to eye-witnesses and survivors, the group of labourers had set out from Kharera in Haryana on Sunday.

World Bank approves \$1 bn for India as social security fund for urban poor, migrants

NEW DELHI (TIP): The World Bank has approved US \$1 billion for India as social security technology fund for country's urban poor and migrant workers during the coronavirus crisis.

The focus will be to enable India to integrate all of its 400-plus social security schemes at a technology level, the bank said.

"The project will be crucial to rebalance social security towards urban poor, as much as rural," said Junaid Ahmad, country director, World Bank.

"I think PMs 'Atmanirbhar mission' is very important in terms of directions and India is not making distinction between life and livelihoods in the aftermath of Covid-19," he added.

The World Bank said that this is the largest project after a similar package announced for health systems earlier.

"The World Bank said the support in collaboration with the government is aimed at integrating platforms so that people should not have to run around from one place to another to access a myriad of social schemes," said Shrayana Bhattacharya, senior World Bank official.



Last month, the bank had approved a plan to roll out US \$160 billion in emergency aid over 15 months to help countries deal with the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic.

The board of the Washington-based development lender announced the first set of fast-track crisis funding, with an initial \$1.9 billion going to projects in 25 countries, and operations moving forward in another 40 nations.

India signs navy chopper deal with US, weapons still being negotiated

NEW DELHI (TIP): India has started the process of acquiring 24 state-of-the-art anti-submarine warfare helicopters for the Navy from the US firm Lockheed Martin after signing a \$905 million deal.

The MH-60R helicopters -- which would replace obsolete Indian Navy Sea King helicopters, first acquired from the UK in 1971 -- are meant to detect and, if necessary, engage Chinese and Pakistani submarines and warships in the Indian Ocean region.

The overall value of the contract signed is less than half the \$2.6 billion package which had been announced by the US State Department in April 2019 which included the cost of the choppers, their sensors and communication systems, and several weapon systems including Hellfire missiles which can targets ships, MK 54 torpedoes and precision strike rocket systems.

These helicopters are also designed to fire the Naval Strike Missile (NSM) developed by the Norwegian company Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace. The NSM can engage warships at a range of 185 kilometers. The original package India was looking at included the provision of NSM training missiles, a precursor to a potential deal for the missile system.

NDTV has learned that



negotiations for the full package which was discussed is still underway with no closure at the moment on the exact weapons and sensor fit the Indian Navy will eventually receive with the helicopters.

The deal itself is being handled through the US Navy which has allowed Lockheed Martin to speed up the delivery process by transferring three MH-60Rs from the US Navy's inventory of undelivered MH-60R choppers to India. This will allow Indian Navy pilots and engineers to train on the

chopper prior to full-scale induction on board aircraft carriers, destroyers and frigates in the fleet.

For several years, the Indian Navy has been operating state of the art warships including the made-in-India Kolkata Class destroyers without any modern anti-submarine helicopters on board, the lack of which has been considered a glaring operational deficiency at a time when China has markedly stepped up its presence in the Indian Ocean region by operating a full-scale base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.



LAST MOUNTED CAVALRY REGIMENT OF INDIAN ARMY TO LOSE HORSES, GET TANKS

NEW DELHI (TIP): The last mounted Cavalry regiment of the Indian Army and one of the few in the world, 61 Cavalry, will soon lose its special tag and be equipped with tanks instead of horses.

Sources in the Army revealed that the wheels have been set in motion to mechanise the Jaipur-based regiment and give it a more contemporary role.

"There are three independent armoured squadrons located at various parts of the country and these will be brought under 61 Cavalry to form an armoured regiment. This will entail virtually no extra expenditure as the squadrons are already equipped with tanks," a senior officer said while confirming the move.

The transition of the regiment to a full-fledged armoured regiment will take around five months time or even more, in view of the Covid-19 restrictions in place. The regiment will be stationed at a new location in an active field formation.

Sources say the horses of the regiment will be located in Delhi where the unit already has a presence along with the Army Polo and Riding Club. This horse squadrons will have personnel who are trained in equitation and will fall under the purview of Director General Mechanised Forces.

The proposal to change the regiment's role to an active armoured regiment is based on the recommendations of the Shekatkar Committee. The committee, under the chairmanship of Lt. Gen DB Shekatkar (retd), had been set up to suggest measures to enhance combat capability and re-balance defence expenditure of the armed forces and had submitted its report in December 2016.

Lockdown To Stay In Mumbai: Maharashtra Minister As COVID-19 Cases Spike

MUMBAI (TIP): Mumbai, fighting a huge spurt in coronavirus cases, will extend the lockdown scheduled to end on May 17, a Maharashtra minister has confirmed. Mumbai has reported nearly 1,000 Covid19 cases on Thursday, taking its total to over 16,500 cases.

Maharashtra's Industry Minister Subhash Desai told NDTV after a meeting with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday that the lockdown will be extended in Mumbai and other major cities.

"Looking at the way cases have bene going up in big cities like Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Malegaon, Aurangabad, it seems the lockdown may be extended. It will have to be done because of the situation. The government focus is on the health of the people. The first focus is that. Then of course there is industry and economy," the minister said.

Maharashtra has demanded a special economic package for Mumbai from the centre. Several decisions have been taken to get the economy on track, Desai said. The minister said Maharashtra is planning major sops for industry to rejuvenate economic activity.

To tackle the problem of migrant labourers leaving the city, which could slow the restart of economic activities, Maharashtra will set up an employment bureau. "We have decided to set up an employment bureau for industrial and commercial workers. And here we will register all those job seekers in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled categories and then we will interact with the employers who want employees.

Badrinath shrine's portals opened for summers, devotees not allowed due to Covid-19

NEW DELHI (TIP): The portals of Badrinath Temple were opened early on Friday in the presence of only 28 people, including the chief priest, due to the lockdown to stop the spread of coronavirus disease (Covid-19), news agency ANI reported.

The doors of the famous shrine in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, which was decorated with strings of marigold flowers, was opened at 4:30am after a long winter break.

"Devotees will not be allowed entry into the temple during that time. The decision has been taken in view of the guidelines issued by the Centre amid Covid-19 pandemic," Anil Chanyal, Joshimath's sub-divisional magistrate (SDM), had said in a statement earlier.

Religious ceremonies were also held on Wednesday at the Narsingh temple in Joshimath ahead of the scheduled date for the opening of the portals of the Badrinath temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

Around 10,000 pilgrims had visited the shrine last year on the first day of its opening as per an estimated figure.

Manujendra Shah, the king of the



Tehri royal family who is considered the 'Bolanda Badri' or talking Lord Badri, had on April 20 changed the date of opening of the portals of Badrinath shrine as the chief priest was under the quarantine after returning from Kerala.

This is the first time in history that the dates for the opening of portals of the shrines have been changed.

The portals of Kedarnath temple were also opened on April 29 after a

six-month-long winter break. Pilgrims were prohibited from visiting the shrine because of the lockdown.

One of the most visited pilgrimage centres of India, Badrinath is one of the Char Dhams or the four main pilgrimage centres of the Hindus located in Garhwal hills.

The Badrinath Temple is along the banks of the Alaknanda River in Chamoli district at a height of over 10,000 feet.

RS 20 LAKH CRORE ECONOMIC PACKAGE

Nirmala Sitharaman announces EPF relief, TDS rate cut; ITR filing deadline extended

NEW DELHI (TIP): As announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 12, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on May 13 announced the first tranche of the government's economic package to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Aimed at all sections of the society, including the middle-class, SMEs, labourers, farmers and the industry, the economic package is themed around the 'Self-reliant India campaign'. Over the next few days, Sitharaman will release more details about the stimulus measures being taken by the Modi government.

Sitharaman unveiled a Rs 5.9 lakh crore stimulus package which includes Rs 3 lakh crore collateral-free loans to small businesses, Rs 75,000 crore liquidity infusion in non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), Rs 90,000 crore financial support to power discoms and Rs 50,000 crore cash in the hands of taxpayers.

The allocation is part of the Rs 20 lakh crore 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' (Self-Reliant India Movement) announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday that combines policy reforms with fiscal and monetary measures.

While a finance ministry presentation noted financial implications of the schemes announced on Wednesday at Rs 5,94,250 crore, Sitharaman declined to comment on the numbers immediately. She, however, said the government recently raised its borrowing limits to part fund the measures. The government on Friday raised its market borrowing estimate by a staggering Rs 4.2 lakh crore to Rs 12 lakh crore in 2020-21 to make up for an expected shortfall in revenues because of prolonged lockdown since March 25 that has crippled the economy.

"Beginning today, for the next few days, I shall be coming here with the entire team of the ministry of finance to detail the Prime Minister's vision for Atmanirbhar Bharat laid out by the Prime Minister yesterday," Sitharaman said.

The first package of Rs 1.7 lakh crore was announced by the finance minister on March 26, followed by monetary measures taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to revive the economy, which has been battered by a prolonged lockdown since March 25 to check the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. The lockdown will continue till May 17, and may be extended in some parts of the country.

Sitharaman said the focus of the measures announced on Wednesday is "getting back to work". The fiscal and policy support will enable employees and employers, businesses, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), to get back to production and workers back to gainful employment, she said.

She said a Rs 3 lakh crore emergency working capital facility is provided to businesses in the form of term loans at a concessional rate of interest. "This will be available to units with up to Rs 25 crore outstanding and turnover of up to Rs 100 crore whose accounts are standard. The units will not have to



The five pillars of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' are economy, infrastructure, system, demography and demand. The special economic package that will serve as an important link to the self-reliant India Campaign.

Nirmala Sitharaman, finance minister

provide any guarantee or collateral of their own," she said. The amount will be 100% guaranteed by the federal government benefiting more than 4.5 million MSMEs, she added.

Besides, the government announced five other measures to support MSMEs - Rs 20,000 crore subordinate debt-based scheme for stressed MSMEs, setting up a Rs 50,000 crore 'fund of funds' with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore, redefining MSMEs to allow growth of units, disallowing global tenders up to Rs 200 crore in all government purchases and providing e-market linkage to boost sales.

In order to infuse liquidity in the system, particularly for small businesses and rural sector enterprises, the government announced a Rs 30,000 crore special liquidity scheme for NBFCs, housing finance companies (HFC) and micro-finance institutions (MFIs). The scheme will allow investment in primary and secondary market transactions in investment grade debt paper of NBFCs, HFCs and MFIs, which will be 100%

guaranteed by the Union government. Another, Rs 45,000 crore partial credit guarantee scheme is also planned to cover the borrowings of lower rated NBFCs, HFCs and MFIs. The government will provide a 20% first loss sovereign guarantee to public sector banks.

The MSME sector is, however, not enthused, said Vinod Kumar, the honorary president at the India SME Forum. "There's nothing for unbanked MSMEs... Only 7% of MSMEs are using banking today. Those with no limits will close down. All the guys who have limits have already given collateral, so there's no need for physical collateral guarantee of the additional amount only. It's a no starter. The fund of funds has already been around, the only hope is from the NPA [non-performing asset] and stressed fund... that too, let's see, how many banks roll that out."

Sitharaman also announced some reliefs to businesses and individual taxpayers. Measures included expeditious refunds to charitable trusts,

non-corporate businesses, proprietorship, partnership, limited liability partnership (LLP) and cooperatives.

She said the rates of tax deduction at source (TDS) and tax collected at source (TCS) has now been reduced for all non-salaried payment by 25% of the specified rates for the remaining period of FY 2021, which will provide liquidity to the tune of Rs 50,000 crore. However, the tax liability remains the same.

In order to reduce tax compliance burdens, the due date of all returns for assessment year 2020-21 will be extended to November 30, 2020, she said. The date for making payment without additional amount under the 'Vivad se Vishwas' scheme will be extended to December 31, 2020.

Sitharaman extended the three-month employees provident fund (EPF) support to small businesses and organised workers by another three months up to August 2020. The scheme provides for government's contribution in 12% of salary each on behalf of both employer and employee to EPF in enterprises employing fewer than 100, with 90% earning less than Rs 15,000 a month. This involves 7.2 million employees and will benefit them to the tune of about Rs 2,500 crore.

Besides, she announced reduction in statutory provident fund contributions of both employers and employees (in companies other than those benefiting from the other EPF incentive) to 10% each from 12% for all establishments covered by Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) for the next three months. "This will provide liquidity of about Rs 6,750 crore."

In order to provide relief to real estate projects, state governments and real estate regulators are being advised to invoke the force majeure clause, she said. "The registration and completion date for all registered projects will be extended up to six months and may be further extended by another 3 months based on the state's situation," she said.

Similarly, contractors involved in public sector projects have been given additional time. "All central agencies like Railways, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and CPWD will give extension of up to 6 months for completion of contractual obligations," she said.

DK Srivastava, chief policy adviser at consultancy firm EY India, said, "Nearly 30% of the Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package envisaged in Prime Minister's speech, that is about Rs 6 lakh crores, has been covered in today's Finance Minister's briefing. The focus is largely on the MSMEs who may be facing different sets of issues."

"This package is based largely on credit guarantee provisions implying minimal direct cost for the central exchequer which may be just a small fraction of today's package. Any additional cost would only be on account of defaults, the burden of which may arise only in future years. In the case of the power sector, the burden of bearing the default is in fact, on the state governments."

RS 20 LAKH CRORE ECONOMIC PACKAGE

Rent, ration, free food for migrants in Sitharaman's 2nd economic package tranche

Announces implementation of 'One Nation One Ration Card' benefiting 67 cr people in 23 states covering 83% of PDS population

NEW DELHI (TIP): In her second press conference in as many days, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday (May 14) unveiled an economic package to help alleviate the distress for small farmers, migrant workers, small traders and self-employed people under the "Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant)" campaign announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Moreover, migrant workers who do not have either central or state PDS cards would be given free food grain supply for next two months at a cost of Rs 3,500 crore, Sitharaman said. Sitharaman also announced an affordable rental housing scheme for migrant workers besides a Rs 5000 crore special credit facility for nearly 50 lakh street vendors even as Covid-19 push the nationwide tally closer to the 80,000 mark. The death toll crossed 2,500, while more than 26,000 have recovered so far.

Sitharaman on migrant workers, urban poor

- Maintaining that the government was conscious of the plight of migrant workers, Sitharaman said the Centre would spend Rs 3,500 crore on giving free food grain to eight crore migrant workers who do not have either central or state PDS cards. "For non-card holders, they shall be given 5 kg wheat/rice per person and 1 kg chana per family/month for 2 months. PDS ration cards to be made portable to allow migrant workers to use ration cards across states," she said.
- Besides, Sitharaman also announced the implementation of "One Nation One Ration Card" benefiting 67 crore people in 23 states covering 83 per cent of PDS population. "They will be covered by national portability by August 2020," Sitharaman said.
- The Finance Minister also unveiled the contours of a scheme for affordable rental housing for migrant workers to provide ease of living by converting government-funded housing in cities into Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) under PPP mode through concessionaire.
- Maintaining that the government was conscious of the plight of migrant workers, Sitharaman said states had been permitted to utilise SDRF for setting up shelter for migrants and providing them food and water. "We are conscious, we are attending to the migrants and giving them in various different ways," Nirmala Sitharaman said. The Finance Minister also said 7,200 new self-help groups (SHGs) for urban poor had been formed during the last two months.

