



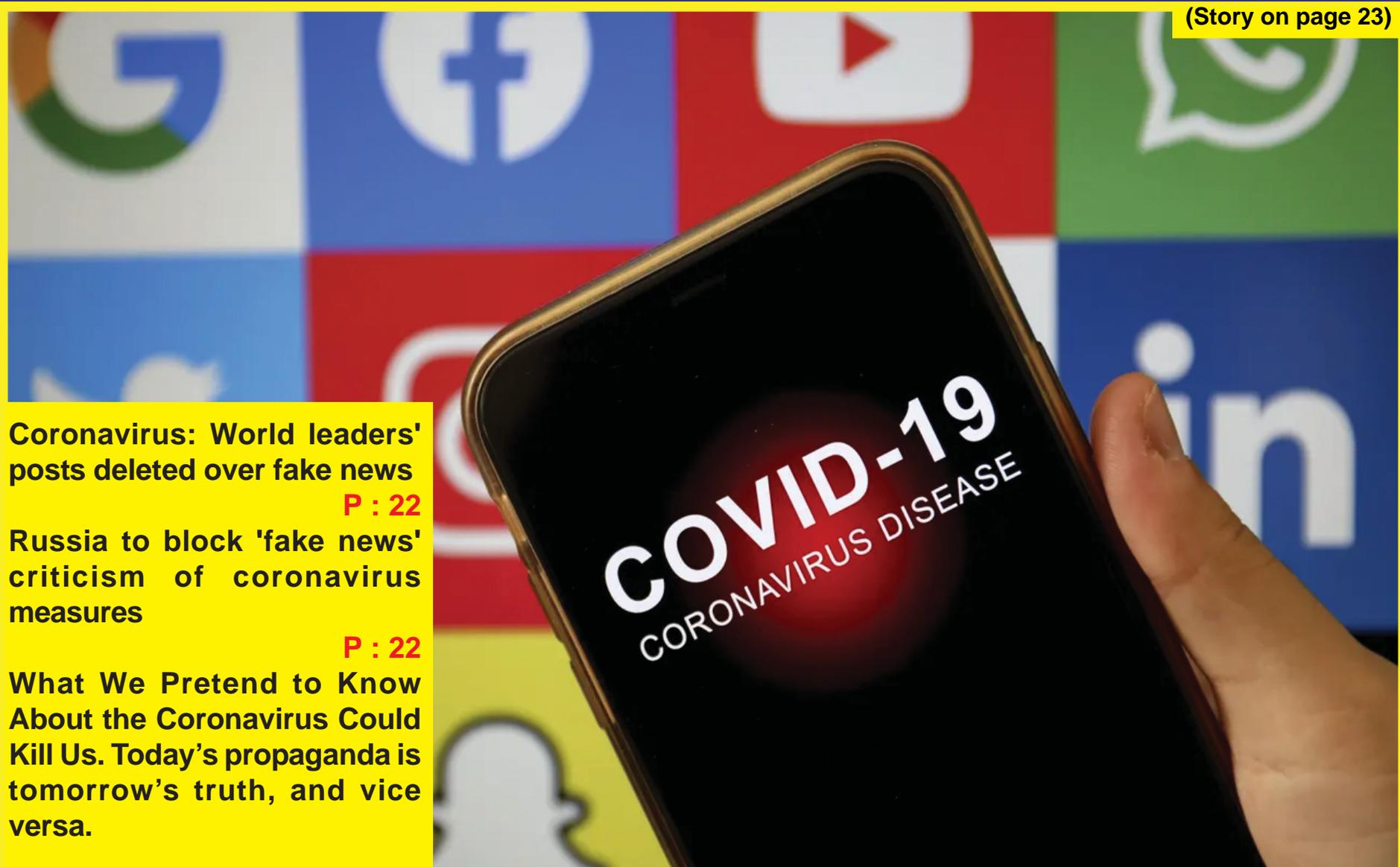
'Infodemic'

“We're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic”

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Tech giants struggle to stem 'infodemic' of false coronavirus claims

(Story on page 23)



Coronavirus: World leaders' posts deleted over fake news

P : 22

Russia to block 'fake news' criticism of coronavirus measures

P : 22

What We Pretend to Know About the Coronavirus Could Kill Us. Today's propaganda is tomorrow's truth, and vice versa.

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Coronavirus, my Trojan Horse, which sought to overcome my Walls of Troy

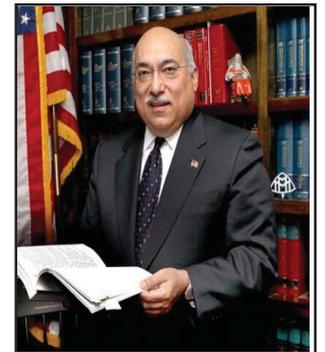
"All of us started to pay some attention by February to this beautiful image of this new virus, the coronavirus. Indeed, the image looks like an exotic bouquet of flowers prepared by an expensive florist. Proving that we have no control over anything, I got the coronavirus infection. I don't know when, from whom or from where. All I know is that on March 14th I not only had a fever, but a strange feeling in my body. By late afternoon, concerned with my temperature and my odd feeling, I called the New York State Department of Health to request it for COVID-19 test. The person on the other side was very gracious, but said they were just getting set up and that they would be back in touch with an appointment. Not having heard anything for five days, living in the City of New Rochelle, albeit 3 miles away from the area of containment ordered by Governor Andrew Cuomo, "ground zero," so to speak, I called House Foreign Affairs Chairman Eliot Engel's wonderful chief of staff, Bill Weitz and told him my concerns and needs. He helped by giving me needed advice. I then called our talented family doctor Dr. Sammy Chitayat. He asked me a battery of questions, and concluded we needed to be tested for Coronavirus and issued prescriptions for my wife, Ranju, our miracle daughter Angela and me. Our precious son Neal was not then issued such a prescription as he was staying in Manhattan,

while we were on the water in New Rochelle. Armed with our doctor's prescription for a coronavirus test for my family, off we went to Glen Island parking lot where NYS had set up its first testing site. The place was set up professionally as an organized maze. Instructed to keep all windows closed, we went thru the gauntlet until we were in a large tent. There, the testers wearing masks and clear face shields, did a nasal swab on each of us through each passenger's slightly open window - open for 5-10 seconds. Test done, we were told we would get the results. By this time, we had fevers ranging from 101 - 103, mine the highest. Later, it would be obvious, that the coronavirus Ranju & Angie got must have been the original strain, while mine was a mutated one as it was more potent. Friday, March 20th several things happened. Neal had called the night before to alert us to a possible magic bullet - use of an anti malaria drug and Zithromax - to fight Covid19. On Friday, I confirmed with Neal that I understood what he was saying thru the fog of my brain. Also, I got calls from Albany NYS DOH that we were all positive, and given instructions of when to go to the hospital. I called our doctor Sammy, updated him, and he prescribed Plaquenil & Zpak for all 3 of us. Luckily, we were able to get it that afternoon. I started taking both. Neal, in consultation with Ranju, over my objection,

convinced Ranju that neither she nor Angela take it - unless their fever got really elevated. Otherwise, they should just rely upon my 3rd medicine: Tylenol. They were right, as their fevers never went past 102, while I hit 104.3 and was on fire. Daily, I'd get checked by phone by our doctor, Sammy, who has the best bedside manners - in person, on the phone or text. I'd also get a call from Minister Hardeep Singh Puri - a call I'd not only take, but wait for, as he'd boost my strength and soul. During the 104.3 fever days, when I was on fire and was putting ice cubes in my eyeballs, head and wrists to cool my blood, I rejected Ranju's calls to go to the hospital - as I knew our home was cleaner and had fresh air from Long Island Sound. These fire days lasted 2-3 days, and I was richly aware that death was waiting outside my door for me. I calmly and honestly - how can one not be honest with God - negotiated for my life, citing Robert Frost's "walking in the woods": "I have promises to keep (to my family, always serving and caring Ranju, miracle Angie and precious son Neal), and miles to go before I sleep...". I also argued that if God wanted me to continue to serve the Greater Good in society, then, that too militated in my continuing to live. I freely admitted that I had no reason to live for myself, as I'd had a most blessed life and was content - as in Frank Sinatra's rendition of the song "My Way." With God's Grace I'm here to

enjoy and protect my family and serve the Greater Good from the "shining city on the Hill." On the 5th day of taking meds, Sammy called to say he had learned that Plaquenil had a side effect: can cause heart damage, arrhythmia, and told me to stop. I did. So, I finished Zithromax, while Tylenol was my constant companion (3 dosage a day; during the 104.3 days, I took 4 dosages a day). Finally, after sixteen days, on March 29th, Sunday I hit 98.6 and became fever free (without taking Tylenol). Since then, we've continued to remain in quarantine and self isolation; which means we sleep in separate bedrooms and have separate individual bathrooms. Even when we sit around the dining table for meals, we maintain social distance of 6-10 feet. We've continued to remain in quarantine and self isolation, to recuperate and recover. The best that has come out of this three weeks "groundhog day" quarantine is: I realize more than ever how much I love, and how dear my family is to me and that they are the core joy of my life. That dearest Hardeep was at least as powerful as all the medications I took to beat Covid19, and love him for it even more, if that's possible. Finally, the tsunami of prayers we received from dear friends - be they everyday people, members of congress, administration, local and state political leaders, judges, lawyers, ambassadors and ministers across the globe - was as

heartwarming - as putting logs in a fireplace to keep the fire bright and roaring. The warmth and light never left our home or our life. We are so grateful to each and every friend - who contributed beyond mere medicine - and credit them for our beating Coronavirus. A word about this virus. I'm a lawyer not a bio chemist, but it is obvious to me from my experience that the coronavirus strain that I got was dressed to do a very friendly "handshake, a warm hug," with my body's auto immune system, fool it as if it was a dear friend, as a Trojan Horse, get in, and then start a war against my immune system - my Walls of Troy. Had it beaten my auto immune system and I succumbed to high fever, then my organs, lungs etc was for it to feast on, and I to exit this mortal soil. Thanks to the joy of seeing Ranju and Angela daily, spending whatever waking time together, accepting dearest Hardeep's daily booster call, and the tsunami of prayers - we are alive today. President Donald Trump was right: with this lockdown we will discover our family again. I did. And I love them even more that before, and more than I knew. I wish for humanity to survive this deceptively friendly coronavirus. I expect China to tell all - the raw truth - so every nations' scientists and doctors, not just our hero, Dr. Anthony Fauci, can use "open source" data and find a vaccine ASAP. Until a vaccine



Ravi Batra

isn't available, nobody is coming out to work, play or go to school. The economy, national, regional and global we knew is dead; it's not coming back. We are going to see global supply lines become domestic. Ricardo's "Comparative Advantage" principle is dead in these pandemic days. Our ventilators have parts made all over the world. This will stop. We will make our ventilators and N95 masks in the good ole USA. Export-based economies will shudder. Globalization is the OBOR for pandemics, and that too, must be disrupted for public health reasons. Having talked to death, I feel energized to do good as never before. And I'm enjoying it. Even some strangers have stopped me to ask if I was the one at such and such place, when I did what I did. They tell me they saw it, and it touched their heart. I'm swimming in blessings. How can life be better, than to have a happy family and to try to make humanity happy and safer too... Let honor and humility, not greed and arrogance, define the brave new world after coronavirus is whipped, even as our casualties will be enormous during this near-Biblical war with Mother Nature."

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A global pandemic and globalisation

From re-nationalisation of manufacturing to more restricted flow of people, prepare for a new world



It is now evident that the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) is a systemic global event, one that will have significant consequences for people's well-being and lifestyles, national economies, and political leaderships on every continent. It is natural for people to be considering the secondary implications of the pandemic. Some of the repercussions will be unexpected, and may not be felt immediately.

One natural question is what Covid-19 will mean for globalisation. Globalisation is the accelerated flow of goods, people, capital, information, and energy across borders, often enabled by technological developments. Over the past three decades, globalising trends were assumed to be the new normal. Trade without tariffs, international travel with easy or no visas, capital flows with few impediments, cross-border pipelines and energy grids, and seamless global communication in real-time appeared to be the natural endpoints towards which the world was moving, if at different rates for different places.

But the globalisation of goods and capital had already begun to plateau or stagnate since the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC). Trade as a percentage of global GDP rose from 39% in 1991 to 61% in 2008 but has remained flat over the past decade. The figure stands at 59% in 2018. Similarly, net foreign direct investment inflows, which were never under 1% of global GDP before 1989,

occasionally crossed 4% over the past 30 years. But by 2018, it had dropped precipitously to 1.4%, its lowest level since 1996. Similarly, personal remittance flows, previously on the rise, flattened to around 0.75% of global GDP.

There are several causes for the great stagnation in the globalisation of goods and capital. It became increasingly apparent that not all countries, societies, and people were benefitting equally from globalisation, and that soon began to be reflected in national and international politics. The United States' (US) sub-prime mortgage crisis of

2007-08, and its spillover to the eurozone, exacerbated national sentiment in Europe, which had previously been a model of international integration. The assumption that China's rise would result in similar development opportunities for others proved unfounded. As one business leader cynically put it to me, "China, after climbing up the ladder, is kicking it out from under everyone else." In hindsight, the economically nationalist impulses of countries as different as the US ("America First") and India ("Make in India") were a natural consequence. A similar flattening has been

underway in the globalisation of energy. Net international energy trade, which stood at 1.5 billion tonnes of oil equivalent in 1990, swelled to 2.5 billion by 2008 but then grew only moderately to 2.8 billion by 2018. But the drivers have been different: Increases in energy efficiency, the rise of renewables, and new sources as a result of fracking. Other aspects of globalisation have not seen as much of a plateau after 2008. In fact, the globalisation of people accelerated, although in a manner that was partial and subordinate to national interests. The stock of global migrants grew steadily from 190 million in 2005 to 243 million a decade later. The number of international tourist arrivals rose from 900 million in 2009 to 1.4 billion in 2018. Similarly, on the face of it, the globalisation of information did not slow down. The percentage of Internet users around the world more than doubled from 22% in 2008 to 50% in 2017, although the national, cultural, and corporate Balkanisation of information firmly set in.

How could Covid-19 impact these trends? There will almost certainly be calls for the re-nationalisation of manufacturing, particularly for what are considered critical or essential goods. The recent bickering over personal protective equipment (PPE) and pharmaceuticals have brought this to the fore. This will further complicate trade agreements, both those in force and those under negotiation. The globalisation of people, including short-term tourist or business traffic, may face new kinds of restrictions. National governments will have to weigh the risks of contagious diseases against the benefits of ease of travel or may have to consider stronger safeguards. In turn, the globalisation of finance will be indirectly affected: Less migration and business travel coupled with incentives to invest at home will hinder transnational capital flows.

The globalisation of information may confront a paradox. On the one hand, information will be more

available, important, and shareable than ever. On the other hand, we may well see greater monitoring of individual information. The SARS epidemic of 2003 was a watershed for the use of mass surveillance and big data by governments in the interest of public health. Similar sentiments in a post-Covid-19 world may contribute further to the nationalisation of data.

On balance, the coronavirus pandemic may further slow down (or possibly even reverse) certain globalising trends that had already decelerated. The risk of supply chain disruptions will feature to a greater degree in trade calculations. Decisions about lowering barriers to international travel will face greater scrutiny. Information may continue to become more plentiful, but will be more jealously guarded. The ongoing phase of globalisation has recovered from systemic shocks before, such as 9/11, SARS, and the GFC. But the omnipresence of Covid-19 presents a challenge of a different magnitude.

2 lockdown violations that reveal the weak spot of Indian State



The law should be applied equally. And those who view the health issue on communal lines are obstructing the national cause

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution promises equality under the law and that everyone must be dealt with equally. Our Constitution provides protection to religions, classes and categories in education, reservation, the criminal law is agnostic in the matter of determining guilt. If you break the law, the penal code and other statutes treat all persons equally, though sentences awarded may vary.

The recent

controversy in Delhi regarding the Tablighi Jamaat continuing to house thousands of people in its premises or a few hundred found at Gurdwara Majnu ka Tila, despite the impending threat of Covid-19 and the closedown of religious institutions, are issues of public safety, health and consequential criminal sanctions.

Even after the curfew (under Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code) and directions under the

Disaster Management Act were in place, the continued presence of large numbers at such religious places has posed a health hazard not only to those present, but to each individual who came in touch with these potential carriers of the Sars-CoV-2 pathogen. As per reports over 21,200 people have been placed under quarantine on this account alone, and the human cost that these follies will bring are yet to be discovered in the weeks and months ahead.

What this tragedy exposes is the Indian state's unstated inability to act with speed and

effectively against registered religious communities and institutions, even where there is a blatant breach of law. A thought process, which instead of enforcing the law, effectively looks at the collateral issues and possible repercussions of action against those who profess or propagate religion is the weak spot of the Indian state in its application of law.

Whether it is the Tablighi Jamaat gathering or the Majnu Ka Tilla Gurdwara crowd, (both in Delhi), such gathering of persons for religious functions was clearly in breach of the law and FIRs have been

investigation is only a reactive, and not preventive approach to the breach of the law which will take its course if a chargesheet is eventually filed with prosecution.

What is a matter of further anguish is that while the provisions of the Disaster Management Act and of Section 144 Cr.PC were in force, its breach, punishable also under penal provisions for the spread of disease under Sections 269, 270 and 271 (Indian Penal Code) is being questioned in some quarters.

(Contd on page 22)

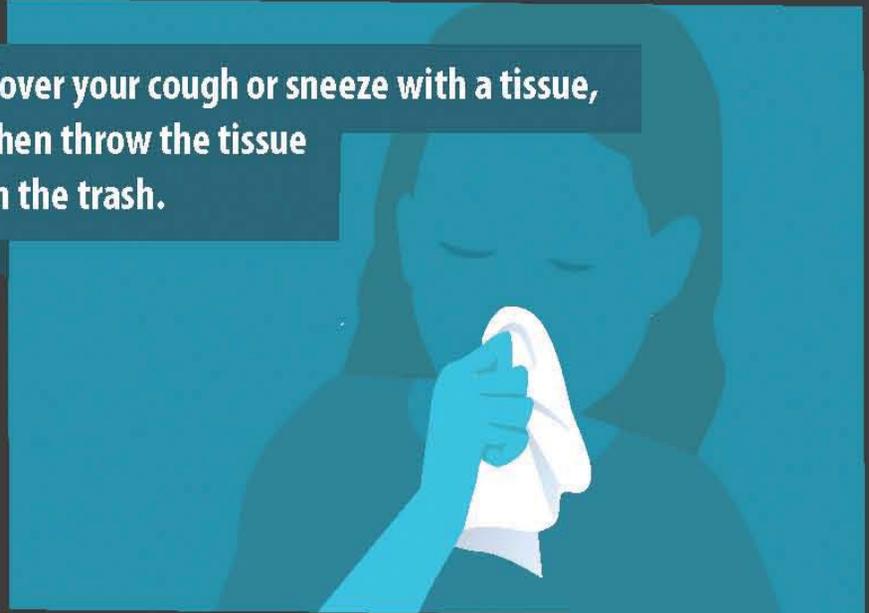
STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



cdc.gov/COVID19

How Unfortunate, Migrants Treated As Black Holes And Black Boxes Of Corona Chronicles

A trauma is a physic wound that goes beyond the physical to damage the soul. It carries shades of stigma. It is usually confined to the backstage of most disasters and is constructed as an afterthought. The trauma of the coronavirus pandemic faces a similar fate.