Sitharaman on farmers, tribals

- Underlining that there has been a focus on rural economy and farmers since March-April in providing liquidity, Sitharaman

MAIN FEATURES

Support for migrants

Feeding the masses

- Migrants who are neither NFSA or State Card beneficiaries in the State they are stationed at will be provided 5 kg of grains per person and 1 kg chana per family per month for two months

No. of beneficiaries: **About 8 crore**

Cost involved: **₹3,500 crore**

Who bears the cost:

Fully borne by Government of India

Technology systems to be used to enable migrants to access PDS from any fair price shop in the country by March 2021 (One Nation One Ration Card)



Affordable housing for migrant workers/ Urban poor

Scheme to be launched under PMAY for migrant labour/urban poor to provide ease of living at affordable rent by:

- Converting government-funded housing in the cities into Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) under the PPP mode through concessionaire agreement
- Incentivising manufacturing units, industries, institutions and associations to develop ARHC on their private land and operate
- Incentivising State government agencies/Central government organisations on similar lines to develop ARHC

For marginal labourers

- Nabard will extend additional refinance support of ₹30,000 crore for crop loan requirement of Rural Co-op Banks & RRBs
- Front-loaded on-tap facility to be made available to 33 State Co-operative banks, 351 District Co-operative banks and 43 RRBs based on their lending
- ₹2 lakh crore concessional credit boost to 2.5 crore farmers through Kisan Credit Cards
- Special drive to be undertaken to provide concessional credit to PM-KISAN beneficiaries through Kisan Credit Cards; fishermen and animal husbandry farmers will also be included in this drive



- Interest Subvention and Prompt Repayment Incentive on crop loans, due from March 1, extended up to May 31, 2020

Labour code changes

- Social Security Scheme for gig workers and platform workers
- Re-skilling fund introduced for retrenched employees
- All occupations opened for women and they are permitted to work at night with safeguards
- Provision for Social Security Fund for unorganised workers
- Gratuity for fixed-term employment: Provision of gratuity on completion of one-year service as against 5 years
- Statutory concept of National Floor Wage introduced; will reduce regional disparity in minimum wages
- Pan-India extension of ESIC coverage; it will cover all establishments employing 10 or more employees as against those in notified districts/areas only

Mudra-Shishu loans

- Government of India will provide Interest subvention of 2% for prompt payees for a period of 12 months
- Relief of ₹1,500 cr to MUDRA-Shishu loanees

For street vendors' aid

- Special scheme to be launched within a month to facilitate easy access to credit
- Initial working capital up to ₹10,000
- Digital payments will be incentivised through monetary rewards and enhanced working capital credit would be made available for good repayment behaviour
- Will support nearly 50 lakh street vendors
- Will provide liquidity of ₹5,000 crore



Unveiling the measures, Sitharaman said the tranche has total liquidity support of Rs 2.46-lakh crore and investment expectation of Rs 70,000 crore. She had disclosed the first tranche on Wednesday which provided support of Rs 5.94-lakh crore for the economy.

said.

- Sitharaman also announced a 2 per cent interest subvention on the smallest category of loans given under the MUDRA scheme. "As much as Rs 1,500 crore interest subvention would be given for MUDRA-Shishu loans of up to Rs 50,000," she said.
- The main thrust of Wednesday's announcements was relief to Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) in the form of credit guarantees to them. Sitharaman's announcements followed up on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address on Tuesday regarding a Rs 20-lakh-crore economic stimulus, almost 10 per cent of the GDP, to cushion the impact of Covid-19 and to be unveiled in a staggered manner.
- Besides MSMEs, the 16 announcements in the first tranche cut across sectors that range from Non Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs) to real estate and power distribution and the salaried, with the overarching theme being of liquidity infusion in an economy that has been battered by weeks-long lockdown to curb the spread of novel coronavirus.
- Apart from Sitharaman's nearly Rs 6 lakh crore worth of measures announced on Wednesday and the fiscal package of Rs 1.7 lakh crore in March, the Reserve Bank of India has announced monetary stimulus measures totaling Rs 8.1 lakh crore.

On MNREGA, rural economy

- In what signals the huge pent up demand and stress in rural India, Sitharaman said 2.33 crore wage seekers in 1.87 lakh gram panchayats had been enrolled under MGNREGA. "Rs 10,000 crore under MNREGA spent in just 43 days. We have already generated 14.62 crore person-days of work till May 13, which is 40-50% more persons enrolled as compared to last May. Migrant workers going back to their states being actively enrolled," she

(CAMP) Funds, Sitharaman said.

On middle income group

- For middle income group with Rs 6 lakh to Rs 18 lakh annual income, Sitharaman announced an extension of the affordable housing scheme till March 2021. "For middle income group with Rs 6 lakh to Rs 18 lakh annual income. Credit linked subsidy scheme for affordable housing extended till March 2021. Another 2.5 lakh families will benefit. Expected to give a Rs 70,000 crore boost to housing," Sitharaman said.



Poonam Pandey booked for violating lockdown norms

Model-actress Poonam Pandey was on Sunday booked by Mumbai Police for violating the coronavirus-induced lockdown norms, an official said.

An FIR was registered against Pandey and a person accompanying her by the Marine Drive Police.

She was found roaming in her high-end car at Marine Drive without any reason, the police official said.

"A case has been registered against Pandey and Sam Ahmad Bombay (46) under sections 269 (Negligent act likely to spread infection of a disease dangerous to life) and 188 (Disobedience of order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and under provisions of the National Disaster Act," senior police inspector Mrityunjay Hiremath told PTI.

SUNNY LEONE FEELS LUCKY AS FANS SHOWER HER WITH LOVE ON BIRTHDAY

Actor Sunny Leone turns a year older today, and she is overwhelmed with all the love she has been getting from fans on her special day.

In a video message, Leone said, "I would like to thank everyone for all the birthday wishes. I am such a lucky girl to get so much love from all of you. I know we are far apart and it is a really tough time to be doing things. But, just know that I love all of you and I hope you all get through this with a big smile."

Sharing the video on Instagram, the Ragini MMS 2 actor wrote, "Thank you so much for all the birthday wishes everyone!! I am so lucky you are all a part of my life! Xoxo".

Manish Paul shared a few photos with Leone and wished her on her birthday. "Happy birthday @sunnyleoneyou wonderful soul...stay blessed always... #mp #hdb #blessed," he wrote along with the photos. Sunny Leone is in the US with her family. A couple of days ago, the 39-year-old actor shared why she chose to fly to Los Angeles with her three kids and husband Daniel Weber.

"I had the opportunity to take our children where we felt they would be safer against this invisible killer 'corona virus'. Our home away from home and secret garden in Los Angeles," Leone wrote in an Instagram post.



KAREENA KAPOOR IS MISSING HER SHOPPING SPREES WITH SAIF

Actor Kareena Kapoor is digging deep into her style files for throwback posts on Instagram. On Saturday, she shared a stylish photo of herself and husband Saif Ali Khan from their time in Morocco.

The photo is from 11 years ago and shows Saif and Kareena strutting down a sunny street in the African country. "Saturday Mood: Morocco '09," she captioned the photo. Kareena is seen in a beige shirt dress with a handbag on her arm and Saif looks handsome in his purple shirt and white pants.

The two were in Morocco to shoot for their film Agent Vinod. Saif plays an R&AW agent in the film.

The couple's fans loved the stylish photo. Kareena's sister and actor Karisma Kapoor wrote, "Love it." A fan wrote "SLAY ITTT".

On Friday, Kareena had shared another throwback photo of her team. "The good old days... no social distancing only love. But for now... do gaj ki doori and stay home," she had captioned the post.

Kareena, Saif and their son Taimur are currently in lockdown together at their Mumbai home. Kareena recently lost her uncle and veteran



actor Rishi Kapoor. She shared many throwback photos of Rishi with the family.

Last week, she shared a childhood

photograph of her 'Chintu uncle' (Rishi) and also posted a video of Rishi with Saif, from their film Hum Tum.

URMILA MATONDKAR: THIS LOCKDOWN IS A WAKE UP CALL



Everyone is adapting new ways to deal with the Covid-19 situation. Actor Urmila Matondkar, too, is indulging in whatever keeps her in spirits high, however, she believes that the lockdown must lead to a larger learning for each and every person.

Matondkar, 46, along with her husband, Mir Mohsin Akhtar, is quarantining at their farm house near Mahabaleshwar. Apart from reading, the other things filling her heart are music, nature and yoga. "This is like a wake-up call to all of us. We've been exploiting nature every possible way. Now it's time to slow down," says the actor, who has a huge library, and her pets for company.

The actor has even been trying to help those in need. "The other day, a friend was worried about her old parents who are in another part of the city and urgently needed medicine. So, we took the help of police to ensure that medicine reaches them on time. These things worry me. The plight of daily wagers, farmers, migrant workers...", she adds.



AMERICA FERRERA GIVES BIRTH TO SECOND CHILD

Actor America Ferrera has welcomed her second child, a baby girl, with director-husband Ryan Piers Williams. The couple, who have named their little one Lucia, took to Instagram to share the news on Mother's Day (May 10).

"LUCIA MARISOL WILLIAMS arrived on May 4th to give me my Mother's Day hugs and kisses herself.

"Mama, Dada & Big Brother are over the moon to welcome her bright light to our family," Ferrera, 36, wrote alongside a picture of the newborn holding onto the actor's hand.

Williams, 38, too shared the news, saying their daughter arrived just in time for Mother's Day.

"Everyone is healthy and happy!" he wrote. In her post, the Superstore star also talked about her Yes We Can Mobile Schools initiative, which helps to provide education to pupils at the US-Mexico border. "Quarantine may have canceled her Baby Shower but it didn't stop us from collecting and delivering essential supplies to #YesWeCanMobileSchools – spaces for moms and children at the border to learn, play, and stay safe through these hard times.," she said.

SHIRLEY TRAILER: ELISABETH MOSS LOOKS IMPECCABLE AS THE CELEBRATED AUTHOR

Shirley is a fictional story based on the novel of the same name by Susan Scarf Merrell, but it features two real characters — famed horror novelist Shirley Jackson and literary critic husband Stanley Edgar Hyman.

Jackson is best known for the celebrated work of psychological horror fiction, *The Haunting of Hill House*, which has been adapted several times and was recently adapted loosely by Mike Flanagan for a Netflix series. Stephen King called the novel one of the finest horror novels of the late 20th century.

Elisabeth Moss plays the titular character and Michael Stuhlbarg essays the role of Hyman. The film looks like an absolute blast. First off, Moss as Jackson is pitch perfect casting. She looks the part, and she seems to be doing a superlative job in bringing out the author's annoyance in a nuanced way despite the stolid exterior.

One thing is certain, this is no traditional biopic. The film had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in January and the reviews are glowing. It has scored a 97 per cent rating at review aggregation site Rotten Tomatoes.

Josephine Decker has directed the film with a screenplay by Sarah Gubbins

Shirley will be out on June 5.



BEN AFFLECK AND ANA DE ARMAS WEAR MATCHING HEART NECKLACES

Actors Ben Affleck and girlfriend Ana de Armas have displayed their affection for each other by wearing pendants in the shape of half of a heart.

The 'Knives Out' actress was photographed in April wearing her heart necklace while out for a stroll with Affleck in Los Angeles. As for Affleck, his necklace was visible when the 'Batman' star arrived to meet de Armas in Venice, California, on Friday.

It was confirmed in March that the couple are dating after the pair were seen vacationing together in Costa Rica and Cuba. A source had said in April that the two are smitten with each other.

"Ben is very supportive of Ana and tells her how amazing she is," the source said at the time.

"Ana's friends are constantly telling her how lucky she is to have Ben and think he is so charming, cool and fun. They're so happy for her."

The couple, who met while shooting for their movie "Deep Water" in 2019, have been enjoying their time together despite the coronavirus quarantine.

Affleck and the "No Time to Die" star have frequently been photographed taking walks together throughout their neighbourhood.

"Ana and Ben are so in love and they are just enjoying the moment and are quarantined together and happy," the source added.



THE OLD GUARD: CHARLIZE THERON'S NETFLIX FILM GETS JULY 10 RELEASE DATE

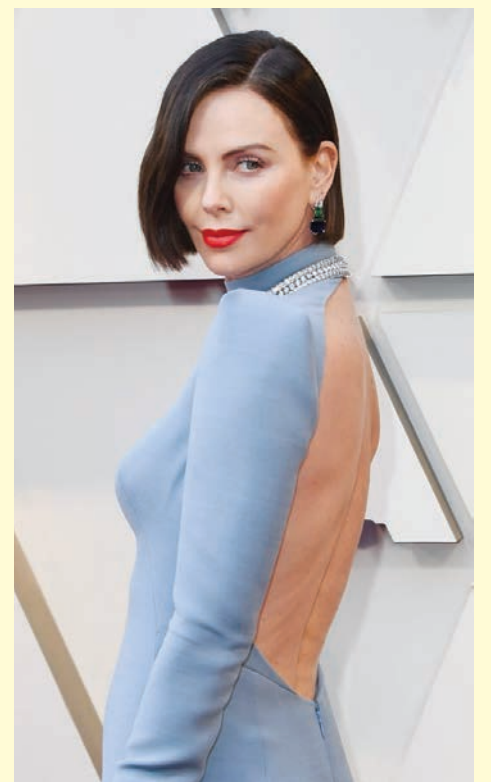
Hollywood star Charlize Theron's much-awaited Netflix project, *The Old Guard* will premiere on July 10. The 44-year-old actor shared the news in a post on Twitter, sharing four stills from the movie.

"@oldguardmovie @netflix July 10," she wrote in the caption. Written and directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood, the film is based on the comic book series of the same name by Greg Rucka.

The story is about on a small group of immortal soldiers, led by a woman named Andy, who have been working as mercenaries for centuries. But the group gets a shock when they find a new immortal woman, not long after they discover an evil group has video evidence of their immortality.

Besides Theron, *The Old Guard* also features Kiki Layne, Marwan Kenzari, Luca Marinelli, Harry Melling, Van Veronica Ngo, Matthias Schoenaerts, and Chiwetel Ejiofor.

Theron has also produced the project through her company Denver and Delilah, alongside Skydance's David Ellison, Dana Goldberg and Don Granger.



ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINEE MUNDHRA-KHAN FILM PREMIERS

By Mabel Pais

ACADEMY AWARD® Nominee "ST. LOUIS SUPERMAN"

premieres Monday, May 18 across MTV, VH1 and MTV2

via MTV Documentary Films

Smriti Mundhra and Sami Khan are co-directors and co-producers of the Academy Award® nominated "St. Louis Superman." The film will premiere on Monday, May 18th at 9PM ET/PT across MTV, VH1 and MTV2 via MTV Documentary Films. "St. Louis Superman" was 1st screened at the Tribeca Film Festival 2019 (TFF2019).