As India sees itself as a middle-class society, it defines itself in middle-class terms. The whole idea of the lockdown was seen as a disciplinary exercise, an attempt to redefine life as a timetable. The middle class lives by timetables. It is a mindset and a way of life. When timetables are frozen, the middle class goes into confinement and its certainties are destroyed. With the lockdown, the upper middle class discovers boredom, isolation, anxiety, leisure and, of course, work from home. Yet the middle-class mentality displayed a complete indifference to the marginal, the migrant, the nomad—and the trauma induced by the coronavirus begins with these very categories.

The trauma of the informal society accelerated at the very moment the national lockdown was announced, when the worker faced the very temporariness of its citizenship and being. The migrant discovered he was marginal, suspect and jobless. Haunted by vulnerabilities, he had to face hunger and humiliation. He was treated as a mass organism and was sprayed with chemicals at the borders. The middle-class tourist also discovered this underside of life as he rushed borders that had been shut down, confronting the police that had fused the migrant and the tourist in his mind. Suddenly, the ordinary Indian faced fear, anxiety and aloneness as he found there was no sense of homecoming. The migrant as an ambiguous creature was trapped in a liminality that bureaucracy refused to understand. The Bihari workers who had left their ration cards home found themselves confronting a hunger that left them helpless. Sadly, their anxiety and fear found no narrative, and the mental woes went backstage. Added to the indignity of treatment, they also found the absence of their place in the emerging narratives. They were the black holes and black boxes of the corona chronicles. The migrant discovered that some disasters are more equal than others. For example, cyclones and floods have rituals of response and narratives, but the coronavirus had a few explanatory myths to make life easier.

The slum, usually throbbing with life and activity, had completely emptied out. With the lockdown began the police crackdown on all the little shops and dhabas. The daily-wage worker found he had no employment. He had to wait day after day to watch the scene unfold. Joblessness, hunger and uncertainty haunt the informal economy. As a woman in a Chennai slum told me, "A few woman as domestic workers hold on to their jobs, but what about our men who hang around and wait?" Waiting is the trauma that the

rich do not understand. Waiting empties identity, breaks confidence and questions competence. Waiting is greeted in silence because it is cloaked in anonymity. The slums fester in a trauma of waiting and uncertainty, yet the media had little place for them. It celebrates 'work from home' for corporate executives.

One has to face the stark uncertainty of what is called civic life today. A lockdown creates a Hobbesian policy, a set of authoritarian territories patrolled by cops and clerks. The police handle all such challenges by reducing it to a law-and-order problem, where everyone is by definition suspect. They lathicharge people thoughtlessly, including even those returning from official responsibilities. The terrifying indifference of cops is complemented by landlords creating a web of stigma around patients, doctors and social workers. The landlord is convinced that all of them are infectious and wants to exterminate them. This places doctors and social workers in an ironic situation. The sadness is that both the trauma and the authoritarianism of the city go unreported.

To be fair, while trauma, unstated and unreported, haunts the informal economy, it is beginning to haunt the middle-class as well. Here time is a major factor because the certainty of timetables is what defines middle-class identity and stability. A housewife complains that people had little place for her fears; she told me she suffered from the guilt that she might infect someone innocently. She also complained she gets haunted by fears that are further exaggerated by the rumours and reports from the street. One of them mentioned the story of a mob attacking a man merely because he coughed obsessively. The ordinary cough, once a mark of everyday presence, now becomes sinister. She also added that old people now feel vulnerable as they have been statistically singled out. Vulnerability and susceptibility now become marks of stigma. As a 70-year-old man put it, "I felt hard as a rock, but now people treat me as a question mark." Worse, old people, especially those with senile dementia, now appear obsolescent. They feel apologetic in the presence of company, clear that time is no longer on their side.

Yet, what includes all citizens is that the coronavirus has created an ecology of death, mass death, around the Indian city. An individual death is understandable, but mass death creates fear and trembling of a different kind. It has an apocalyptic inevitability that puts a stop to ordinary life. This everydayness of mass death is measured with the banality of weather reports as newspapers announce body counts for the day. The word exponential has a magical quality of fatalism. People feel helpless and sense that the virus could claim one and all. Mass death creates a deep sense of trauma and our society has few narratives or myths to make sense of it.

A New Front for Nationalism: The Global Battle Against a Virus

Every country needs the same lifesaving tools. But a zero-sum mind-set among world leaders is jeopardizing access for all.

(By Peter S. Goodman, Katie Thomas, Sui-Lee Wee and Jeffrey Gettleman for NY Times)

As they battle a pandemic that has no regard for borders, the leaders of many of the world's largest economies are in the thrall of unabashedly nationalist principles, undermining collective efforts to tame the novel coronavirus.

The United States, an unrivaled scientific power, is led by a president who openly scoffs at international cooperation while pursuing a global trade war. India, which produces staggering amounts of drugs, is ruled by a Hindu nationalist who has ratcheted up confrontation with neighbors. China, a dominant source of protective gear and medicines, is bent on a mission to restore its former imperial glory.

Now, just as the world requires collaboration to defeat the coronavirus — scientists joining forces across borders to create vaccines, and manufacturers coordinating to deliver critical supplies — national interests are winning out. This time, the contest is over far more than which countries will make iPads or even advanced jets. This is a battle for supremacy over products that may determine who lives and who dies.

At least 69 countries have banned or restricted the export of protective equipment, medical devices or medicines, according to the Global Trade Alert project at the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland. The World Health Organization is warning that

protectionism could limit the global availability of vaccines.

With every country on the planet in need of the same lifesaving tools at once, national rivalries are jeopardizing access for all.

"The parties with the deepest pockets will secure these vaccines and medicines, and essentially, much of the developing world will be entirely out of the picture," said Simon J. Evenett, an expert on international trade who started the University of St. Gallen project. "We will have rationing by price. It will be brutal."

Some point to the tragedy playing out around the world as an argument for greater self sufficiency, so that hospitals are less reliant on China and India for medicines and protective gear. China alone makes the vast majority of the core chemicals used to make raw materials for a range of generic medicines used to treat people now hospitalized with Covid-19, said Rosemary Gibson, a health care expert at the Hastings Center, an independent research institution in New York. These include antibiotics, blood pressure treatments and sedatives. "Everyone is competing for a supply located in a single country," Ms. Gibson said.

But if the laudable goal of diversification inspires every nation to look inward and dismantle global production, that will leave the world even more vulnerable, said Chad P. Bown, an international trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington. (Contd on page 24)



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Team India must fight Covid-19 together

The PM should set up a task force with experts, CMs, and Opposition leaders to fight Covid-19

Rajdeep Sardesai
In the build-up to the 2019 general elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party's most potent campaign plank was to pose a direct question: "Modi versus who?" Now the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) may have redefined notions of "national" leadership: It is the chief ministers (CMs) who are at the frontline of the battle. In a sense, the crisis is a reminder that real power and responsibility does not vest in Delhi, but in the state capitals. A Modi-centric political universe is being finally forced to acknowledge the existence of a diverse range of regional leaders.

Take, for example, the Maharashtra CM, Uddhav Thackeray. Lacking his father's charisma or administrative experience, he was widely perceived as an "accidental" CM when

he took over in November. Less than six months later, Thackeray has become the face of Maharashtra's fight against the coronavirus. His daily TV addresses stand out for their assured presence in an age where panic seems only a remote control button away. That he has spoken out firmly against any attempt to communalise the spread of the virus is a reflection of the distance the Shiv Sena has travelled under his leadership. If the coronavirus-positive numbers in Maharashtra are higher, it is a consequence of more rigorous testing, and Mumbai being a social contact hub for travellers.

Take also the Kerala CM, Pinarayi Vijayan. Until now, Vijayan's image was of a local political strongman with limited mass connect. The coronavirus crisis has

shown him to be a hands-on politician with a firm grasp over the administration. Be it an economic package for the poor, setting up emergency testing facilities in hotspot districts, or even imposing a controlled lockdown, Kerala, with its valued tradition of public health investment, has been a step ahead of the national agenda.

Indeed, across the political divide, different states have risen to the challenge. In Punjab, for example, Captain Amarinder Singh has ensured that the state's large migrant labour population is given enough financial support to stay back ahead of the harvest season. In Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath was one of the first to assure a guaranteed income to daily-wage labourers. In Odisha, Naveen Patnaik



has set up three fully-equipped Covid-19 hospitals. In Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel has ensured extra rations for all, while in Rajasthan, the Ashok Gehlot government moved swiftly to contain the outbreak in Bhilwara. In Delhi, the Arvind Kejriwal government has initiated mass-scale random testing. Assam's Sarbananda Sonowal government has been quick to scale up its medical preparedness,

while in West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee's "Sufalbangla" scheme has ensured vegetable prices are kept in check. This special focus on CMs to deliver underscores the urgent need to re-orient Centre-state relations in the coronavirus-hit age. The Delhi-knows-best mindset has long plagued the political order, creating a centralised system of decision-making. In the Modi years, major decisions such as demonetisation were taken, with minimal consultation and maximum disruption, a command-and-control approach that allows for no consensus-building. A war-like situation like the current one demands a fundamental change: A need for constant interaction with stakeholders in a spirit of genuine partnership, where the focus shifts from nurturing a personality cult to incentivising a collective effort. **(Contd on page 22)**

Covid-19: India has done well till now, but lifting the lockdown is not advisable

It is critical to sustain the benefits of the lockdown and the inherent immunity that the population enjoys



The Chinese government alerted the World Health Organization (WHO) of several cases of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) on December 31, 2019, and reported the first death on January 11. India discovered its first case a month later (January 30) and had its first death two months later (March 11). It is clear that Covid-19 has largely been driven by human-to-human transmission, forcing public health officials to announce social distancing as an effective way to drive down the virus's reproductive numbers (known as R0, and pronounced as R naught), meaning the average number of new infections generated by each

infected person.