The critically acclaimed film is now also co-produced by Al Jazeera Witness and Poh Si Teng.

The award-winning film directed by Smriti Mundhra and Sami Khan, tells the story of Representative Bruce Franks Jr., a Ferguson activist and battle rapper who was elected to the overwhelmingly white and Republican Missouri House of Representatives.

Known as "Superman" to his constituents, Franks Jr. cuts a unique figure - an unorthodox politician who has overcome a tremendous loss to become one of the most dynamic and unapologetic young leaders in the country. Forced to deal with the trauma he's been carrying for nearly 30 years after witnessing the shooting death of his nine-year-old brother, the film chronicles his work toward overcoming both personal trauma and political obstacles in an effort to pass a bill that is critical to his community. Only by confronting his pain can Franks Jr. find peace and truly fulfill his



Bruce Franks, Jr. with brother

Photo / Courtesy TFF2019

destiny as a leader.

The film won the jury prize for Best Documentary Short at Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, the Audience Award for Best Short at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, the Audience Award for Best Short at the American Film Institute (AFI) Docs and the Special Jury Mention at Tribeca Film Festival. "St. Louis Superman" is produced by Mundhra, Khan and Poh Si Teng and executive produced by Sheila Nevins and Fiona Lawson-Baker.

About Bruce Franks Jr.

Bruce Franks Jr. is an American politician and community activist. He served in the Missouri House of Representatives representing the 78th District and served as the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Police/Community Relations before resigning in 2019. A St. Louis native, Franks Jr. is also a world-renowned battle rapper known as "Ooops" as well as a small

business owner. Today, he works with the Community Justice Action Fund, which holds elected officials and community leaders accountable for ending gun violence in communities of color across the nation.

About MTV Studios

Music Television (MTV) Studios is a unit of MTV focused on developing content for Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) and linear distribution platforms. With access to one of the largest libraries of 200+ youth and music titles, MTV Studios was created to harness the power of MTV, create new franchises and reimagine its most iconic hits including "The Real World" for Facebook Watch as well as "Punk'd" and "Singled Out" for Quibi. Additionally, MTV Studios launched MTV Documentary Films to explore the social, political and cultural trends and stories important to young people.

About Al Jazeera English (AJE) - Witness

"St. Louis Superman" is an Al Jazeera original documentary from AJE Witness, an award-winning documentary strand of Al Jazeera English. AJE Witness celebrates independent filmmaking and stories challenging dominant views that reflect the human experience. AJE provides international news, current affairs and documentaries that places people at the heart of the story, rooted in the belief that everyone has a story worth hearing. The AJE Witness team is proud to have the opportunity to work with film protagonist Bruce Franks Jr., and award-winning directors, Smriti Mundhra & Sami Khan.

Mumbai film fest immerses stay-at-home audiences in 'we are one'

By Mabel Pais

"All of the world needs healing right now....

'We Are One: A Global Film Festival' unites curators, artists and storytellers to entertain and provide relief to audiences worldwide." - Jane Rosenthal, Tribeca Enterprises & Tribeca Film Festival, Co-Founder - CEO.

"It's an event that's never been done before and we're proud to be the home for this fantastic content that is free to fans around the world." - Robert Kyncl, Chief Business Officer - YouTube

"We Are One: A Global Film Festival" May 29 - June 7 on YouTube.com/WeAreOne

"WE ARE ONE: A Global Film Festival," a collaboration of Tribeca Enterprises and YouTube, will present an unprecedented 10-day digital film festival exclusively on YouTube, bringing together an international

community of storytellers to present festival programming free to audiences around the world.

Set to begin on May 29 on YouTube.com/WeAreOne, the festival will feature programming curated by the Mumbai Film Festival (MAMI), Tribeca Film Festival, Annecy International Animation Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, BFI London Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, New York Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival, Tokyo International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, and many more, immersing audiences in stories from around the world and providing a voice for filmmakers on a global stage.

At a time when the world needs it most, the belief that artists and creators have the power to bring people together and create meaningful connections, is core to the DNA of film festivals. Through "We Are One: A Global Film Festival," audiences will not only get a peek into different cultures through a new lens, they'll be able to support local communities by directly donating to organizations helping the relief efforts for those affected by COVID-19. The festival will benefit the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as local relief partners in each region.

"All of the world needs healing right now," said Tribeca Enterprises and Tribeca Film Festival Co-Founder and CEO Jane Rosenthal. "'We Are One: A Global Film Festival' unites curators, artists and storytellers to entertain and provide relief to audiences worldwide. In working with our extraordinary festival partners and YouTube we hope that everyone gets a taste of what makes each festival so unique and appreciates the art and power of film."

"One of the most unique and inspiring aspects of the world staying home is our ability to come together and experience an event as one, and 'We Are One: A Global Film Festival' is just that," said Robert Kyncl, Chief Business Officer, YouTube. "Along with Tribeca Enterprises and our incredible partners, we are bringing fans the opportunity to experience the curated programming each of these festivals provides as part of our ten-day long event. It's an event that's never been done before and we're proud to be the home for this fantastic content that is free to fans around the world."

"WE ARE ONE: A Global Film Festival" runs from May 29 - June 7 on YouTube.com/WeAreOne. Programming will be available for free, and will include films, shorts, documentaries, music, comedy, and conversations. A full

schedule will be available closer to the festival start date.

About Tribeca Enterprises

Tribeca Enterprises is a multi-platform storytelling company, established in 2003 by Robert De Niro and Jane Rosenthal. Tribeca provides artists with unique platforms to expand the audience for their work and broadens consumer access to experience storytelling, independent film, and media. The company operates a network of entertainment businesses including the Tribeca Film Festival; the Tribeca TV Festival; and its branded entertainment production arm, Tribeca Studios.

About YouTube

Launched in May 2005, YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch, and share originally created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small. YouTube is a Google company.

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

From nose to toes, doctors continue to discover uncommon signs of coronavirus infection



By Rachel Nania, AARP

Fever, cough and shortness of breath are not the only warning signs of a coronavirus infection, even if they are the most common. In recent weeks, a growing number of doctors have documented a handful of otherwise unexpected symptoms in patients with COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus.

Some are reporting red or purple lesions on patients' hands and feet; others are treating people with diarrhea and severe appetite loss. There are also patients who have lost their sense of taste and smell. These symptoms, strange as they may seem, reinforce what experts around the world have come to realize in recent weeks: The coronavirus is capable of causing more than a respiratory illness; it can launch a full-body attack.

"It takes a while for the full range of symptoms to kind of be known" when you're dealing with a new virus, explains Lisa Winston, M.D., an epidemiologist and professor of clinical medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. At the start of the U.S. outbreak, the focus was primarily on treating the sickest patients, many of whom experienced classic respiratory symptoms and needed help breathing. "And then, as time went on and people saw more cases, they started to recognize some of the things that are a bit less typical," Winston says.

Here are some uncommon signs of COVID-19 that fall outside the hallmark symptoms. 'COVID toes'

If you had asked dermatologist Esther Freeman, M.D., last year what type of skin ailment a future viral pandemic might bring about, she never would have predicted red- and purple-colored toes that swell, burn and itch. But that's exactly what she and other experts are seeing in patients with coronavirus infections, leading this unusual symptom to be dubbed "COVID toes."

"The good news is, they do go away," says Freeman, director of Massachusetts General Hospital Global Health Dermatology and assistant professor of dermatology at Harvard Medical School, who is also overseeing an international registry that catalogs the dermatological manifestations of COVID-19. "So, we're not seeing that this is going to cause permanent damage."

Another plus: The majority of people with COVID toes - which Freeman likens to chilblains (also called pernio), an inflammatory skin condition that often occurs after exposure to very cold

temperatures - don't experience other symptoms of a coronavirus infection and don't require hospitalization for care. "Many patients are developing these toe lesions well after their infection, or they're otherwise completely asymptomatic, except for the toes," she adds.

Though most cases of COVID toes occur in the feet, the hands can be affected, too. Rashes similar to those that result from hives and chicken pox have also been reported in people who test positive for the coronavirus.

As for how and why these skin conditions are happening, Freeman says, "Our knowledge on this is still evolving." It could be an inflammatory response to the virus, for example, or even a result of small blood clots in the blood vessels of the skin. (Medical experts have reported concerning clotting issues in patients with COVID-19.) "I think that over the coming months, we're going to learn a lot more about why this is happening," Freeman adds.

If you notice a lesion like rash on your hands or feet, contact your doctor or dermatologist about your symptoms, since it could signify a coronavirus infection. That said, it's important to keep in mind that "not everything on your toes right now is from COVID," Freeman says. "There's certainly lots of other things that can appear on the feet, and there's things that can even look similar," which is why it's important to talk with an expert. There is no specific treatment for COVID toes, but a high-potency topical steroid might reduce inflammation.

One thing to note, however, is that a doctor won't be able to tell if the virus is still active in your body just by looking at your skin. "So, the safest thing to do is to follow CDC guidelines for self-isolation and to discuss with your board-certified dermatologist or other physician whether COVID testing might be right for you," Freeman advises.

Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and severe appetite loss

COVID-19 is producing symptoms of diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and appetite loss in a number of patients young and old. A recent study out of Stanford University School of Medicine found that nearly one-third of 116 patients infected with the coronavirus reported mild gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms. Earlier reports showed that among roughly 200 patients in China, more than half experienced diarrhea, nausea or vomiting. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also acknowledged GI issues on its list of COVID-19 warning signs.

"There's no question at this point that GI symptoms can be a manifestation of COVID-19," says William Chey, M.D., professor of gastroenterology and nutrition sciences at the University of Michigan. And oftentimes these symptoms can come on even in the

absence of "the more typical and recognized" markers of a coronavirus infection, such as fever and cough, he adds.

Experts point to a few explanations for the tummy trouble. Chey says the virus can directly infect the cells that line the GI tract, which is why some patients can test positive for the virus with a stool sample, even if results from a nasal swab come back negative. GI issues could also be an indirect result of the body's fight against infection.

If you don't have a history of GI trouble and experience a sudden onset of diarrhea, nausea, vomiting or loss of appetite - with or without other COVID-19 symptoms - check in with your doctor. Your symptoms might warrant a coronavirus test.

And if you are diagnosed with COVID-19, consider confining yourself to your own room and bathroom, separate from others in your house. Chey says it's not yet clear whether the virus can be transmitted fecal-orally, but if that is the case, "you should not be sharing a toilet with somebody that has COVID-19 unless, obviously, you have no other choice."

A few other tips: Disinfect bathroom surfaces often, especially high-touch areas such as toilet and sink handles. Don't share toilet paper rolls with someone who has COVID-19, and always flush with the cover closed, to minimize the spread of germs. Finally, continue to be vigilant about personal hygiene. "This whole issue about meticulous hand hygiene is so unbelievably important," especially if the virus is spread by the fecal-oral route, Chey emphasizes. "People need to wash their hands and not touch their face."

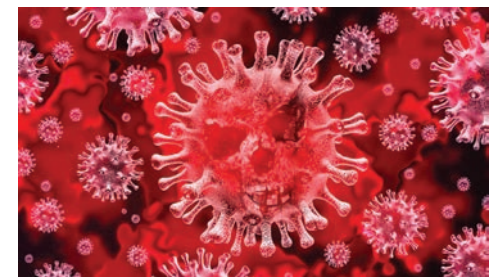
Loss of taste or smell

On the CDC's recently expanded list of common COVID-19 symptoms, one newcomer stands out. In addition to fever, chills and a sore throat, the public health agency now recognizes new loss of taste or smell as evidence of a coronavirus infection.

"People who have colds, if they get a really stuffy nose, they may complain of lack of smell, but, you know, that's sort of an unusual [symptom] right now in the absence of COVID," UCSF's Winston says. But it may be one of the best indicators of a coronavirus infection.

A new study published in the journal *Nature Medicine* tracked more than 2.5 million participants who reported their potential symptoms of COVID-19 on a smartphone app. About 65 percent of people who tested positive for COVID-19 reported loss of taste and smell, making it one of the strongest predictors of the illness among those studied. Similarly, researchers from the University of California, San Diego, found that smell and taste loss were reported in 68 and 71 percent of COVID-19-positive subjects, respectively.

"But we don't always ask those questions [about loss of taste or smell] when we are in the busy emergency



room," says Xinqi Dong, M.D., director of the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. When triaging patients, many health care workers "have been focused on the primary symptoms that they know to ask."

Neurological effects complicate diagnosis in older victims

This is starting to change, though. Loss of taste and smell, which usually return after the virus runs its course, are two symptoms on a growing list of neurological effects doctors are noting in COVID-19 patients. Other indicators of the illness include dizziness, headache and confusion. In fact, a study in *JAMA Neurology* found that more than 36 percent of 214 patients in Wuhan, China, experienced neurological symptoms during their bout of COVID-19.

For older adults, in particular, these neurological effects can be just as devastating as the pulmonary impacts of a coronavirus infection, Dong says. They can also be easily overlooked or dismissed as dementia or other diseases common with aging.

Neal Sikka, M.D., an associate professor of emergency medicine at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., says broader coronavirus testing is key to distinguishing COVID-19 patients from those who are suffering from a stroke or experiencing a complication from an underlying health condition.

"We're trying to be very vigilant and broad in our thinking" when a patient comes into the emergency room with confusion or change in mental status, Sikka says. "That could be some other type of infection; it definitely could also be a presentation of COVID. And so, we are trying to do rapid testing on those patients to identify them early."

And this catchall approach is what Dong expects will become the norm going forward, especially as health care providers learn about the different ways a coronavirus infection can show up in the body.

"You know, we started by thinking about COVID as very similar to SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome] and MERS [Middle East respiratory syndrome]," which are two other respiratory illnesses caused by coronaviruses. "But this - there's something different about this virus," Dong says. "We're catching up now, but if we had focused on not just fever, shortness of breath and dry cough, I think we might have caught more potential symptoms much earlier, especially in vulnerable older adults."

(Rachel Nania is a reporter and editor, covering lifestyle, food, health, travel and parenting)

(Courtesy AARP)

Brazil registers record 13,944 new coronavirus cases

RIO DE JANEIRO (TIP): Brazil registered a daily record 13,944 new cases of the novel coronavirus on Thursday and 844 additional deaths, according to health ministry data.

Brazil has now tallied 202,918 confirmed cases of the virus since the outbreak began and 13,933 deaths. — Reuters

Virus vaccine possible in a year, says EU agency

AMSTERDAM/BRUSSELS (TIP): A vaccine to counter the new coronavirus could be approved in about a year in an "optimistic" scenario, an agency which approves medicines for the European Union said on Thursday.

Britain is in talks with Swiss drugmaker Roche Holding AG to buy an accurate COVID-19 antibody test, following the lead of the European Union and United States, which had already given preliminary approval to the tests. Mass antibody testing with millions of kits is being considered by many countries as a way to speed the reopening of economies devastated by the lockdowns and to introduce more social distancing measures. A Public Health England laboratory concluded on May 7 that the Roche test detected the exact antibodies prompted by the virus, but the findings were made public on Wednesday.