For the epidemic to begin to end, the reproduction rate has to drop below one. Based on a mathematical model, a multi-author paper published in the March 16 issue of Science cautioned that undocumented infections are responsible for nearly 80% of the total documented cases in China, and that this single factor could facilitate rapid dissemination of the coronavirus. Those with undocumented infections often experience mild to no symptoms and can go unrecognised by the health system, thereby increasing the risk of the virus' spread.

During the first half of January,

before China imposed a complete lockdown in the affected province, the R0 of the virus had risen to 2.38, indicating a high capacity for sustained transmission. China was quick to announce a complete lockdown on January 23. Subsequently, the R0 plummeted below one, suggesting containment of the epidemic with only a marginal increase, if any, in new infections, and new deaths for weeks on end. This is the basis of a lockdown.

What is not clear, however, is the length of the period for these measures to remain in force to keep the infection R0 below one for a reasonable period, and to prevent a possible rebound after the control measures are relaxed. Do regional and population-specific factors play a role in this? India imposed a similar lockdown on March 22, exactly two months after Wuhan, first as a people's curfew on an experimental basis, followed quickly by a nationwide lockdown from March 25. Two questions are being asked now: First, did India succeed in containing the disease as effectively as China? Second, India has a prevalence of tuberculosis,

and persistent BCG vaccination has helped boost robust innate (pre-existing) as well as adaptive immunity in the Indian population. So will this broad-based immunity help India weather Covid-19?

An analysis of data, till April 8, reveals interesting trends. With over 120,000 tests done, the rate of positive cases in India with densely-populated regions is 4.5-5.0%, as compared to much higher figures in hotspot European nations and the United States. India is yet to start testing clusters with high rates of Covid-19. However, based on the expanded testing standards, the low positivity rate is encouraging. What is even more remarkable is the almost near lack of severe and critical cases and limited mortality.

But then India is not China or Europe where most infections and deaths are concentrated in ageing populations. The ministry of health and family welfare has put forward a set of interesting figures. Consistent with global patterns, 73% of Covid-19 patients in India are male and

around 40% are in the 20-40 years age group. But only about 17% of the patients are senior citizens (60-80 years), though there is a higher proportion of deaths among them. These are the documented figures and perhaps community surveillance through rapid antibody tests will throw further light on as-yet-undocumented figures and defy the trends observed so far. How does a host immune system recognise the virus as an enemy and proceed to eliminate it? Once the lymphocytes recognise the virus as foreign, the foot soldiers in this fight (cytokines) are mobilised. They set off a cascade of signals to killer T-cells to marshal an effective response. Usually, the stronger this immune response, the quicker the chances of thwarting an infection. This is why younger people remain less vulnerable to the coronavirus. Once the enemy is defeated, the immune system returns to normal and generates "Memory T-cells" that are ready to attack more quickly, should the same infection re-enter the body.

India needs a common minimum relief plan. Here is a road map

Protecting workers in the unorganised sector, farmers, the middle class, and MSMEs, is key to securing India's future



The coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), and the challenges that it has presented, have made it clear that any comprehensive and effective response must be based on the three pillars of prevention, testing and economic fortification. While the first two can be contained through uniform international practices, the third requires a solution that addresses India's unique and diverse economic terrain. It is for this reason that the Congress has been pushing the Centre to come out with a roadmap that reassures the most vulnerable that their concerns are paramount.

In this piece, we provide the government with a ready catalogue for those at risk. These

are the key stakeholders in the development, publication and execution of, what we call, a "Common Minimum Relief Programme".

Those at the bottom must be at the top in the order of priority. This includes daily-wage earners, labourers and migrant workers. The last few weeks have attested to the fact that they are the most affected in terms of economic and social insecurity. We have witnessed the scale of economic upheaval and displacement, with millions of migrants trudging across states to get home. There is no longer any alternative but to prepare a targeted social security programme for these individuals and their families.

These concerns were brought out by eight major national trade unions in a letter to the central government last week. Their suggestions provide an insight into the real cost paid by these workers who face evictions, food shortages and lack of access to basic facilities. The government must use these recommendations as a template to identify key areas to tackle. This must be done on a war-footing, given that the overwhelming majority of our population is currently employed and engaged in the unorganised sector. This brings us to India's "annadatas" (food providers). Sixty per cent of India is engaged and occupied, in some form or the other, with the agricultural sector. For farmers, this year has had a greater-than-normal set of challenges. First, they were impeded by unseasonal rains and inclement weather. Now, given the absence of agricultural labour and transportation facilities, how can they harvest the standing crop? Make no mistake, a shortage of wheat and other rabi crops will have adverse consequences for every citizen. Clarity, information and guarantees must be

provided by the Centre on procurement and prices.

The next in this sequence, and right in the eye of the storm, is the middle class. The longer economic activity remains dormant, the greater the erosion of the middle class. Employers in the private sector have begun slashing salaries, and will continue to do so. Large numbers of mid-level and blue-collar jobs have been lost. Every single index suggests that this trend will intensify in the near future. The government's response has been to offer delayed payment of EMIs, disingenuously enough, without interest subvention. This, in turn, leads to a greater cost in the long-run. At the same time, it has lowered the rate of interest on all small savings schemes. This has directly hit senior citizens, pensioners, farmers and women especially hard. This is a catch-22 situation in which the cost of the obligations go up in the long-term, while the value of the savings goes down sharply. How is this in the interest of the middle class, which is already seeing its savings ravaged by the high cost of petrol, diesel and gas? These

are the same people who gave up their subsidies when Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked, without a second thought or hesitation. It is now time for the government to reciprocate and secure their interest. Not so long ago, medium and small-scale enterprises (MSMEs) were recognised by the government as the "backbone of the economy". This is a fact, given that MSMEs contribute close to 30% (~61 lakh crore) to the GDP. The same government is yet to provide a plan that bails out these 42.5 million entities that employ several times as many citizens. Unless there is a plan for protection, followed by a strategy for revival and growth, this sector will be irreparably diminished. This will devastate the spirit of entrepreneurs, who, in the words of the prime minister, are the growth ambassadors of the economy. Governments and the people that elect them are judged by their response to crises and catastrophes. Indians have demonstrated unshakeable resolve, patience, optimism and fortitude in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. For the Modi government, the litmus test starts now.

Covid-19, and Washington's handling of it, will determine the poll outcome

At present, the bulk of American victims is concentrated in the North-east and Pacific coastal states and is disproportionately from ethnic minorities. These are all Democratic strongholds. Trump's real test will be when the virus begins to take a toll in the south and midwest regions and moves beyond large cities—striking at his still-loyal voter base.

With Bernie Sanders announcing the end of his bid to be the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, the United States (US) President Donald Trump now knows he will be facing Democratic Party candidate Joe Biden in the upcoming presidential election. The coronavirus disease (Covid-19) may be the third candidate in the race.

The US election is not until November and seven months is an eternity in politics. Mr Trump was never assured of re-election. The US electoral college system means victory or defeat will be determined by less than 10 states. The crisis initially increased the President's approval ratings, a rally-



around-the-flag effect experienced by most world leaders when the crisis hit their respective countries. But such surges are sustainable

only if they are backed by credible governance and strong leadership. Both of these are lacking in Mr Trump's slow and haphazard response to

Covid-19.

The viral variable in all of this is that the infections are still spreading. At present, the bulk of American victims is

concentrated in the North-east and Pacific coastal states and is disproportionately from ethnic minorities. These are all Democratic

strongholds. Mr Trump's real test will be when the virus begins to take a toll in the south, and midwest regions and moves beyond large cities — striking at his still-loyal voter base. This would explain the Trump administration's obsession with quick and scientifically questionable fixes, as well as his attacks on China and the World Health Organization. It would also explain the Republican Party's use of voter suppression tactics such as questioning the validity of mail ballots. Infections in the US are not expected to peak for a few more weeks. The medical and economic aftermath may be the real determiner of who will be the next US president.



In times of a lockdown, why the courts matter

They keep an eye on State forces; review arbitrariness in State action; and are the last refuge of the voiceless

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on March 24 to put India under a nationwide lockdown was followed by a notification that contained a list of essential services that would be allowed to operate. One notable exception from this list was legal services.

Nonetheless, the events of the first two weeks under lockdown have made it clear that the courts are an indispensable public service, a vital check and balance on State excesses, especially in a country where executive action is characterised by opacity and a lack of access.

Regardless of the omission, the Supreme Court (SC) and various high courts (with the enthusiastic assistance and cooperation of their respective bars) have improvised and adapted admirably. Video conferences and e-filings have demonstrated that there is an easier (and more efficient) way to do things. Despite being hamstrung by omission from the March 24 list, the courts are attempting to ensure that matters of "extreme urgency" are heard and addressed. They have demonstrated that the value of the courts, especially in times of crisis, cannot be a

matter of debate. There are three illustrations from the period under lockdown that support this proposition.