As the world rushes to develop a vaccine, the European Union, hard hit by Covid-19, fears it may not have sufficient supplies, especially if a vaccine were developed in the US or China.

The European Medicines Agency, in communication with 33 developers, was doing all it could to speed up the approval process, the EMA's head of vaccines, Marco Cavaleri, said, but he was sceptical of claims any could be ready by September.

"For vaccines, since the development has to start from scratch...we might look from an optimistic side in a year from now, so beginning of 2021," he said.

He ruled out the possibility of skipping the third phase of a vaccine trial, which he said would be needed to be sure a vaccine was safe and effective.

The EMA is also looking at 115 different therapeutics, or treatments, for the coronavirus. Cavaleri said some of those therapeutics could be approved in Europe as early as this summer.

"If a vaccine is first developed outside Europe, we must do everything possible to ensure that the vaccine is actually available to all countries," said Peter Liese, who is a prominent member of Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party, the same as Chancellor Angela Merkel's. — Reuters

AMAZON COULD BE NEXT VIRUS HOT ZONE: SCIENTIST

SAO PAULO (TIP): The next pandemic could come from the Amazon rainforest, warns Brazilian ecologist David Lapola, who says human encroachment on animals' habitats — a likely culprit in the coronavirus outbreak — is soaring there because of rampant deforestation.

Researchers say the urbanization of once-wild areas contributes to the emergence of zoonotic diseases — those that pass from animals to humans.

That includes the new coronavirus, which scientists believe originated in bats before passing to humans in China's rapidly urbanizing Hubei province, probably via a third species.

Lapola, 38, who studies how human activity will reshape the future ecosystems of tropical forests, says the same processes are in play in the Amazon.

"The Amazon is a huge reservoir of viruses," he told AFP in an interview.

"We'd better not try our luck."

The world's biggest rainforest is disappearing at an alarming rate.

Last year, in far-right President Jair Bolsonaro's first year in office, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon surged 85 percent, to more than 10,000 square kilometers — an area nearly the size of Lebanon.

The trend is continuing this year. From January to April, 1,202 square kilometers were wiped out, setting a new record for the first four months of the year, according to data based on satellite images from Brazil's National Space Research Institute (INPE).

That is bad news, not just for the



planet but for human health, said Lapola, who holds a PhD in earth system modeling from the Max Planck Institutes in Germany and works at the University of Campinas in Brazil.

"When you create ecological disequilibrium... that's when a virus can jump" from animals to humans, he said.

HIV, Ebola, dengue

Similar patterns can be seen with HIV, Ebola and dengue fever — "all viruses that emerged or spread on a huge scale because of ecological imbalances," he said.

So far, most such outbreaks have been concentrated in South Asia and Africa, often linked to certain species of bats.

But the Amazon's immense biodiversity could make the region "the world's biggest coronavirus pool," he said — referring to coronaviruses in general, not the one behind the current pandemic.

"That's one more reason not to use the Amazon irrationally, like we're doing

now," he said.

And one more reason to be alarmed by the surge in deforestation by illegal farmers, miners and loggers, he added.

Bolsonaro, a climate-change skeptic who wants to open protected indigenous lands to mining and agriculture, deployed the army to the Amazon this week to fight deforestation, in a rare protective move.

But Lapola said he would rather see the government reinforce the existing environmental agency, IBAMA, which has faced staffing and budget cuts under Bolsonaro.

"I hope under the next administration we'll pay more attention to protecting what may be the planet's greatest biological treasure," Lapola said.

"We need to reinvent the relationship between our society and the rainforest."

Otherwise, the world faces more outbreaks — "a very complex process that is difficult to predict," he said.

"We'd better just play it safe." — AFP

Canada likely to extend travel restrictions until June 21

OTTAWA/WASHINGTON (TIP): Canada and the United States appear likely to extend a ban on non-essential travel until June 21 amid the novel coronavirus pandemic, a Canadian government source and a top US official said on Wednesday.

The two neighbours had agreed on April 18 to extend border restrictions until May 21 as cases of the disease continued to rise in both nations. Canada is now pressing for the measures to remain for another month.

"It's too early to lift the restrictions, so we're working toward an extension," said one Canadian government source, describing the talks with Washington as positive.

Chad Wolf, acting US Department of Homeland Security secretary, said later on Wednesday that restrictions across the borders with Canada and Mexico would likely be extended.

Speaking to reporters in San Diego, Wolf said officials from Canada and Mexico were willing to continue the

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said talks about the border "are going well and we're confident about being able to continue to keep Canadians safe."

measures "at least in the short term."

Separately, a Mexican government source said an extension for a limited period seemed likely.

On Tuesday, the chief Canadian public health officer said the United States — where cases are increasing steadily — presented a risk.

News of the request for a 30-day extension was first reported by Canada's Globe and Mail newspaper.

The agreement allows the flow of goods across a border that stretches 5,525 miles (8,891 km) and is a crossing point for one of the world's largest bilateral

trading relationships.

The United States takes 75% of all Canadian goods exports.

The total Canadian death toll edged up by just over 3% to 5,209 from 5,049 on Tuesday, official data showed on Wednesday.

The data are another sign the outbreak in Canada is slowing whereas the situation in parts of the United States is more challenging.

The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec neighbour the state of New York, a US epicenter of the disease. Canadian officials have been repeatedly pressed about the potential risk posed by arriving truck drivers.

Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer, said on Tuesday the coronavirus "could take off rapidly" unless extreme caution was exercised about relaxing the ban.

"The United States being one country that still has cases and is still trying to manage outbreaks ... presents a risk to Canada from that perspective." Reuters

New Zealand unveils NZ\$50 billion COVID-19 recovery plan

WELLINGTON (TIP): New Zealand unveiled a record NZ\$50 billion (\$30 billion) spending package on Thursday to revive an economy hit by the coronavirus pandemic, but warned it may not be enough to stop thousands from losing jobs and businesses shutting.

The massive budget stimulus, which includes billions on infrastructure, healthcare, housing and wage subsidy schemes, sets the stage for Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's re-election campaign, as her centre-left government seeks to consolidate support ahead of the September poll.

Ardern said the priority was to stop massive unemployment and described the package as a "jobs" budget.

The NZ\$50 billion will be spent over a four-year forecast period and is more than any New Zealand government has ever spent in one budget.

"Nothing about this time in our history is usual and so neither should our response be," Ardern told lawmakers in a speech to parliament.

Economic forecasts released with the budget cast a grim picture for the years ahead, with unemployment seen spiking to nearly 10% by June from 4% currently.

The dark outlook comes as neighbouring Australia on Thursday reported record monthly jobs losses of about 600,000 in April.

New Zealand's spending means debt projections balloon to NZ\$200 billion for 2024, from NZ\$76 billion in December's forecasts. The operating deficit for fiscal year ending June 2020 is now expected to be 9.6% of gross domestic product, well up on the 0.3% forecast in December. The deficit is expected to average 9.3% over the next two years.

"There will be a sharp fall in economic activity and a substantial rise in unemployment," Finance Minister



Grant Robertson said in his speech.

GDP for 2020 was seen shrinking 4.6% but gradually recovering by 2022.

"Today's budget delivered an economic support package that was even more massive than expected, an extraordinary response to extraordinary times," said Michael Gordon, a Senior Economist at Westpac.

Recovery expected

Ratings firm S&P said in a note the budget indicated a significant hit to New Zealand's finances in the next couple of years before slowly recovering.

"We expect New Zealand's economy to recover faster than the budget assumes, aided by the quicker easing of lockdown restrictions than assumed in the budget," the agency said.

Robertson said the measures will bring unemployment rate back to its current level of 4.2% by June 2022. He estimated the package would save 140,000 jobs over two years.

Prime Minister Ardern has garnered global praise for her leadership amid the pandemic, with the country recording only 21 deaths from coronavirus, among

the lowest tolls in the world.

But she faces a tough task rebooting the \$200 billion economy, which is dependent on trade and tourism, with growth expected to slow significantly and hundreds of thousands of jobs to be lost.

She eased some tough lockdown measures this week amid growing pressure from critics who said they were crippling small businesses and hurting the economy. The main opposition National Party slammed the budget, saying it lacked any detail of how money would be spent and what it will achieve.

"Kiwis have sacrificed so much through the restrictions of the lockdown, our collective efforts have so far worked well, now we need to get our economy cranking again," opposition leader Simon Bridges said.

The government said it would build 8,000 new homes to support the construction sector, and create 11,000 jobs in environmental projects. It plans to spend NZ\$4 billion on supporting businesses and extended its current wage subsidy scheme for another eight weeks. Reuters

Japan expected to lift emergency in most areas except Tokyo

TOKYO (TIP): Japan is expected to lift a state of emergency across a large part of the country on Thursday but the capital Tokyo will likely remain under restrictions until there is a convincing containment of the coronavirus.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is scheduled to hold a news conference at 6 p.m. (0900 GMT) when he is expected to announce the lifting of the emergency in 39 of Japan's 47 prefectures, but not in Tokyo.

The world's third-largest economy declared a nationwide state of emergency a month ago, urging citizens to reduce person-to-person contact by 80% in an effort to slow the pace of new coronavirus infections and ease the strain on medical services.

The government had said it would reassess the situation in mid-May.

Abe, like leaders everywhere, is striving to strike a balance between damage to the economy from prolonged shutdowns and the need to contain the virus.

Economists said normalisation would be gradual as the government keeps a wary eye on the possibility of a second wave of infections as seen in countries such as South Korea and China.

"The focus is whether the government will lift the emergency in the big areas such as Tokyo and Osaka before the end of May, as was initially planned," said Atsushi Takeda, chief economist at Itochu Research Institute.

"If it does, economic recovery will likely be faster than previously estimated."

The emergency gives governors more authority to tell people to stay at home and to close schools and businesses, but there is no penalty for non-compliance.

Some non-essential businesses, even in areas hit hard by the coronavirus, have started to reopen ahead of the government's review, and the scope of restrictions has varied across the country.

The emergency is also expected to remain in force in Osaka, Japan's second-largest metropolis, but its governor has announced criteria for gradually lifting some restraints on businesses including eateries and bars. The 39 prefectures in which the emergency is expected to be lifted account for 54% of Japan's population.

The greater Tokyo area, where the emergency is expected to remain in force, represents about a third of the economy.

"Tokyo is the heart of the Japanese economy. It's like driving a car with three wheels," said Jesper Koll, chief executive of asset manager WisdomTree Japan. The government is set to add four economists to its advisory panel for combating the epidemic and another review will be conducted again in about a week. Reuters

China reports 15 new COVID-19 cases, Wuhan begins mass testing

BEIJING/WUHAN (TIP): China has reported 15 new COVID-19 cases, including 12 asymptomatic infections, the health authorities said on Thursday, as the mass testing for the deadly coronavirus began for the 11 million people in the city of Wuhan, amid apprehensions about a second wave of the pandemic.

According to China's National Health Commission (NHC), the three new cases are domestically transmitted, with two reported in Liaoning province and one in Jilin province.

As of Wednesday, the overall confirmed cases on the mainland had reached 82,929, including 101 patients who were still being treated. Overall, the death toll in China stood at 4,633, the

NHC said.

Following a spike in cases, officials in Jilin city of the northeast China's Jilin province have adopted a number of more stringent measures to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Gai Dongping, vice-mayor of Jilin, told reporters on Wednesday that the city had reported a total of 21 community cases, with two asymptomatic patients, since the first cluster infection was reported a week ago.

"The current outbreak is very serious and complex and poses a major risk of further spread. In order to prevent and stem the spread of the epidemic, the Jilin epidemic prevention and control group has decided to implement control measures in the urban area of Jilin," she

was quoted as saying by the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.

The NHC said that 712 people with asymptomatic infections were under medical observation. This included 574 in Hubei province and its capital Wuhan.

The local health commission in Wuhan said no new confirmed case of coronavirus was reported on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Wuhan began a massive campaign on Wednesday to test all of its over 11 million people.

The tests to be completed by May 20 began as a top health official warned that China's risk of COVID-19 cluster infections caused by the sporadic cases cannot be ignored, although the epidemic is in a generally stable state in the country at the moment. PTI

HOMEMADE TONICS FOR HAIR GROWTH

Our hair is our crown, and most of us are very touchy about it as well. Hair fall, hair loss, white hair, dry hair, too oil, well all these are issues with different people. If we are happy with our hair then too we have to maintain it to keep them like that. Here, particularly if you have hair growth issues then there are some tonics as I call them or juices that will help majorly when it comes to the hair problem.

Potato Juice

Not just for hair, but juice of fruits and vegetables are good for the overall human body. The juice of potatoes has vitamin C, zinc, beta carotene, iron and phosphorus, which keeps the hair healthy by nourishing the cells in our scalp. Potato also helps in keeping the pH level balanced and prevents dandruff. It also stops hair loss.

Method:

- Cut the peeled potato into small slices and put them in a blender.
- Now add some water to it and blend to make the juice.
- Strain the potatoes in a glass and drink immediately.

Amla Juice

Amla juice is the best medicine for your hair. It is excellent for your scalp and hair. Indian gooseberry juice is well known for being rich in vitamin C and for being a natural antioxidant. It fights free radicals and can prevent hair loss quite fast. Not just this, it is very good for the prevention of premature greying. Have the juice every day as it also has anti-microbial properties that prevent yeast infection and dandruff. Here we are telling you how to make this juice.

Method

- Wash the amla properly and chop into small pieces.



- Blend the pieces in the blender with some water and then strain it into a glass.
- You can add some honey to reduce the acidity.

Carrot Juice

Carrot juice is full of many nutrients, which are crucial for hair growth. The juice of carrots have high amounts of antioxidants which are known as carotenoids. They reduce the oxidative damage of the cells of the head. Carrot juice has vitamins present that prevents hair loss by curing dry and damaged hair. It hydrates the hair and makes it soft. The biotin in it prepares keratin to prevent hair loss.

Method

- Peel the carrots properly and wash and cut into pieces.
- Blend it in a jar and put some water in it to make a juice.
- Now filter the juice and drink it.



FOOD CORNER



Lamb Kofta

Ingredients

Minced lamb - 250 gms
Breadcrumbs - 1/2 cup
Onion - 1, small, finely chopped
Egg - 1, beaten
Mint leaves - handful, finely chopped
Coriander leaves - handful, finely chopped
Cinnamon powder - 1 tsp
Cardamom powder - 1 tsp
Cumin powder - 1 tsp
Red chilli powder - 1/2 tsp
Turmeric powder - 1 tsp
Salt as per taste
Black pepper powder as per taste
Wooden skewers - few, soaked in cold water for 30 minutes
Olive oil - little
Optional ingredients:
Ginger garlic paste - 1 tsp
Red chilli flakes - 1/4 tsp

Method

1. Combine the minced lamb and breadcrumbs in a bowl.
2. Mix well.
3. Add the onions, mint leaves, coriander leaves, cinnamon powder, cardamom powder, cumin powder, red chilli powder and turmeric powder.
4. Sprinkle some salt and pepper powder.
5. Mix well.
6. Add the egg and mix again until all ingredients are evenly combined.
7. Make small balls of the mixture and insert a skewer into the center.
8. Gently press the mixture around the skewer and keep aside.
9. Heat a grill pan over medium flame.
10. Add some olive oil and grill the prepared koftas until golden brown on all sides.
11. Remove and serve with naan/parathas and lemon wedges.



FACE PACKS TO GET RID OF SUN TAN

It's blazing hot in Chennai. Despite the heat we have to step out for work and for other activities. It is natural that our skin would get tanned when exposed to this scorching heat. Apart from applying sunscreen lotion you can also try out these face packs to help remove the tan. City-based skin care expert Vasundhra Ravi gives us six homemade face packs that will keep your skin looking fresh this summer.

Barley pack

Grind 30 grams of barley with 20 grams of khus khus. Mix this powder with five drops of lemon juice and a few drops of rose water to make a smooth paste. Apply this paste on the exposed areas. Leave the pack on for half-an-hour and wash your face with cold water.

Dal pack

Take two tablespoon of tuvar dal, two tsp green gram dal, two tsp cucumber seeds, two tsp channa dal. Grind all these into a fine powder. Add two pinches of kasturi manjal and two tsp cucumber juice to this powder and make a paste. Apply this on the tanned areas. Leave it

for half-an hour and wash it.

Fruit pack

Soak 10 grams of dry raisins and two dates in 50 ml tea decoction for two hours. Then grind this into a smooth paste. Add a tsp of papaya pulp, apply the mix on face, neck and other exposed areas. Rinse after 10 minutes.

Orange pack

Dry orange peel (mandarin orange) and powder it. Take a tsp of this powder and add one tsp curd, a tsp Multani mitti, and one tsp sandal paste. Add a little water and mix it into a fine paste. Apply the paste on the tanned areas and leave it on for 20 minutes. Wash off with water.

Aloe vera pack

Mix two tsp of aloe vera pulp, three tsp tomato juice, one tsp Multani mitti and one tsp sandal paste. Apply on tanned areas. Leave on for 15 minutes, pat on cold milk. Leave on for five minutes and then wash off with water.

FOODS THAT ARE BEST SOURCES OF COPPER

For the proper functioning of the immune system and growth development of the foetus, we require this essential trace mineral in the right amount and one can include copper-rich food items in their diet to get the same. If you have copper deficiency then you may experience bone weakness, muscles & joints pain among others. However, it is important to note that you should not get pass the daily recommended allowance.

Nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds are two superfoods that you should include in your diet as they provide a wide range of nutrients including copper. Almonds, cashews and sesame seeds are good sources of copper and that's why you should add them in your daily diet.

Seafood and liver

Seafood especially oysters and lobster are very rich in copper. Organ meats such as liver, you must be aware of, how nutritious they are. The liver also provides other micronutrients such as B12, vitamin A, riboflavin (B2), folate (B9), iron and choline.

Mushrooms

Mushrooms, especially, Shiitake Mushrooms are incredibly rich in copper. They also a great source of selenium, manganese, zinc, folate and vitamins B1, B5, B6 and D



among others. 4 dried Shiitake mushrooms can give 89% of the RDI for copper.

Green leafy vegetables

It is no surprise to see their mention in this list. Green leafy veggies are powerhouses of so many vitamins and minerals including copper. For the unversed, cooked spinach can give you 33% of the RDI.

Dark chocolate

Chocolate lovers must be grinning from ear to ear. Dark chocolate which boasts several nutrients includes health-boosting antioxidants is also rich in copper. A 100-gram bar of dark chocolate has 200% of the RDI for copper. Make sure to not overeat dark chocolate as they are a high-calorie food.



GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP 'CRUCIAL' FOR ASTHMA SUFFERERS

Getting a good night's sleep is vital for asthma sufferers, researchers have reported. Experts from the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology have discovered that too little sleep, and occasionally too much sleep, could lead to a greater likelihood of an asthma attack, dry cough, and hospitalisation compared to normal sleepers.

The study involved 1,300 adults, aged 20 and over, who self-identified as having asthma.

More than 25 per cent of participants slept five hours or less, while nearly two thirds slept between six and eight hours, and just over eight per cent slept more than nine hours.

Short sleepers had an increased risk of having an asthma attack, and also had significantly worse health-related quality of life, such as poor mental health and physical inactivity.

Long sleepers were also associated with having an increase in wheezing compared to normal sleepers.

"Compared to normal sleepers, short and long sleepers had a higher proportion of people who reported having an asthma attack in the past year, and had more days with impaired health-related quality of life," Faith Luyster, lead author of the study, explained.

While allergist Gailen D. Marshall noted that disturbed sleep in asthma patients can cause the condition to become out of control, leading to poor health.

"This study adds solid evidence to the practice of asthma patients discussing sleep issues with their allergist to help determine if they need to change their asthma plan to achieve adequate sleep as a component of overall good asthma management," he added.

Here's why your knees might hurt after sitting still for a few hours

Thanks to a movie marathon, you haven't moved from the couch in hours - but your knees feel like you just ran an actual marathon.

Since 26.2 miles never happened, you might be wondering why these aches appeared.

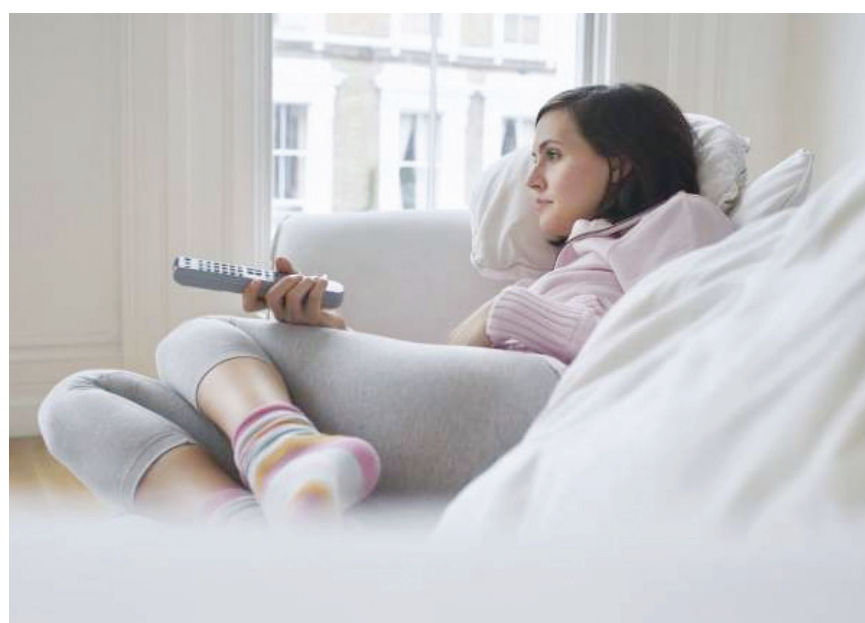
TV binges are a fail-safe way to zone out, relax, and unwind, but sitting in one place for prolonged periods of time doesn't always have the same effect on your joints.

"Sitting in one position for a long period of time puts a lot of contact pressure on the patella (knee cap). This type of pain is especially common in females who are more likely to have soft or slightly damaged cartilage in the front of their knee," Dr. Sabrina Strickland, an HSS orthopedic surgeon, explains.

One solution is fairly simple and probably pretty obvious - make movement a priority.

Dr. Strickland suggests setting a timer to move every 30 minutes, as well as completing quad and hamstring stretches a few times a day.

"For the quads, try reaching back



and pulling your heel toward your buttock," Dr. Strickland says. "For your hamstrings, prop your heel on an ottoman and lean over your leg - you should feel the stretch from your buttock down to the back of your knee."

If you plan on being seated for a while, Dr. Strickland suggests

propping up your foot for periods of time so that the knee isn't rested in one position all day.

Knee pain can be caused by more than just sitting still, so if you regularly deal with this type of pain - especially after exercise - reach out to your doctor for a specific diagnosis and set of instructions.

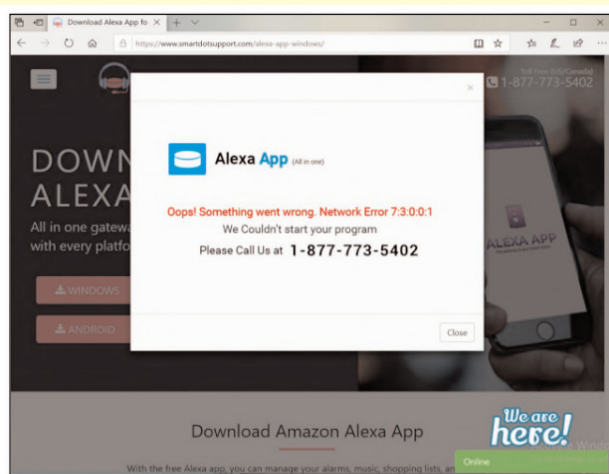
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ALEXA, IS THIS A SCAM? AMAZON CRACKS DOWN ON TECH SUPPORT SITES

Amazon is suing two companies for “widespread tech support fraud,” alleging that they tricked new users of Echo speakers and other Alexa devices into paying for purported technical support through an elaborate ruse designed to convince them they had encountered frustrating technical glitches.

The formal complaint follows a series of earlier legal actions by Amazon against the companies, resulting in the shutdown of most of their apps and sites.

In one example cited in the suit, a purported support technician — speaking on the phone with a user who was actually an Amazon investigator — used a remote connection to the investigator’s computer in a creative attempt to make it look like there was a problem installing Alexa.

“The technician opened the command function, and prompted a simple directory search,” lawyers for Amazon write in the suit. “The perpetrator stated this task would identify the problem. At the conclusion of the search, the perpetrator wrote at the bottom of the dialogue box: ‘Foreign Address Detected . . . IP is not secure . . . Unable to connect Alexa.’ ”

That’s one of several tactics alleged by Amazon in the lawsuit against Robojap Technologies LLC of Covington, Wash., and Quatic Software Solutions Pvt. Ltd. of Punjab, India, and their respective principals.

You can now have your very own digital avatar on FB, Messenger

Facebook is rolling out its own version of bitmoji — personalized avatars — for U.S. users, Facebook told USA TODAY exclusively.

Designed to infuse a bit of playfulness into a social network that many young people eschew for Instagram or Snapchat, these cartoon versions of ourselves are clones of Snapchat’s Bitmoji and Apple’s Memoji stickers, tapping into a popular form of expression in text messages and on social media.

On Facebook, the avatars will be used to share feelings and interact with friends in comments, on Messenger and in Stories and, shortly, in text posts with backgrounds, too, says Fidji Simo, head of the Facebook app. You can also use your personal avatar on your gaming profile.

Facebook avatars were first introduced last year in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Ireland and expanded this year to Europe and Canada.

From skin tone and complexion to facial features and hairstyles to outfits and accessories, you can personalize your avatar to reflect who you are, Facebook says.

“Avatars enable you to share a range of emotions and expressions via a digital persona that’s uniquely representative of you,” Simo says.

The social network, which tends to cherry-pick good ideas like this one from competitors, says it took its time building the feature for Facebook to make sure the avatars represented the diversity of its billions of users. It says it has no plans to monetize the avatars at this time.

RESEARCHERS DEVELOPING FACE MASK THAT LIGHTS UP WHEN IT DETECTS VIRUS

Pandemics were top of mind for Jim Collins years before the new coronavirus emerged.

In 2014, his bioengineering laboratory at MIT began developing sensors that could detect the Ebola virus when it was freeze-dried onto a piece of paper. The small team of scientists from MIT and Harvard first published their research in 2016; by then, they’d tailored the technology to address the growing Zika virus threat.

Now, they’re adjusting their tool again to identify coronavirus cases.

The team is developing a face mask that produces a fluorescent signal when a person with the coronavirus breathes, coughs, or sneezes.

If the technology proves successful, it could address flaws associated with other screening methods like temperature checks.

“As we open up our transit system, you could envision it being used in airports as we go through security, as we wait to get on a plane,” Collins told Business Insider. “You or I could use it on the way to and from work. Hospitals could use it for patients as they come in or wait in the waiting room as a pre-screen of who’s infected.”

Doctors could even use them to diagnose patients on the spot, without having to send samples to a laboratory. At a time when testing snafus and delays have hampered



many countries’ ability to control outbreaks, tools that quickly identify patients are critical.

Fluorescent signal could show whether coronavirus is in saliva

Collins said his lab’s current project is in the “very early stages,” but the results have been promising. For the last few weeks, his team has been testing the sensors’ ability to detect coronavirus in a small saliva sample.

They’re also experimenting with design: Right now, the lab is debating whether to embed sensors on the inside of a mask or develop a module that can be attached to any over-the-counter mask.

The team hopes to demonstrate that the concept actually works within the next few weeks.

“Once we’re in that stage, then it would be a matter setting up trials with individuals expected to be infected to see if it would work in a real-world setting,” Collins said.

The virus-identifying technology more generally, however, has already been proven. By 2018, the lab’s sensors could detect SARS, measles, influenza, hepatitis C, West Nile, and other viruses.

“We initially did this on paper to create inexpensive paper-based diagnostics,” Collins said. “We’ve shown it can work on plastic, quartz, as well as cloth.”

GOOGLE CHROME WILL NOW ALLOW USERS TO GROUP THEIR TABS TOGETHER

We’ve all been there: 27 browser tabs open and struggling to find the one we need. Google wants to help.

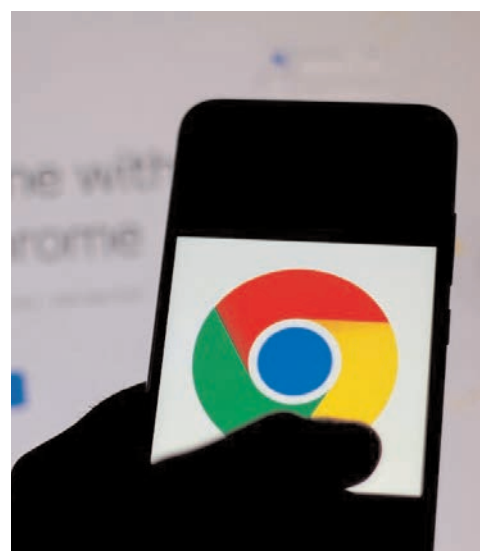
The tech giant is rolling out a new tool to organize tabs in its Chrome browser and group them together, it announced Wednesday.

Users can right click on tabs to add them to groups and then label those groups with a custom name, color, emoji or a combination of the three, Chrome engineer Edward Jung said in a blog post. Google’s initial research showed some popular ways that people tend to group their tabs — by topic, by urgency (“ASAP,” “this week” or “later”) or by progress (“haven’t started,” “in progress” or “completed”).

“Tab groups are customizable so you can decide how to use them,” Jung said.