First, the watchmen argument. That, without the fear of review or supervision, certain members of the police force may fall prey to dictatorial tendencies. Images of policemen zealously using lathis or visiting medieval humiliations on violators who have stepped out for legitimate purposes of buying medicines or groceries, have been disturbing. Some states, like Punjab, sought to take immediate corrective action when these incidents were brought to the notice of the state's leadership, but others offered no apology or explanation. Violence has no place in a civilised society and the boundaries of State power or the interpretation of how elastic the ambit of section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure is, cannot be left to the varying consciences of the political leadership in different states.

Second, the courts are the last refuge for the voiceless. In the first week of the lockdown, the SC on its motion passed a far-sighted order, directing the release of undertrials in custody for

non-heinous offences. Another example is that of the Delhi High Court directing (two days after the announcement) the free treatment of an 18-month-old child with a rare illness. Ensuring justice when constitutional and statutory rights are especially vulnerable is a principal function of the judiciary. Third, the review of arbitrariness in State action. In a country as large as India, policy conception often collides with implementation. There is a real temptation on the part of certain officials to choose convenience over constitutional safeguards. This concern is also what preoccupies a large part of the fields of constitutional and administrative law. The lockdown was a measure supported by all political parties, but as issues of migrant and unorganised sector workers grew in size, different states responded with measures that ranged from humane — waiving transport costs and rents and providing food — to the draconian — spraying migrant workers and excessive use of force. The SC passed detailed directions last week (before declining to intervene further in another later petition) to address these concerns, but imagine if it

hadn't. The power to make policy does not exempt the government from ensuring that it satisfies the rigours of Article 14 of the Constitution; that State action must demonstrate the application of mind that it must be free from malice, and above all, must not be arbitrary.

There is an oft-cited caution attributed to Benjamin Franklin, "Those who sacrifice individual liberty to secure a temporary safety, deserve neither." In a country of over a billion individuals battling an unprecedented epidemic, this might be a tad harsh, but it contains a relevant warning that will have a bearing on the nation that emerges from this crisis. It is not just the State that will be judged by its handling of the crisis, but also the courts whose legacy will be defined by how, even in a crisis, they

ensured that the Constitution reigned supreme.

On a separate, but related note, it must also be observed that the rapid Covid-19 response measures introduced by the SC and followed by other high courts have demonstrated that technology renders several of the old formalities obsolete. The SC has also come up with detailed guidelines for this to continue when normal hearings resume. Filing remotely through an online portal addresses excessive paper usage, while helping reduce overcrowding. It is also faster. The proceedings using video conferencing demonstrate the efficiency with which an argument can be concluded. True, this lacks the majesty, the pageantry and the thrill that comes with the prestige of arguing in historic courtrooms.



Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW: If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

- **Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.



Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific “sick room” and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
 - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
 - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.



Call ahead before visiting your doctor

- **Call ahead:** If you have a medical appointment, call your doctor’s office or emergency department, and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider’s office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.



Cover your coughs and sneezes

- **Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.



Reflections on surveillance in the middle of a pandemic

While it may seem like it's a worthy trade to sacrifice individual privacy to contain the pandemic, it is decisions taken in the eye of the storm that will ripple outwards, creating situations and precedents for future emergencies



We live in an age marked by one overarching phenomenon — surveillance. Operationalised through electronics and analysed through algorithms, everyday surveillance of the minutiae of our lives has become the defining feature of our times. The data exhaust from our mundane, everyday lives is collected, collated and analysed; and returned to us in many forms such as recommendations on what else we'd like to buy on shopping apps, the manner in which our social media feeds are ordered, and as activists have found out, even government officials showing up at their doorsteps. Much ink has been spilled in describing the many ways in which such surveillance can be harmful, especially in the hands of private corporations and authoritarian regimes.

But, as with everything, the phenomenon of surveillance itself is value neutral. It is neither inherently good or inherently bad. Its harm and benefits are made operational by the manner in which it is deployed. While

there are excellent reasons to stop collecting and collating so much data about users; there are some spaces in which surveillance is a vital tool. One of those areas is public health. Surveillance as a tool to study and safeguard from epidemics is a method as old as modern medicine itself. Since the time of Hippocrates, observation and analysis of data has been the cornerstone of modern medicine. Throughout history, attempts at early detection and effective surveillance of diseases have helped not just curb the spread of communicable diseases, but also understand diseases themselves and develop treatment paradigms. Polio is a case in point. The complete eradication of polio in India was a resounding victory for effective surveillance and reporting.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the public health arm of the United Nations (UN) lists integrated disease surveillance as part of its important functions. In such

surveillance, countries are required to report any cases of notifiable infectious diseases to WHO. The data thus collected helps analyse the spread and severity of the disease, and to quickly and efficiently put in place protocols to handle the crisis and contain the spread in the case of an epidemic. Disease surveillance, in order to be effective, must be continuous and systematic. This automatically means the continuous collection of data from everywhere.

In comparison to the kind and amount of data that data brokers have about our everyday habits, the amount of viable health data that is available for analysis even in countries such as the United States and Britain is abysmal. Even within the much-vaunted National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom, datasets are sparse and often disconnected. This makes it harder for doctors to trace patients' histories across regions or find common threads among diseases and treatment protocols within the system.

In case of the coronavirus pandemic, finding those who carry the virus and preventing others from coming into contact with them is so far the only effective means of preventing the spread. But here, it is the process of finding that has set off surveillance and privacy alarm bells. Whether it's European, Israeli and Chinese governments accessing mobile phone location data to ensure

that people are obeying lockdown orders or the Karnataka government publishing online the names and contact details of people who have returned from abroad, breaches of individual privacy in these pandemic times are becoming commonplace. In cases where diseases carry stigma — such as HIV — knowledge of disease history and a breach in anonymity of cases can be particularly harmful. We have already seen this in India with coronavirus cases, where individuals and families face social ostracisation. Several Indians have even taken to ostracising doctors who are working at the frontlines of the fight against the coronavirus.

It is in this context that privacy must be taken into consideration by government agencies while continuing to battle the pandemic. As several commentators have pointed out, measures taken during extreme situations have a sneaky way of becoming business-as-usual, even after the emergency is over. And as we know from several generations of caste discrimination, social ostracisation sticks very easily. One other clear upshot of privacy violations is that a fear of ostracism and mistrust of authorities could prevent people from coming forward to report their symptoms and travel history. With no protocols for data security and

preventing personal details of individuals from becoming public; case surveillance in the Internet age can lead to dangerous consequences. The phone numbers and addresses of specific people, for instance, can easily be culled from a public database of people returning home from abroad. Linking this one database to many others can also reveal many other details of individuals, to anyone who comes looking. In such a situation, while it may seem like it's a worthy trade to sacrifice individual privacy to contain the pandemic, it is decisions taken in the eye of the storm that will ripple outwards, creating situations and precedents for future emergencies. A pandemic in the age of digital surveillance and big data compounds public vulnerabilities; adding to the looming health and economic crises. This is, therefore, the best time to ask questions about the efficacy of the surveillance in each administrative block — from individual villages and residential complexes to nation-states and WHO itself. What is the information that it is important to know, who absolutely requires to know, how much of it requires dissemination, how can it be effectively collated and reported, and how may we protect the individuals who are already dealing with fear and uncertainty are the important questions to ask.

Is isolation the new normal?

As we embrace this new normal, we often forget that there are large swathes of society who cannot disengage from the rest of us.

Solitary isolation or confinement used to be a punishment given to prisoners. But now it has become something that we accept as part of our daily lives, thanks to the lockdown.

These are conditions we are imposing on ourselves to survive an enemy that we cannot see, but which can attack us if anyone from the larger social group has been infected and gets close to us. We have to assume everyone is a possible host to the virus.

And then we have to arm ourselves with masks and gloves — and if possible keep others at a distance of at least six feet. This further reinforces the hostility that urban dwellers already feel as their familiar world of close proximity and interactive behaviour comes crashing down. The individual no longer works with a group for social good, and sees himself or herself alone, at war with the world. As supply chains are broken, as the world face a shortage of medicines,

hospital beds, food, jobs — we are back to the survival of the fittest, foregoing the niceties of civilised behaviour. We have now come to stage three of the psychological impact of the lockdown — from shock, to acceptance, to mistrust. And there will be a need to convince some people once again that the government will take care of their concerns.

We have already seen some of this aggression break out as individuals feel that they have to hit

out at authority to survive. People are attacking doctors, beating up police officers — turning on anyone who they think might destroy their already shrinking universe. They are not "idiots" as some TV channels call them, but genuinely disturbed and increasingly insecure.

There are also other issues of social isolation that governments will have to sort out. While many of us are fortunate enough to be able to lock ourselves in our homes and get by,



there are many who are unable to do so — so one has to think carefully what social isolation means to them. For instance, the elderly, the children, the physically and mentally-ill, the disabled, the poor, the street dwellers, the rural economy, the daily-wagers. As we embrace this new normal, we often forget that there are large

swathes of society who cannot disengage from the rest of us. This is a social order that was built on social dependency, not on the premise that all men and women are equal islands. What, in these circumstances, happens to the poorest of the poor — to paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi.

(Contd on page 22)

Race & Ethnicity



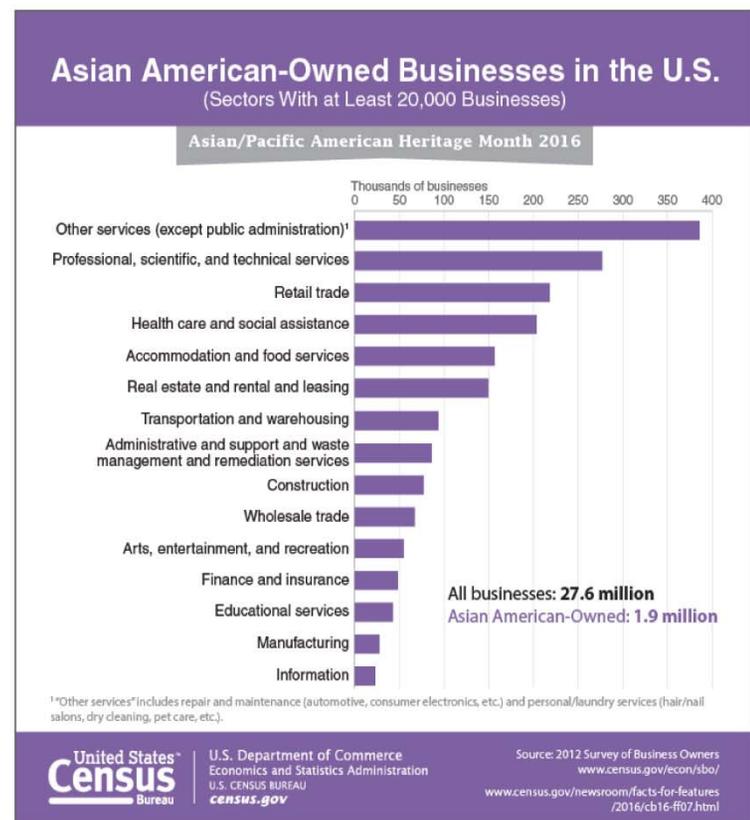
The U.S. Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity to be two separate and distinct concepts.

What is race?

The Census Bureau defines race as a person's self-identification with one or more social groups. An individual can report as White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or some other race. Survey respondents may report multiple races.

What is ethnicity?

Ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not. For this reason, ethnicity is broken out in two categories, Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics may report as any race.



Can the information be used to enforce immigration laws on me or my family?

No. The Census Bureau adheres to strict confidentiality laws that prohibit sharing of respondent information. We do not share respondent answers with immigration, law enforcement, tax collection agencies or any other organization.

What region of origin does Census consider for each race category?

White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Europe	Africa	North America	Far East	Hawaii
Middle East		South America	Southeast Asia	Guam
North Africa		Central America	Indian	Samoa
				Pacific Islands

India has enough Hydroxychloroquine says govt and specifies who can use it

Government has warned people against indiscriminate use of Hydroxychloroquine due to fear of coronavirus.

(News Agencies) Government has warned against self-medication using anti-malarial drug Hydroxychloroquine which has been used in some countries including the USA for treatment of Covid-19 cases in special instances and added that it can prove harmful for cardiac patients.

The warning was given out during the daily joint press briefing by the officials of health and home ministry on Wednesday. The health ministry official stated that the anti-malarial drug was meant for use only by medical

practitioners exposed to the infection and by the contacts of positive patients. It added that the drug was to be administered only on medical advice.

There have been reports that people were indulging in panic buying of Hydroxychloroquine in the belief that it could act as a vaccine to safeguard against the infection. The government warned against its indiscriminate use.

"Hydroxychloroquine must be used as per particular norms. Hydroxychloroquine is only for contacts (of positive patients) and for doctors who are dealing with positive

patients, the protocol related to this disease must be followed," said Luv Agarwal, joint secretary, health ministry.

He added that the drug, if used without expert medical advice, could end up harming people with heart condition.

"This disease can also be harmful to patients suffering from cardiac irregularities and cardiac diseases. Every medicine has some side effects, therefore, only those who fall in a particular category should be given this medicine," he added.

The health ministry official also assured that the Centre

had enough stock of the medicine and there was no need to worry. India is the biggest manufacturer of the medicine and it recently sent its supplies to friendly countries like the United States and Brazil after lifting the restrictions on its export.

We have sufficient quantity of the medicine, we have more than what is required today and there is a plan in place to ensure its availability in the future even if the requirement rise," Agarwal added.

Hydroxychloroquine is used to prevent or treat malaria among other diseases and the

US drug department has cleared its "sympathetic" use for the treatment of coronavirus cases after it was reported to have given positive results in reducing the severity of the disease. The medicine also shot into the limelight after US President Donald Trump was heard saying he could consider retaliating against New Delhi if Washington's request for supply of the medicine went unheeded. India later supplied the medicine to US and Brazil after lifting the hold order on Tuesday, a move that was met with appreciation by leaders of both countries.

Covid-19: Uttarakhand books 3 more Tablighi Jamaat members for 'attempt to murder'

On Sunday, Uttarakhand police had asked all those who had attended Tablighi Jamaat functions to come forward and get themselves tested.



(News Agencies) Three more Jamaatis were booked for 'attempt to murder' in two different cases after they failed to present themselves before the authorities for a health check-up and quarantine, a top Uttarakhand police officer said Thursday.

Two of them were booked in a single case and one in another. Two others were booked earlier on Tuesday. "Haridwar police booked the two Jamaatis for attempt to murder in two separate cases in the district after finding them hiding post 24 hour ultimatum given by police to

all jamaatis in the state on Sunday evening to present themselves before administration for medical examination and quarantine," said Ashok Kumar, director general (law & order) Uttarakhand police. After the 24-hour ultimatum ended on Monday evening Uttarakhand police on Tuesday started booking Jamaatis who were still hiding, for 'attempt to murder. Uttarakhand so far has reported 35 Covid-19 cases. Out of the 35 cases, 26 had attended Jamaat functions in Delhi and elsewhere. The two arrested

in Haridwar had come in contact with them.

Following the significant number of positive cases among Jamaat members, the administration has also put restrictions on public movement in certain areas of the state where Jamaatis have tested positive.

On Tuesday police had booked two jamaatis for attempt to murder in two separate cases in Roorkee and Haridwar. In a video message on Sunday evening, Uttarakhand's director general of police

(DGP), Anil Kumar Raturi had asked the Jamaatis to come out by Monday evening and present themselves before administration for required medical examination and quarantine for checking the spread of Covid-19. He had warned them that they would

be booked for attempt to murder or murder if they don't come forward for tests. Uttarakhand police have so far identified 708 members of the Jamaat including 383 hailing from the state who had gone to other states to attend congregations and 325 from

other states who had come to Uttarakhand to attend congregations after March 1. Meanwhile, Uttarakhand police registered 69 new cases and arrested 257 people for alleged violation of the lockdown, said Ashok Kumar.

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BEWARE OF SCAMS AND FRAUD SCHEMES

The Office of Inspector General recognizes that we are facing unprecedented times and is alerting the public about potential fraud schemes related to economic stimulus programs offered by the U.S. Small Business Administration in response to the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19). The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the largest financial assistance bill to date, includes provisions to help small businesses. Fraudsters have already begun targeting small business owners during these economically difficult times. Be on the lookout for grant fraud, loan fraud, and phishing.



Grants

- SBA **does not** initiate contact on either 7a or Disaster loans or grants. If you are proactively contacted by someone claiming to be from the SBA, suspect fraud.



Loans

- If you are contacted by someone promising to get approval of an SBA loan, but requires any payment up front or offers a high interest bridge loan in the interim, suspect fraud.
- SBA limits the fees a broker can charge a borrower to 3% for loans \$50,000 or less and 2% for loans \$50,000 to \$1,000,000 with an additional ¼% on amounts over \$1,000,000. Any attempt to charge more than these fees is inappropriate.
- If you have a question about getting a SBA disaster loan, call 800-659-2955 or send an email to disastercustomerservice@sba.gov.
- If you have questions about other SBA lending products, call SBA's Answer Desk at 800-827-5722 or send an email to answerdesk@sba.gov.



Phishing

- Look out for phishing attacks/scams utilizing the SBA logo. These may be attempts to obtain your personally identifiable information (PII), to obtain personal banking access, or to install ransomware/malware on your computer.
- If you are in the process of applying for an SBA loan and receive email correspondence asking for PII, ensure that the referenced application number is consistent with the actual application number.
- Any email communication from SBA will come from accounts ending with sba.gov.
- The presence of an SBA logo on a webpage **does not** guaranty the information is accurate or endorsed by SBA. Please cross-reference any information you receive with information available at www.sba.gov.

Report any suspected fraud to OIG's Hotline at 800-767-0385 or online at, <https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/oversight-advocacy/office-inspector-general/office-inspector-general-hotline>.





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Punjab thief coughs in court, judge sends him to doc; tests Covid-19 +ve

The station house officer (SHO) of the local Focal Point police station was among those quarantined after the vehicle thief, Saurav Sehgal, 25, was caught and produced in a court on April 5.



(News Agencies) coronavirus disease after the vehicle thief, Saurav Sehgal, 25, was caught and produced in a court on April 5. He was put in jail for a day at the Jeevan Nagar police post.

Seventeen policemen were placed under quarantine in Ludhiana on Thursday, two days after a thief they arrested tested positive for coronavirus disease (Covid-19). The station house officer (SHO) of the local Focal Point police station was among those quarantined

Two local residents who had helped the police in arresting Sehgal and 11 of the thief's family members were also quarantined in the city's Ganesh Nagar locality.

On April 6, the duty magistrate found Sehgal had a fever and cough and asked the police to put both the accused through a medical examination before sending them to judicial custody.

The duty magistrate and court staff have now been asked to go into self-isolation as a preventive measure.