(This writer’s trick is to open a new browser window for each story he is working on or when he hits a certain threshold of tabs, which means instead of having 36 tabs open he has three windows with 12 tabs each). (The editor of this story has 18 tabs open in one window right now).

While tab organizers aren’t a new concept — services such as OneTab, Cluster and Toby offer Chrome extensions for this purpose, for example



— this is the first time Google is offering its own.

The feature, which Google has been testing for months, is currently only available on Chrome’s beta version. The company will add it to the new version of Chrome starting next week, rolling it out gradually to avoid impacting the browser’s “stability and performance.”

One thing that won’t change no matter what Google does, however, is the joy of closing dozens of tabs when you’re done working on something.

Scientists make fastest soft robots based on biomechanics of a cheetah

Taking inspiration from cheetahs, researchers from North Carolina State University have developed a new type of soft robot that is capable of moving more quickly than previous generations. The paper “Leveraging Elastic Instabilities for Amplified Performance (LEAP): spine-inspired high-speed and high-force soft robots” published in the journal Science Advances claims that the new soft robotics based on the biomechanics of a cheetah is also capable of grabbing objects delicately and with sufficient strength.

Soft robots have attracted researchers because of their safe and adaptive interaction with humans in harsh environments.

Vijay Mallya faces extradition, loses appeal in UK court

LONDON (TIP): Fugitive Indian businessman Vijay Mallya today lost his application seeking leave to appeal in the UK Supreme Court, news agencies reported. UK Home Secretary Priti Patel will now take a final call to formally certify the court order for Vijay Mallya to be extradited to India within 28 days.

The 64-year-old businessman had 14 days to file this application to seek permission to move the higher court on the High Court judgment from April 20, which dismissed his appeal against a Westminster Magistrates' Court's extradition order certified by the UK Home Secretary.

The latest ruling will now go back for re-certification and the process of extradition should be triggered within 28 days.

Earlier, Mallya had urged the government to unconditionally accept his offer of bank loan repayment and close the case against him. "Congratulations to the government for a Covid-19 relief package. They can print as much currency as they want BUT should a small contributor like me who offers 100 per cent payback of state-owned bank loans be constantly ignored? Please take my money unconditionally and close," Mallya had tweeted.

Vijay Mallya, promoter of the defunct Kingfisher Airlines is wanted in India over alleged fraud and money laundering charges amounting to estimated ₹9,000 crore. He was arrested by the UK authorities on April 20, 2017 on the request of the Indian investigative agencies.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Vijay Mallya lost his appeal in the London High Court against an extradition order to India on alleged charges of money laundering
- Earlier, Mallya had urged the government to unconditionally accept his offer of bank loan repayment
- UK Home Secretary Priti Patel will now take a final call to formally certify the court order



ASIAN SHARES STRUGGLE AS CORONAVIRUS STRAINS US-CHINA RELATIONS

TOKYO (TIP): Asian stocks struggled to extend gains on Friday and were on course to end the week lower as deteriorating US-China relations undercut optimism over the reopening of major economies.

Worries about confrontations between the two largest economies in the world eclipsed Chinese economic data, which showed its economy is gradually recovering from the shock of the coronavirus outbreak.

With China the first to relax lockdowns, global investors are closely watching it for clues on how long demand will take to bounce back, as other countries begin to ease their own anti-virus measures.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan were little changed, with gains in Australia offset by falls in Hong Kong.

Japan's Nikkei dipped 0.3% while mainland Chinese shares also ticked lower.

US S&P500 futures dipped 0.15% after the index gained 1.15% the previous day, recovering from a three-week low.

While many analysts regarded the drop as a natural correction after a fast rally since mid-March, they are also increasingly worried about US-China relations as US President Donald Trump blames China for the disease that killed more than 85,000 Americans.

US MORTGAGE RATES HOVER NEAR ALL-TIME LOW

WASHINGTON (TIP): Long-term US mortgage rates were mostly steady this week, hovering near all-time lows.

Mortgage buyer Freddie Mac reported Thursday that the average rate on the benchmark 30-year home loan edged up to 3.28% from 3.26% last week. A year ago, the rate stood at 4.07%.

The average rate on the 15-year fixed-rate mortgage eased to 2.72% from 2.73% last week.

Mortgage applications for home purchases reached a new low in April as the economy and housing market reeled from the shutdown spurred by the coronavirus pandemic. The normally busy spring homebuying season has been upended. At the same time, however, home prices have been rising.

Grim data, meanwhile, continues to pour in showing the economic damage from the virus that shut down wide swaths of business and social life. The government reported Thursday that the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits because of the pandemic has soared to 36 million in two months.

The spike of nearly 3 million laid off workers applying for US unemployment benefits last week came despite most states having begun letting some businesses reopen under certain restrictions.



Oil prices inch higher on US stockpile drop, but bleak outlook caps gains

SEOL (TIP): Oil prices were lifted on Thursday by an unexpected drop in US crude stocks, but gains were capped by both a bleak outlook for the world's no. 1 economy as the coronavirus pandemic crushes fuel demand and concern over a potential second wave of cases.

Brent crude futures were up 6 cents, or 0.2%, at \$29.25 per barrel at 0401 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 18 cents, or 0.7%, to \$25.47 a barrel.

Prices have risen in the past two weeks as some countries relaxed coronavirus restrictions and lockdowns to allow factories and shops to open again. But new cases have emerged in South Korea and China, raising concerns over a possible second wave of infections which would weigh on economic recovery and fuel demand.

US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell warned on Wednesday of an "extended period" of weak economic growth and called for additional fiscal spending to stave off the fallout from the virus.

"It is hard to get excited about a steady rebound for crude demand when the world's largest economy has significant uncertainty about the outlook and big downside risks," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA.

A drop in US crude inventories provided some support to prices early in the trading session, but Moya said much bigger drawdowns over the next few weeks would be needed to boost prices. US crude inventories fell by 745,000 barrels to 531.5 million barrels in the week to May 8, marking the first decline since January, the Energy Information Administration said on Wednesday. Analysts in a Reuters poll had forecast a 4.1 million barrel increase.

Amid the slump in fuel use, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) said on Wednesday it expects 2020 global oil demand to shrink by 9.07 million bpd, worse than its previous contraction forecast of 6.85 million bpd. It said it also expected the second quarter to see the steepest decline in demand. ING Economics said in a note the lowering of demand forecasts made for "bearing reading".

"(Second-quarter) demand for OPEC oil is just 16.77 million bpd, well below OPEC output levels, even when full compliance of OPEC+ cuts are taken into consideration," ING added.



Cost of Coronavirus pandemic could reach almost 10% of world's GDP: Report

The cost of the coronavirus pandemic could reach as much as \$8.8 trillion, or almost 10% of global gross domestic product, depending on how long the outbreak continues and the strength of government responses, according to the Asian Development Bank.

A shorter containment period of three months coupled with strong policy measures could limit the impact to \$4.1 trillion, or 4.5% of world output, the Manila-based lender said in a report Friday. The Asia Pacific region is expected to account for about 30% of the overall decline in global output, it said.

The analysis "highlights the important role policy interventions can play to help mitigate damage to economies," ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada said in a statement.

The new cost estimates are more than twice the range of \$2 trillion to \$4.1 trillion the development bank gave April 3. There are now more than 4 million confirmed cases of coronavirus globally with deaths exceeding 300,000.

The lender suggests boosting health systems, as well as income and employment protections, to avoid an even more difficult recovery. Sustained measures from governments could soften the economic impact of the virus by as much as 40%, ADB said.



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, lunched 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

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 May 18 - May 24, 2020

ARIES: Ganesha says money will be important for you and you will look at making some important financial transactions. Matters related to legacy, joint-finance, insurance, real estate, buying / selling / shopping / investing / capital formation take on an extra dimension and importance. This is a pivotal period astrologically. There will be better health and more opportunities to job-switch, start a business, get a promotion or have a spin at games of chance.

TAURUS: Quick gains are more than likely, says Ganesha. There will be many new developments as your money worries get resolved. There is passion and deep bonding as you soar with the ecstasy of the moment. You will also indulge in strange esoteric pursuits, to flights of fancy, the supernatural, interest in spirits, witches, life-after-death, and occult phenomena. You also meet old friends and spend great moments in fond memories of wonderful times gone by.

GEMINI: There are many expenses as you love to splurge on the good life. You may look at a new home or even expansion of the office, at renovation or redevelopment. The trend of loans and funds, investment and buying / selling of the last period continues. Ganesha says it will also ensure a hectic social whirl as well as professional and business interactions that could prove very good.

CANCER: Ganesha says you manifest the charm, social skills and charisma of your sign in plenty and could feel on top of the world. You will be a human dynamo, a powerhouse of energy, ready to attain targets. There is a renewed zest for life, lots of vigour and energy, as you work exceptionally hard. Your success will be the envy of all. Children bring joy and you will spend a lot of time with them.

LEO: Ganesha says there is personal evolution and you grow in credibility, popularity and authority. This is a period of achievement and consolidation. This is a good period to achieve, that's for sure. But what you need to think about, warns Ganesha, is the manner in which you go about it. It will impact you personally and individually. But, definitely, you will catapult to new heights of excellence.

VIRGO: Ganesha says do not do anything that you don't believe in and do not look for a quick buck, however tempting the offers. You will have the necessary money to go ahead with plans, projects, assignments and commitments. Prestige, status, position, power will be the attributes which will concern you very deeply this period. The gains of this period will be long-lasting, pleasing, profound and deep-rooted.

LIBRA: Ganesha says you find the time to delve into the spiritual and meditative aspects of life. You are oozing with confidence by mid of this period. You push ahead in all areas of work and make money and also powerful professional links. You are filled with self-belief and hope for the future. As the period ends, the intensity of the phase increases.

SCORPIO: Ganesha says there is love in your life and you could be torched by it as it may not be just a fleeting romance. Love and entertainment bring welcome relief from money and professional concerns. There is a chance that you may even lose all reason and logic. Friends, sweethearts and fraternizing lead to great happiness, especially in the second half of the period.

SAGITTARIUS: This period Ganesha decides generously to give you several things you have long been craving for. There are rewards, returns, recognition and romance. This period is powerful and your sexuality and charisma are expressed easily. You look pleasing to the eye too and may win beauty contests if you enter any. You also fall prey to indulgences and the good life.

CAPRICORN: Ganesha says those in films, fashion and media do well for themselves and win rewards and awards. There is grand success and accomplishment waiting for you. Work and play will be enhanced in this period. Your life is moving the way you want it to, and this pleases you no end. This is the time for expansion in thought processes and a new focus.

AQUARIUS: Ganesha says this period you manage to do exceedingly well. However, you could find yourself falling prey to moods of angst, depression or ennui all of a sudden. It could well be caused by a desire to assess, take stock of your life, aspirations and orientation. You will seek deeper insight, greater meaning or just plain consolation, as you feel that there is a certain futility in your life.

PISCES: Ganesha says, you could be into healing, nursing, helping people. A certain restlessness caused by anxiety or even nervousness is a distinct possibility. This is a common occurrence, astrologically. You are looking at genuine, physical, mental and emotional expansion. You need wider horizons and a broader canvas for your ambitions. There are many sources of income and inspiration as you grow financially, emotionally and spiritually.

Birthday Horoscope May 18 - May 24, 2020

May 18: Ganesha says a public alliance amplifies power. If you struggle for control, others hold it over you. If you combine influence, you'll be transformed into an unbreakable united force. Either way, you'll want to bolt.

May 19: If you chose yesterday to join forces rather than struggle for dominance, today solidifies the union with joint benefits that could include funding or create long-term stability and trust.

May 20: Someone's in a roustabout mood, taking an edgy stand for independence and wasting away yesterday's happy community anticipation. If money's in the mix, watch for lunch - bill anger.

May 21: If you've got a pal in high places, you can count on support or special influence. Talks or local connections throughout the day reinforce positive connections and congenial accord.

May 22: You have an original, progressive,

positive turn of mind and swim in happy approval. Others rally round with their own jovial good news and views.

May 23: Get started early since yesterday's high communications vibrate motors the morning into activity. Take the rest of the day to chill or make notes.

May 24: An insecure moodiness sets everyone on defensive edge, but you'll find a way to enjoy your freedom amidst exciting communal ties.

From Sanskrit, Shakti translates to power or energy in common terms. This energy belongs to the domain of “Prakriti” or the female aspect of creation. She is the Mother Goddess and is worshiped in various occasions all around the Hindu customs.

How does it work?

First of all, you should know that God is an undivided consciousness. In other words, he is nothingness, if you want to look it from a perceptual perspective. In this devoid form, he is the Nirguna Brahman, that is devoid of any distinguished features or appearance. In him, the division of time and space, and other forms of ego consciousness do not exist. But for some reasons, he awakens and sets in motion with Prakriti. He enters into the universal energy, and from this amalgamation, what we know as “reality” is created. And thus, there is a Big Bang with the latent energy hidden in the cosmic egg (Hiranyagarbha), and it is pretty much in cohesion with the modern theory of Big Bang too.

Everything in the world, tangible, sensible, unstable, anything within the aspect of the sensory world, can be transformed from one state to another and is a part of Prakriti only. Law of Conservation of Energy?

Matter possesses energy at any time. Even the human body and the mind and other constituents are a manifestation of energy in one way the other of the Prakriti but at the higher form. The divine energy is way higher than the humans, in terms of the evolutionary scale. The Holy Trinity – Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwar – are indeed above the rest, and at the highest level can be the combination of distinguished energy sources. This energy is the energy of Mother Goddess acting as the Shakti of Isvara. When Brahman is awakened, Isvara arises. Brahman is the field of play for Shakti. This is how Shakti is structured and this is how Shakti originates.