The police are searching for Sehgal's accomplice,

Navjot Singh, 25, of Jhabewal village, who was also involved in snatchings, and escaped from the civil hospital when they were taken for the medical examination. Assistant sub inspector Gurmeet Singh said Sehgal was unwell but Navjot looked fit. "The thief was sent to the isolation ward but the moment I opened Navjot's handcuffs, he pushed me and fled," the ASI said. A case was registered against him under Section 224 of the Indian Penal Code. Ten police personnel, including three ASIs, two head constables, two constables and two home

guards of Jeevan Nagar police post, had come in contact with Sehgal on April 5 and 6. The thieves were brought to the Focal Point police station for clicking a picture to be released with the press note. It was here that they came in contact with inspector Mohammad Jamil and a head constable. The accused were taken to court and the civil hospital by three police personnel, including two ASIs and a home guard. Two constables, including a policewoman, came in contact with the accused while recording their fingerprints.

At Delhi's Covid-19 review, no answers to 2 crucial questions on Tablighi Jamaat

Lt Governor Anil Bajjal reviewed the medical preparedness, enforcement of lockdown, perimeter control measures and social distancing at his meeting



(News Agencies) to which there were no clear answers," a senior government official told Hindustan Times after the meeting. One, if the authorities had been able to trace the last of the Tablighi Jamaat worker in Delhi who attended the congregation. "And two, have we been able to pinpoint all the clusters linked to the Jamaat".

A second government official said there were no clear answers to these questions in a city where two-third of all Covid-19 cases have been traced back to the Jamaat. By last evening, the city had 669 Covid-19 positive cases. Of these, 426 cases had been linked to the Jamaat. There were 93 fresh cases last evening. All of them had been evacuated from the Markaz and located in quarantine facilities in north Delhi.

This remains an area of concern, the second official said, pointing that the story of the family of three in south Delhi's Defence Colony who tested positive reinforced this worry.

It turns out that the private security guard of the locality had attended the congregation in Nizamuddin in March. He did not volunteer the information when the authorities appealed to people who had been to the Markaz to come forward. He was eventually located after the three tested positive to the Sars-Cov-2 pathogen

and health officials started contact tracing.

The police registered a case against the guard and sent him to a quarantine facility. "But there could be others, many others," the second official mentioned above said. The police already have been trying to trace people who may have attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation using their mobile phones. But it is a painfully slow exercise. The use of mobile phones to track people who violated orders to be in self-isolation has led the police to identify 23 violators so far. They have been charged under the penal code and sent to a state-run quarantine facility, the Raj Nivas statement said.

In his presentation, the Delhi health secretary outlined the city administration's medical preparedness considering possible scenarios. "The Health Department is implementing a containment strategy for all possible high risk zones.... ASHAs and ANMs (Auxiliary nurse midwife) have been trained, retired govt/private medical professionals are being engaged to augment human resources," the statement said

How to prepare for new life after coronavirus lockdown ends

(News Agencies) The world has survived all pandemics of the past. We are alive and more populous than ever is proof to that. Humans have vanquished past pandemics with much lower degree of medical advancements.

Medical science today is at its pinnacle and it gives confidence that Covid-19 pandemic caused by novel coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2 will be over. And, much before that national lockdown in India will end though it is unlikely to be lifted on April 14.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has hinted at an extension of coronavirus lockdown. Many affected states too have asked the Centre to prolong lockdown. Odisha, one of the least-affected states, has already extended the lockdown till April 30. It is anticipated that on April 11 or 12, PM Modi is likely to make a similar announcement for the country.

The coronavirus lockdown may be lifted after one extension nationwide. But it is likely to happen not in one-go lest a sea of humanity hits the road at

once. A graded approach is suggested.

Kerala, the only state with past experience of containing a similar viral outbreak in the times of Nipah recently, is ready with a report by a special task force constituted to frame an exit strategy to end coronavirus lockdown. Kerala's exit strategy calls for tight surveillance and nominal relaxation to begin with. The special task force recommends that only one person per household should be allowed to go outside and that too for a limited period, say three or four hours. Further relaxations can happen depending on the progress of coronavirus containment. But relaxation can only be offered if new cases stop in the area. The Kerala task force recommends shutting down of air conditioners in all work places, and personal and public vehicles. There have been some studies by epidemiologists finding that novel coronavirus tends to survive longer and is more virile in closed spaces having air conditioners running.

How sickening that China will now exploit the fallout of coronavirus after giving it to the world



By ALEX BRUMMER: There is scant comfort for Britain and other Western democracies in seeing China - the source of the deadly Covid-19 virus - emerging so rapidly and strongly from the crisis. The Chinese economy is already up and running again even as the US, the UK and other nations are battling to hold back the tide of illness, death and economic destruction plunging them into a recession 'worse than the global financial crisis', according to the International Monetary Fund.

What is becoming clear is that by ramping up production and driving recovery, China could be the big winner from the global downturn - and that is an alarming prospect. The ability of its leader, Xi Jinping, to

invoke the ruthless powers of the state to combat coronavirus and to make sure dissenting voices were silenced gave the Chinese a huge advantage.

This week, Beijing proudly announced it had no new coronavirus deaths. Furthermore, any new cases are the result of Chinese citizens infected abroad returning home. So China is flaunting its triumph over coronavirus - but be in no doubt it is also set to exploit the paralysis that has enveloped Western economies to its own ends, in terms of finance, and greater global power. Yet this is the nation that failed to alert the world at the earliest opportunity to this new strain thought to have evolved in its unsanitary live animal markets; allowed the virus to incubate and spread for vital weeks before conceding it was a major

public health issue; and which has by common consent been less than honest about infection and death rates.

Nor can we ignore growing international concern that in the race to return to business as usual, many experts fear the lockdown in Wuhan, where Covid-19 appeared, has been lifted too early. Yesterday, tens of thousands of people left the city, igniting fears of a second wave of infections spread throughout China - and beyond. China's actions have provoked a belligerent response from the UK's political Right about the 'reckoning' to come - and, yes, the international community must unite on this when the time is right. But it will be a challenge - for which we only have ourselves to blame. The broader, more depressing

truth is that the acquiescence of the West to China's drive for manufacturing, economic and diplomatic domination leaves us handicapped.

Yes, Donald Trump's 'America First' rhetoric has been actively deployed by applying \$115 billion of tariffs on Chinese goods entering the US - certainly more effective than his posturing yesterday about cutting funds to the World Health Organisation over its China bias. But the damage was done long before that.

In 2001, the World Trade Organisation chose to treat China as a developing country, opening doors to low-cost Chinese manufactured goods without seeking reciprocal tariff arrangements. The result is that the laptop on which I am writing carries the Californian Hewlett Packard

brand, but when purchased online was shipped to me at home from a Chinese factory.

Similarly, my office chair, branded Japanese calculator, and stapler are all from China. Marks & Spencer used to boast that most of its clothing was made in the UK. Faced with cheaper competition, it too turned to China in the Noughties and lost its unique selling point and quality. In this way China has punched its way to within a hair's breadth of the US as the world's largest economy, and is responsible for 16 per cent of the world's output. It is the biggest exporter of goods, with a 12.8 per cent market share, against 8.5 per cent for the US and 8 per cent for Germany.

One of Britain's defining characteristics in the post-Thatcher era has been its openness to foreign

investment and trade - and the red carpet was rolled out for China. Ex-chancellor George Osborne hailed it as a triumph when he persuaded China to buy almost 9 per cent of the UK's largest water utility, Thames Water, in 2012.

When China launched its own Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the UK was the first Western democracy to become a shareholder, despite US disdain.

The Cameron-Osborne government also welcomed Chinese financing and investment in the £22 billion-plus nuclear power station at Hinkley Point in Somerset. Ministers somehow overcame initial reservations from the security services over potential snooping and sensitive technology transfer opportunities.



Should Modi govt take over private hospitals to fight coronavirus pandemic like Spain?

Spain did it to fight novel coronavirus pandemic. Andhra Pradesh has taken over 58 private hospitals.

Should Modi government take over private hospitals to fight coronavirus pandemic like Spain?

(News Agencies) The Novel coronavirus pandemic might have started in India among those holding passports but it is now reaching those clutching on to their ration cards.

The fight against the novel coronavirus pandemic is largely in the hands of government hospitals, which in India are not particularly known for robust infrastructure except for in the biggest

cities. Government hospitals are plagued by a shortage of doctors, nurses and other support health professionals. And so, resources are spread thin in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, which is the biggest human crisis since World War II.

On the other hand, private hospitals are better managed but less accountable to the people of the country. There have

been reports that many Covid-19 patients being turned away from private hospitals leaving them clueless about where to go next. Some of them have died. Mumbai, in particular, has seen more such instances than other places, possibly because it has the highest coronavirus death toll among all cities.

There have been calls for a unified command for more effective coordination

in the fight against the coronavirus outbreak in India. For example, one 67-year-old person, who died at KEM Hospital on April 2, was denied admission at more than a couple private hospitals - the reason could have been anything including lack of beds. That patient might have been directed by a nodal official there to a hospital that could have admitted the patient. Spain has been completely

coronised. More than 14,500 have died due to coronavirus infections even though it is a country with comparatively better medicare infrastructure for the size of its population.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) data, Spain has three hospital beds and 4.1 physicians for every 1,000 persons. India, in contrast, has 0.7 hospital beds and 0.8 physicians for every 1,000

persons. Still Spain's healthcare system was pushed to the breaking point due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. It prompted the Spanish government to unveil sweeping reforms that led to nationalisation of all private hospitals. The country took over private healthcare providers and requisition materials such as Covid-19 test kits and protective gears including face masks.