The Manifestation of Things and Beings

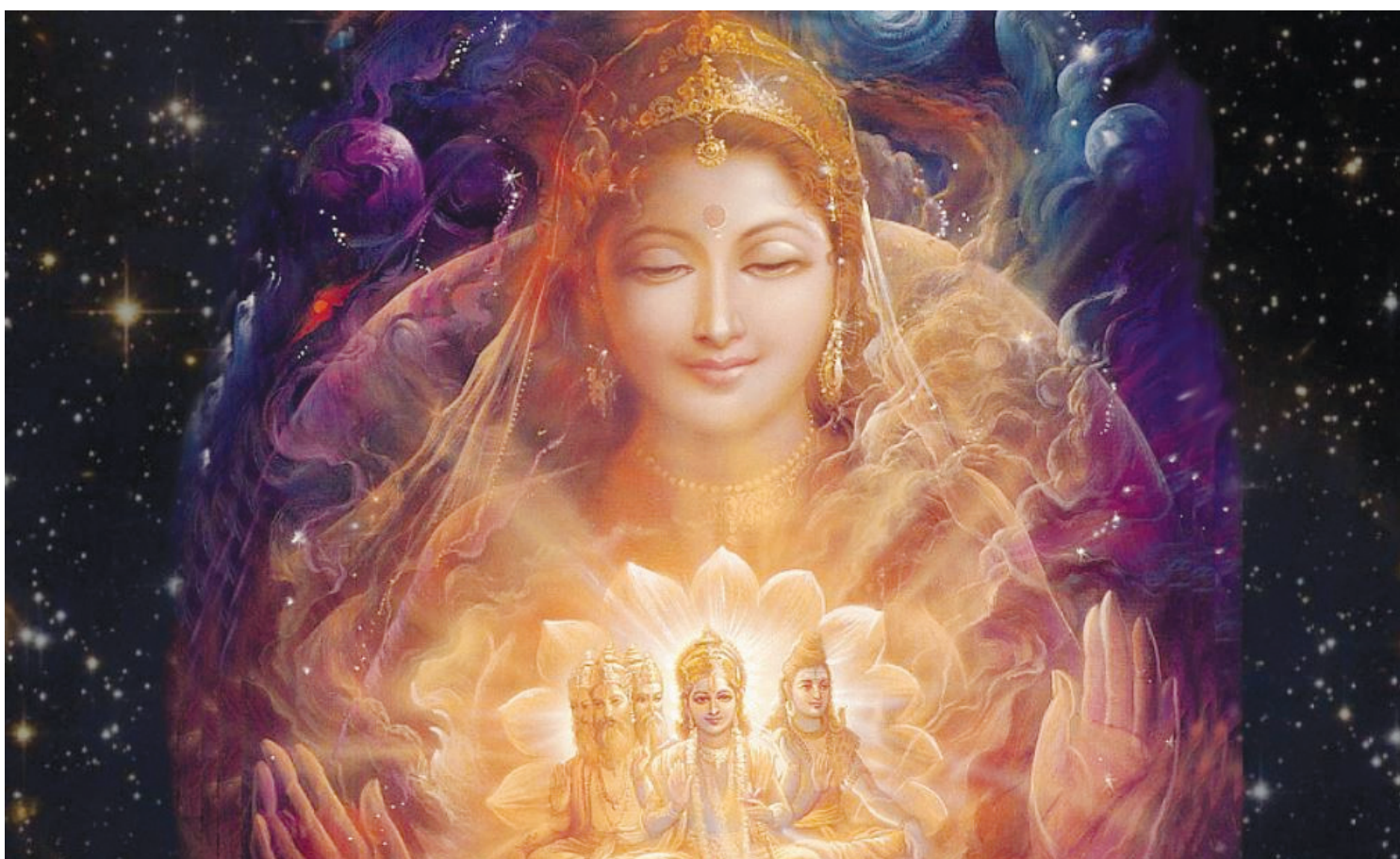
According to Hindu Dharma, when Pure Self, Purusha, combines with the matter or energy, Prakriti, then there is some sort of creation. What happens is the Pure Self-enters into the matter and awakens the various energies in the matter; thus, leading to the formation of a false self, known as ego. All of this happens over a period of time, through differentiation and combination of five Mahabhutas (the five gross elements), Panchendriyas (the five sense organs), the Karmendriyas (the five organs of action), the Tanmantras (the five subtle elements), manas (mind), ahamkara (deluded self) and buddhi (discriminating intelligence). With this, individual beings come into the world and then move towards liberation. The same happens in the most macro of a level, resulting in the creation of the world and higher divinities.

Ego is formed as part of the process, and it is an important tool in an armory. This ego is driven by three Gunas: Sattva, rajas, and tamas, which is nourished by the activity of senses and motivated by the force of desires. These are nothing but the false sense of identity, developed through the formation of mind and mind’s awareness of the body.

The Bondage and Delusion in Prakriti

A mind is only a field in space and time

THE ROLE OF SHAKTI IN CREATION



for the ego to distinguish from the rest of the creation. It acts as if it is the only real self, and separates from the rest of the creation. This is ignorance at its highest form, and it leads to the belief that the real self that the ego created exists in reality when it does not. The Real Self-exists, losing its own buddhi and higher intelligence, keeping the body, the mind and the false ego ticking and breathing.

This leads to the bondage of the self. Mind you that this doesn’t mean the soul suffers, and you should also know that the soul cannot suffer since it is pure consciousness. Nothing can touch it or punish it. But we do say it suffers because it goes through the same cycle of birth and death, stopping it from going back to the source. From our “conscious”, “self-ego” point of view, the soul suffers, but not from the “soul” point of view. Wherever it is – in heavens or in any other loka – the soul is the same: eternal, unchanging and pure bliss consciousness.

But what suffers then? It is the false self or the ego that suffers. But this suffering doesn’t stop the self from indulging in its desire-driven action, until one point, when this suffering becomes unbearable too. And this is when the ego turns into spiritualism. Otherwise, this ego would not mind to exist in the “reality” for even thousands of years if it could, considering the physical limitations.

When life ends, the ego is frustrated with itself because it leaves behind a lot of tasks unfinished, dreams unrealized and fruits of the past actions untasted. Nature also limits itself from escaping the clutches and perpetuation of the delusion is the chief design of nature.

Thus, there is a compromise between

nature and ego by which each created ego is permitted to return to the “reality” for another rebirth and continue the unfinished work. Even when a being dies, the ego does not die completely.

A small portion of it survives containing the basic tendencies, desires, and impulses, which then becomes attached to the soul as a kind of program file, and passes through the door of death, heaven or hell, as the body is reborn again. This is the cycle of Prakriti. For us, the Prakriti will always keep us in delusion by the use of elements and interplay of triple Gunas. For the highest levels, Prakriti acts in the same way by combining with Shakti of various worlds and divinities. However, she cannot delude the awakened soul. She, instead, becomes a force in their consciousness to help them in their assigned responsibilities.

In the world of Brahma, she is the

Saraswati who helps Brahma in his responsibility for creation. In the world of Vishnu, she is the Laxmi, who manages the world through wealth and resources. In the world of Shiva, she is the yogini or Siddhi, who helps in destroying the illusions.

Is Shakti female?

The simple answer is no. Shakti is neither male or female. The interpretation is only human, and should not be taken literally. One should never consider energy to be female while the self in the male. The Purusha exists in both male and female, and so does Prakriti. They are two sides of the same truth and is difficult to impose who is superior to whom. But consider this: without energy, self cannot move, and without self, the energy does not have any field for its move. It can be said, “Prakriti is undivided consciousness (Purusha).”

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“If Hindus don’t maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?”

“If India’s own children don’t cling to their faith, who shall guard it?”

“Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one.”

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contd from page 1

Narendra Modi announces 20....

Addressing the nation on television, Prime Minister Modi said the whole world was reeling from the crisis engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic, as was India. In this crisis, however, India had had an opportunity to look at systems and institutions that were in existence before the crisis hit and how they crumbled. "We have been hearing for many years that the 21st century will be India's century, and this crisis is, I believe one that carries a message, that we have to move forward not just to combat the crisis but to prevail," Mr. Modi said. "That can happen when we are self-reliant."

He gave the example of India's ramped-up capacity in producing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) kits and N-95 masks required by medical personnel and frontline health workers to illustrate his point that India could achieve this.

"When the first case hit us, we didn't produce either of these things. Now, within weeks we have the capacity to produce 2 lakh of PPE and 2 lakh of N95 masks every day," Mr. Modi said.

Clarifying that by self-reliance he did not mean insularity and suspicion of the world as in the past but embracing the world in the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family).

"Self-reliance in this sense is neither exclusionary nor isolationist, it is for helping the world, with our actions. In the past whenever we have acted it has impacted the world in a positive way - be it solving the Y2K riddle in 1999, or our campaigns against open defecation, tuberculosis and polio," Mr. Modi said.

He said that the new edifice of this self-reliant India would be based on the five pillars of the economy, infrastructure, demography, technologically driven systems and to strengthen demand and supply chains, with the supply chains being based on local sourcing.

"In the past few days we have seen how local supply chains and shops are the only things that have helped," he said.

The Prime Minister said the economic package would not be based on incremental changes, but a quantum leap in bold reforms with regard to land, labor, law and liquidity.

"In the last few days we have seen the suffering of our workers, migrant labor, street vendors and daily wagers and farmers. This package will be aimed at them. It will be aimed at the honest taxpayer, at our industry that makes its capital work," he said.

Mr. Modi signed off on a strong note to buy local, and to be vocal about it. "Local production helped us in this crisis, and when you look at several global brands, they began as local but were marketed and raised to a global level. We have to do the same with our produce. We need to be vocal about local," he said. "We must and will make India self-reliant," he said.

A day after PM Modi made the announcement, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, on May 13, announced a ₹3 lakh crore collateral free loan scheme for businesses, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as part of a ₹20-lakh-crore economic stimulus package to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

For salaried workers and taxpayers, some relief was provided in the form of an extended deadline for income tax returns for financial year 2019-20, with the due date now pushed to November 30, 2020. The rates of tax deduction at source (TDS) and tax collection at source (TCS) have been cut by 25% for the next year, while statutory provident fund (PF) payments have been reduced from 12% to 10% for both employers and

employees for the next three months.

Apart from MSMEs, other stressed business sectors which got attention were non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), power distribution companies, contractors and the real estate industry.

MSMEs will get the bulk of the funding. The ₹3 lakh crore emergency credit line will ensure that 45 lakh units will have access to working capital to resume business activity and safeguard jobs, Ms. Sitharaman said. For two lakh MSMEs which are stressed or considered non-performing assets, the Centre will facilitate provision of ₹20,000 crore as subordinate debt. A ₹50,000 crore equity infusion is also planned, through an MSME fund of funds with a corpus of ₹10,000 crore.

NBFCs, housing finance companies and microfinance institutions - many of which serve the MSME sector - will be supported through a ₹30,000 crore investment scheme fully guaranteed by the Centre, and an expanded partial credit guarantee scheme worth ₹45,000 crore, of which the first 20% of losses will be borne by the Centre.

Power distribution companies, which are facing an unprecedented cash flow crisis, will receive a ₹90,000 crore liquidity injection. Contractors will get a six-month extension from all Central agencies, and also get partial bank guarantees to ease their cash flows. Registered real estate projects will get a six-month extension, with COVID-19 to be treated as a "force majeure" event.



Nirmala Sitharaman with MoS Anurag Thakur outlines stimulus plans at a news conference on Thursday, May 14.

Photo Credit/ Shiv Kumar Pushpakar

On May 14, the Finance Minister announced another round of stimulus.

The Centre will help create affordable rental housing for the urban poor and provide relief worth ₹1,500 crore to small businesses through an interest subvention scheme, apart from extending credit for street vendors, farmers, and middle-class housing.

Apart from free food for migrant workers, these are the major highlights of the second tranche of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan stimulus package, announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday, May 14.

Noting that migrant workers and other urban poor face difficulties in finding affordable housing, the Finance Minister said a scheme to build rental housing complexes through public private partnership mode would be launched under the existing Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) scheme. Both public and private agencies will be incentivized to build rental housing on government and private land, while existing government housing will be converted into rental units.

The credit linked subsidy scheme for lower middle

class housing under PMAY will also be extended by one year to March 2021, and is likely to benefit 2.2 lakh more families, said Ms. Sitharaman, expressing the hope that this would also create jobs and stimulate demand for the steel, cement and construction industries.

Street vendors who have been hit hard by the lockdown will be given access to easy credit through a ₹5,000 crore scheme, which will offer ₹10,000 loans for initial working capital.

The scheme will be launched within a month and will benefit 50 lakh vendors, said the Finance Minister.

Small businesses who have taken loans under the MUDRA-Shishu scheme, meant for loans worth ₹50,000 or less, will receive a 2% interest subvention relief for the next year, which will cost the government ₹1,500 crore.

The Centre plans a drive to enroll 2.5 crore farmers who are not yet part of the Kisan Credit Cards scheme, along with fish workers and livestock farmers, and provide them with ₹2 lakh crore worth of concessional credit. NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) will also extend additional refinance support worth ₹30,000 crore to rural banks for crop loans, Ms. Sitharaman said.

"The only fiscal outlay in today's announcements are the ₹3,500 crore for food grains to migrants and ₹1,500 crore for the MUDRA loanes. So only ₹5,000 crore is actually coming from government coffers, while the rest are credit-based measures," said Himanshu, an economist at Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for Economic Studies and Planning.

Terming the government's approach as "stingy and half-hearted", he noted that at a time when demand is down, any moves to provide liquidity are not going to help, adding that putting cash in people's pockets would have been a better approach.

"Banks are parking money with the RBI (Reserve Bank of India), so the problem is not liquidity, but rather the appetite of people to take credit at this time," he said. "Effectively, the burden of revival has been passed on to the people most affected by the lockdown," he added.

Meanwhile, Congress spokesman said Govt's 'jumla package' fell way short of what PM Modi had promised.

A senior spokesperson of the party, Anand Sharma, said the country believed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was serious when he made the "dramatic" announcement of giving 10 per cent of the GDP as a package to revive the economy and support workers and migrant laborers, and that expectations had soared.

"The Finance Minister's announcement dashed all hopes," he said.

Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcements were nothing but a "jumla package".

Senior party leader Ahmed Patel said: "It is not an economic package. It is an empty package wrapped with speeches since the last three days."

Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari pointed out that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman articulated the second tranche of the bailout or economic package that this government had conceptualized.

"It is unfortunate that the entire press conference (of Sitharaman) was a classic display of arrogance, ignorance and insensitivity," he said addressing reporters via a video link.

"We expected that the Finance Minister would come out with what the government is doing to ferry the migrants who are walking on the roads back to their homes safely. But nothing like that happened," Tewari said.

(With inputs from agencies)

THE INDIAN PANORAMA

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 www.theindianpanorama.news
Published by Prof. Indrajit Saluja

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NAINITAL: THE LAND OF MISTY LAKES AND MOUNTAINS

The gem of Uttarakhand - Nainital is a charming hill station that sits prettily at the green foothills of the Kumaon ranges in the Himalayas. Located at an elevation of around 1938 metres, the epicentre of the town's popularity and beauty lies within the gorgeous Naini Lake, after which the town is named. Founded by the British due to its resemblance to the Cumbrian Lake district, Nainital brims with elegant colonial structures that amplify the beauty of this place. It is a perfect weekend getaway from the Indian capital of Delhi.

This quaint little town experiences a pleasant climate throughout the year, making it a tourist getaway, especially preferred by families and honeymooners. The Naini Lake, along with the other lakes in the area, has earned this town the title of 'City of Lakes'. Whether you want to go boating on the beautiful Naini Lake or any of the other lakes, relish some local delicacies, shop at the Tibetan Market and Mall Road, or take a ropeway ride to soak in the beauty of the Himalayas from Snow View Point, Nainital is sure to leave an imprint on you that will last a lifetime.

Top Places to Visit

Eco Cave Gardens

Famous for its interconnected rocky caves, hanging gardens and the musical fountain, the Eco Garden are a set of six small caves in the shape of various animals. Located in the Mallital area of Nainital, you need to crawl your way in. In the evenings, you can see the spectacle of the musical fountain with various audio video effects.

The Eco Cave Garden is set up to give tourists a glimpse of the natural habitat of the Himalayan Wildlife by constructing different caves for different animals, similar to their natural home. Lit with petroleum lamps, the most popular caves are Tiger Cave, Panther Cave, Apes Cave, Bat Cave and Flying Fox Cave. Visiting Eco Cave Garden is not recommended for old people and toddlers.

Nainital Lake

Nestled amidst the township of Nainital, Naini Lake (short for Nainital Lake) is a beautiful natural fresh body lake. The lake is in crescent or kidney shape and is one of the most famous lakes of the Kumaon region. Bounded by Naini Peak on North West, Tiffin Point on the South West and snow-capped peaks on the north, the Nainital Lake offers a breathtaking view, especially during early morning and sunset. The mesmerising lake is most famous for its wonderful scenic beauty which is a hotspot for family picnics. Boating, long evening walks and endearing interactions with ducks are some of the things that are a must do whilst visiting this glittering lake. You can also seek the blessings of Goddess Naina Devi at the Naina Devi temple which is also situated near the Naini Lake.

The Nainital Lake is a charming beauty that is surrounded by seven



different peaks namely Ayarpata, Deopata, Handi Bandi, Cheena Peak, Alma, Laria Kanta and Sher Ka Danda. The lake itself can be divided into two distinct sections, the northern part called Mallital and southern region called Tallital. Coniferous trees that cover the hillside add charm to the raw beauty of the place. You can also visit Naini Temple on the shores of the lake. A pretty lake that once a European man fell in love with, Naini Lake today serves as a major tourist spot for people from all over the country.

Naina Devi Temple

Regarded and revered as one of the fifty-one Shakti Peeths that are located all across India, the Naina Devi Temple is a holy site that is situated on the northern shore of Naini Lake, in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand, India. This temple is one of the most renowned places of Hindu worship all over the country. Dedicated to Devi Sati's eyes, devotees from all parts of India flock to this region in huge numbers all year round.

The presiding deity of the Naina Devi Temple is Maa Naina Devi or Mata Sati. According to Hindu mythology, the

temple is built on the exact spot where Goddess Sati's eyes fell on the Earth after Lord Shiva carried her charred body after taking it out from the fire of the yagna that was performed by Sati's father- Daksha. Inside the Naina Devi Temple, you will find the two eyes on the roof, depicting Goddess Naina Devi, placed in the centre; with the statues of Goddess Kali and Lord Ganesha surrounding it. It would be interesting to note that the city of Nainital got its name from the temple of Naina Devi only. As you climb the hill to reach the temple, various shops selling prasad and other essential puja items will greet you on the way. Considered to be extremely pristine and sacred by the devotees, the venerated Naina Devi Temple is a must visit on your next trip to Nainital.

Snow View Point

Snow View Point in Nainital stands at a dizzying altitude of 2270 meters above sea level and is one of the most attractive tourist spots of the area. As the name suggests, Snow View Point offers a panoramic view of the mighty Himalayas draped in a blanket of milky-white snow. One can see a picturesque view of all three important peaks- Nanda

Devi, Trishul and Nanda Kot peaks together from this point.

A huge pair of binoculars has been installed at the Snow View Point that allows you to take a closer look at the Himalayan range and its magical peaks. If you look closer, you will find a small temple housing the images of Ram, Sita, Laxman, Hanuman with Durga and Shiva. An aerial cable car connects you to the Snow View Point directly from the Mall Road of Mallital and shows you a spectacular view of the beautiful town.

Dorothy's Seat

Located in Ayarpatta Hill of Himachal Pradesh, Tiffin Top is a very famous tourist attraction in Nainital, also popularly called as Dorothy's Seat. A fantastic picnic spot in its own right, one gets a complete view of the town of Nainital and its surrounding hills in the Kumaon region from this location. The serene and peaceful environment of Tiffin Top makes it irresistible to the photographers. Those who love nature's beauty must not miss out on this vacation spot. Adventure activities such as rappelling and rock climbing are conducted at Tiffin Top as well.

Football-starved world awaits the 'most important' contest

Dortmund meet Schalke in Bundesliga on Saturday as Europe's top flight returns to action

PARIS (TIP): German football will find itself in an unaccustomed global spotlight this weekend as audiences starved of live football turn to the only major European league back in action. With the Premier League, Spain's La Liga and Serie A in Italy all still sidelined by the pandemic, the Bundesliga will take centre stage on Saturday.

Even in Brazil, media coverage has switched from domestic football stories to what TV viewers can expect to see when Borussia Dortmund meet Schalke in the biggest match of the opening day, albeit it without spectators in the stadium.

Cable channel Fox Sports, which holds exclusive rights to show the Bundesliga in Brazil, will be showing the Ruhr Derby at 9:30 am local time. Its website already features a lengthy article about the games entitled "The wait will soon be over".

Even Brazil's biggest media group, Globo, is getting in on the act with interviews with four Brazilians who play for Bundesliga clubs, including Wolfsburg midfielder William, who admitted players were "a little bit scared" about the implications for their health.

In India, foreign football leagues have found a market in India's urban youth who keenly follow the Premier League and support clubs like Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United. But a few of these fans also watch La Liga and Bundesliga. "I am desperately waiting for the Bundesliga to start this weekend. I am thirsty for live football in this lockdown," Amjad Rehan Ibrahim, a student of Delhi University, told AFP.

Indian international forward Jeje Lalpekhlua said he would also be tuning in to the coverage on Indian broadcasters Star Sports and Hotstar: "It's difficult without football for so long. I am surely going to watch it." In Japan, rightsholder Sky Perfect is going to show two Bundesliga matches this weekend free of charge. In Europe too, the matches in Germany will provide a much-needed fix of live sport. Adolfo Barbero, who commentates on Bundesliga games for the Spanish channel Movistar+, said: "I can assure you that I



haven't seen this level of interest in the Bundesliga in 20 years. Normally people support Bayern Munich, Dortmund or even Bayer Leverkusen and that's it.

"But now they are also looking forward to seeing Fortuna Dueseldorf and Paderborn. It's crazy." In Mexico, football journalists are grateful for something to cover—and the sorely-missed revenue live sport generates. "For those of us who make a living from football the fact there hasn't been any activity really affects us. A weekend without football is really difficult," said Emilio Fernando Alonso, a Mexican reporter for ESPN.

In China, where the Super League might not begin until June, German football's meticulously planned return is being closely watched. Writing in the Oriental Sports Daily, columnist Ji Yuyang said the biggest challenge for the Bundesliga was not restarting during the pandemic, but being able to outlast it because of financial pressures that clubs were facing due to the health crisis. "So for many German clubs, whether it was better to wait for failure or risk restarting, they chose the latter."



BABAR IS PAKISTAN'S ODI SKIPPER, AZHAR TO CONTINUE AS TEST CAPTAIN

KARACHI (TIP): Star batsman Babar Azam on Wednesday took over the reins of Pakistan's white-ball cricket after being appointed as the ODI skipper.

Azhar Ali will continue to lead in Tests, the Pakistan Cricket Board announced.

Babar, who was one of the world's leading batsmen across formats last year and already the T20 skipper, replaced wicket-keeper batsman Sarfaraz Ahmed as the ODI captain for the 2020-21 season. Pakistan is scheduled to play six ODIs and 20 T20Is, besides the Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup this season.

"I want to congratulate Azhar Ali and Babar Azam for getting captaincy extensions," chief selector and head coach Misbah-ul-Haq said in a PCB statement.

"This is absolutely the right decision as they also require certainty and clarity on their future roles. I am sure they will now start looking to the future and start planning so that they can build sides that can perform at the expected levels."

Pakistan also announced an 18-player men's central contract list for the 2020-21 season, which will come into effect from July 1.

Hasan Ali, Mohammad Amir and Wahab Riaz missed out, while Imam-ul-Haq, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Yasir Shah slipped one category each.

"The selectors have made the tough decisions to leave out Amir, Hasan and Wahab but considering Hasan missed most of the season due to an injury and Amir and Wahab decided to focus on white-ball cricket, this was the right move," Misbah said.

"However, Amir and Wahab are senior and experienced bowlers and they remain in contention as we believe they can still contribute to the Pakistan men's cricket team and also mentor our young battery of fast bowlers."

Naseem Shah and Iftikhar Ahmad are the two new faces in the contract list.

GAYLE LIKELY TO BE PENALISED FOR OUTBURST AGAINST SARWAN

KINGSTON (TIP): Chris Gayle is likely to be penalised for his recent outburst against Ramnaresh Sarwan, said Cricket West Indies (CWI) chief Ricky Skerritt and hoped that it doesn't end the maverick big-hitter's "outstanding career".

The 40-year-old Gayle, who was signed by St Lucia Zouks for the 2020 season of the Caribbean Premier League, called his former teammate "worse than coronavirus", accusing the Guyanese of plotting his exit from CPL outfit Jamaica Tallawahs.

Skerritt said though it is an "interpersonal battle", he doesn't expect the controversy to die down so easily.

"I'm sure there is some kind of discussion taking place at the moment between Chris and the CPL because the CPL has rules which will come into view here because Chris is signed into a franchise team," Skerritt was quoted as saying by 'Jamaica-Gleaner'.

"I hope it doesn't become a world matter in terms of the career of Mr Gayle, because it's been a very outstanding career and I really wouldn't want to see it brought to an end by this event," he added.

The opener had claimed that Sarwan was behind his ouster as the former middle-order batsman wanted to take control of the franchise.

"Sarwan, you are worse than the coronavirus right now," Gayle had said in a video uploaded on his YouTube channel.

"What transpired with the Tallawahs, you have a big part to play because you and the owner are like this (very close)."

SERENA WILLIAMS EAGER TO RETURN TO TENNIS AFTER LOCKDOWN BREAK

LOS ANGELES (TIP): US superstar Serena Williams says she's ready to play "real tennis" after the enforced rest of coronavirus quarantine.

"I really look forward to getting back on the court," the 23-time Grand Slam champion said in a chat with elder sister Venus during an Instagram live workout on Tuesday.

"It's what I do best. I absolutely love playing."

Tennis is on hiatus until at least mid-July thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the French Open postponed until autumn and Wimbledon cancelled for the first time since World War II.

Serena said she'd come to see the break as "a necessary evil."

"I felt like my body needed it, even though I didn't want it," said the 38-year-old, who last won a Grand Slam title at the 2017 Australian Open.

"And now I'm feeling better than ever. I'm feeling more relaxed, more fit. Now I can go out and play real tennis."

Elder sister Venus, a seven-time Grand Slam winner, began posting workouts on Instagram eight weeks ago and this week she invited Serena, "the greatest tennis player to ever exist — my little sister" to share a yoga-inspired stretching session.



Serena said the exercises, which took about half an hour, served as a warm-up for her, even though they were "a little intense."

"Do not injure yourself doing this," she admonished during one lunge, while advising at another point: "If you have bad knees, like me, use a pad."

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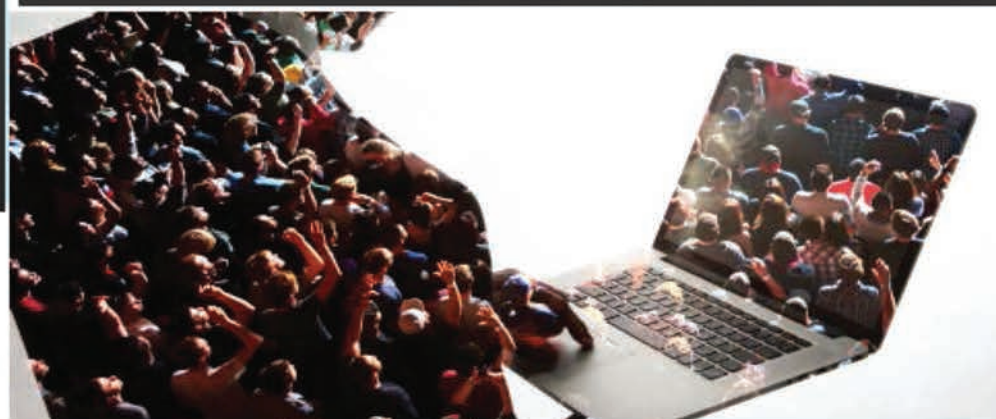
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 - Asthma
 - Diabetes
 - Cancer
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- Always contact a doctor or go to the hospital if you have severe symptoms of COVID-19 or another serious health issue.
- Do not leave your home except to get necessary medical care or essential food or supplies (if someone cannot get them for you).
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 - Avoid crowded places.
 - Stay at least 6 feet from others.
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a bandana, scarf or other face covering.
 - Wash your hands before you go out, and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer while outside.
- Household members can go out for essential work and needs but should monitor their health closely.

If you or someone in your home is sick:

- Create physical distance:
 - Do not have visitors.

- Stay at least 6 feet from others.
- Sleep head-to-toe if you share a bed with someone who is sick, or sleep on the couch.
- Keep people who are sick separate from those at risk for serious illness.
- Cover up:
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a bandana, scarf or other face covering when you are within 6 feet of others.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your inner elbow.
- Keep it clean:
 - Throw tissues into the garbage immediately after use.
 - Wash your hands often with soap for 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze.
 - Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you are unable to wash your hands.
 - Frequently clean surfaces you touch, such as doorknobs, light switches, faucets, phones, keys and remote controls.
 - Wash towels, sheets and clothes at the warmest possible setting with your usual detergent, and dry completely.
 - Do not share eating utensils with others, and wash them after every use.

WHEN CAN I LEAVE MY HOME AFTER BEING SICK?

- If you have been sick, stay home until:
 - You are fever-free for three days without Tylenol or other medication **and**
 - It has been at least seven days since your symptoms started **and**
 - Your symptoms have improved
- **Reminder:** New York is on PAUSE. This means that even if you have been sick, you should only leave your home for essential work or errands, or to exercise, while staying at least 6 feet from others.

NEED HELP?

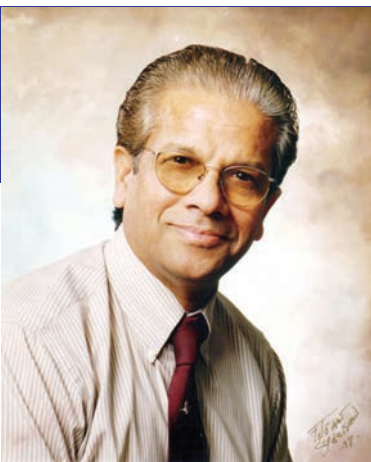
- If you are having a medical emergency, **call 911**.
- If you do not have a doctor but need one, **call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692)**. New York City provides care, regardless of immigration status, insurance status or ability to pay.
- For more information, **call 311** or **visit nyc.gov/coronavirus**.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves. 4.20

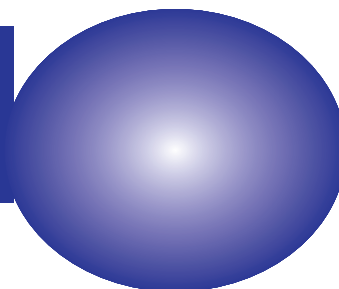


CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE

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



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