'You can't relax'

Vigilance urged as New York sees signs of coronavirus progress

Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said on CBS "This Morning."

A University of Washington model often cited by public health experts projects that COVID-19 will claim 60,415 American lives by Aug. 4, assuming current social distancing measures stay in place, with the peak coming on Easter Sunday.

Cuomo likened the crisis to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, which killed almost 3,000 people, most of them at Manhattan's World Trade Center, calling the current emergency a "silent explosion that just ripples through society with the same randomness, the same evil."

Stay-at-home orders closing non-essential workplaces in 42 states have strangled the once-humming U.S. economy and idled millions

of workers - a consequence borne out by 16.8 million Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits during the past three weeks, as of Thursday. "In its first month alone, the coronavirus crisis is poised to exceed any comparison to the Great Recession," said Daniel Zhao, senior economist at recruitment firm Glassdoor, referring to the downturn triggered by the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

Small businesses and workers, particularly in the service industries, have been hardest hit. Outside Grand Rapids, Michigan, Jocelyn Ockerse, 22, recently lost her job as a hairdresser while her husband, a driving instructor, also is out of work.

Neither has been approved for unemployment benefits. "We are struggling mentally and financially, but if further restrictions slow this thing

down and help save lives, then I'm all for it," Ockerse told Reuters through Twitter messages.

The virus has turned the work of those still employed, such as 35-year-old driver Excelso Sabulao, into hazardous occupations, where infection risks loom with every food pick-up and delivery. "I'm just putting my faith in God that, you know, somehow, while doing this, I'm gonna be spared from getting infected by this," said Sabulao, who uses his own car to deliver for Amazon in Dublin, California. "I can't afford it."

In the latest unprecedented effort to support the economy, the U.S. Federal Reserve on Thursday announced a \$2.3 trillion package to keep local governments and small- and mid-sized businesses afloat. Fed chairman Jerome Powell warned against re-opening the economy too early.

Officials serving on President Donald Trump's economic team were more bullish.

Asked on CNBC whether he believed the economy could be restarted as early as next

month, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Thursday, "I do." As soon as Trump "feels comfortable with the medical issues," he said.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow told Fox Business the economy should be able to reopen "on a rolling basis" over the next month or two.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, like many of her peers in other states, was moving in the other direction, ordering stay-at-home directives extended through at least April 30.

Citing data that social distancing was working, California Governor Gavin Newsom said daily admissions to intensive care units in his state had dropped for the first time in recent weeks, by nearly 2%, on Thursday. Calls for heightened vigilance, countering talk from the Trump administration of reopening the economy next month, came as new evidence emerged that stay-at-home restrictions were working to flatten the arc of

infections in New York state, the U.S. epicenter of the pandemic.

The number of newly hospitalized patients in New York dropped for a second day, to 200. Governor Andrew Cuomo said it was a sign that social distancing was succeeding, even though the number of coronavirus-related deaths in the state rose by 799 on Wednesday, a record high for a third day.

"You can't relax. The flattening of the curve last night happened because of what we did yesterday," Cuomo said, referring to the slope of data when plotted on a graph.

The apparent progress in efforts to slow the spread of the highly contagious virus were also reflected in fresh computer models scaling back the projected nationwide death toll to 60,000, down from earlier forecasts of at least 100,000. New York state has now recorded more than 7,000 deaths from COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the virus.

Perhaps nowhere was the grim calculus of the pandemic more evident than on Hart Island, a potter's field at the western end of Long Island Sound, where contract laborers have been burying two dozen bodies of COVID-19 victims a day in pine caskets lowered into freshly dug trenches.

New York state alone has accounted for nearly half the total loss of life in recent days across the United States, which leads the world in total number of known infections at more than 460,000.

In a stark reminder of the singular peril posed for prisons and other institutions where large numbers of people are confined in close quarters, Chicago's largest jail reported that about 450 of its inmates and staff have tested positive for COVID-19. The surge of cases at the Cook County Jail marked the latest in a series of coronavirus flare-ups in lockups across the country and one of the largest known clusters of infections in a single U.S. location.

The world is coming together to fight coronavirus. It can do the same for the climate crisis

While the coronavirus pandemic and climate change are inherently different issues, they share two important characteristics: both are global crises that threaten the lives of millions of people.

Yet only one crisis has inspired widespread, drastic action from countries across the globe.

As Covid-19, the disease caused by the virus, spreads, governments, businesses and individuals around the world have undertaken unprecedented measures akin to wartime efforts. Countries have been put into lockdown, schools closed, events canceled, factories shuttered, millions told to work from home and emergency funds released. No economic cost has been too big to stem the spread of the disease. Coronavirus is proving that it is possible to make dramatic changes and economic sacrifices to save lives.

For decades, scientists have been demanding that climate crisis be taken this seriously. But despite numerous international agreements, governments have been slow to take action to reduce carbon emissions.

"It actually hurts because it shows that at the national, or international level, if we need to take action we

can. So why haven't we for climate? And not with words, with real actions," said Donna Green, associate professor at University of New South Wales's Climate Change Research Centre.

Heat-trapping emissions from human activity keep rising, air pollution continues to choke cities, and the world is on track to warm by 3°C above pre-industrial levels. So why haven't governments done more to protect their citizens from the impact of climate change? The climate crisis is also a global health emergency.

Air pollution kills 7 million people every year, according to the World Health Organization. A recent study found toxic air shortens lives worldwide by nearly three years on average. And the life of every child born today will be profoundly affected by climate change, according to another report.

The novel coronavirus, discovered in China in mid-December, has so far killed more than 24,000 people, and infected more than 550,000 in 176 countries, according to the Johns Hopkins University, which is tracking cases reported by the WHO and additional sources.

The impact of the virus has been sudden and dramatic.

The toll of climate change is slow and steady -- but no less deadly.

Part of the difference in the response to the two crises is that, for many people, the virus is more of an immediate, tangible threat. The virus is infecting people now and is the undisputed source of their illness.

"You can put a virus particle down a microscope and draw a picture of it, it looks scary. You can explain how in medical science, you can deal with that particular virus, develop a vaccine and take steps to respond," said Green.

Climate crisis is not a virus. The illnesses it causes and dangers it poses come through a third party - pollution, a flood, a drought -- giving climate crisis deniers an opportunity to argue they were caused by other factors.

And for many people not on the front lines, climate crisis feels like a future problem.

"In terms of their lives, and this being an existential crisis, and a threat, I don't think that comes off as immediately as something like a pandemic," said Miro Korenha, co-founder of Our Daily Planet, a Washington DC-based environmental news platform. "They hear climate change is something that might be off in the future, maybe it won't hit their community." Countries that enacted early detection measures

for the coronavirus, quickly allocated medical resources and issued social distancing measures, have fared better than countries that were slower to respond.

South Korea, for example, has one of the worst outbreaks outside of China but it moved fast to conduct widespread testing, and in recent weeks its caseloads have stabilized.

There are concerns that other countries, including the United States and United Kingdom, have been slow to act. A recent study by UK epidemiologists predicts that attempts to slow -- rather than actively halt, or suppress -- the novel coronavirus could overwhelm the number of intensive care hospital beds available and lead to about 250,000 deaths in the UK and more than one million in the US.

That lesson of preparedness applies to the climate crisis.

Countries need to act quickly to mitigate against future worst-case climate scenarios, rather than waiting for the disaster to peak before acting.

They can do this by reducing emissions, developing green technology and implementing effective climate policies.

We know what must be done -- both to stop the spread of

coronavirus and to fight climate change -- but many countries that produce the most heat-trapping gases are waiting until it is too late. Just as in some places, people have been slow to adopt the social distancing doctors are advising to fight the spread of the virus, not enough countries, especially those that produce the most heat-trapping gases, are taking significant action to slash emissions. One of the unintended consequences of the drastic measures enforced by China during the coronavirus outbreak was a sharp drop in emissions.

China's air pollutant levels fell by about 20-30% in February as a result of the restrictions on industry and traffic, according to the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service. Italy, which has the largest outbreak outside of China and has enacted widespread shutdowns, has also seen a big decline in air pollution, specifically nitrogen dioxide emissions, according to the European Space Agency.

Travel bans have grounded flights and removed the ability to travel -- a big contributor to heat-trapping emissions. And working from home experiments are showing that not everyone needs to travel to the office.

India steps up medical diplomacy, flies plane loads of medicines to friends



India has begun sending consignments of life-saving drugs as gifts to neighbouring countries to help them fight the coronavirus pandemic, South Block officials said on Thursday. Officials said the government was sending drugs to Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Seychelles, Mauritius and some African countries. One of the early consignments, an Air India plane with 10 tonnes of

medicine, was sent to Sri Lanka on Tuesday. While neighbouring countries are being gifted consignments of paracetamol and hydroxychloroquine, the government has also cleared export of Covid-19 drugs to countries such as US, Spain, Brazil, Bahrain, Germany and the UK in line with the commercial contracts signed with Indian pharmaceutical companies. "Instructions to this effect have been issued by the commerce ministry," said a senior official. It was pointed that the exports from special economic zones were allowed after steps were taken to secure supplies that India might need if the worst-case Covid-19 scenario plays out. It was after this assessment that India eased restrictions on export of hydroxychloroquine to the US and other countries that prompted US President Donald Trump to tweet his 'thank you' note to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the people of India. India is also keeping a special watch on drug requirements of Gulf countries. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is in touch with his counterparts in the Gulf. "Besides, India is constantly in touch with the Indo-Pacific countries and those countries like US, France, UK, Spain and Italy who have been hit by the pandemic very severely," said the official. Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla will also speak to his Russian counterpart today to discuss the overall pandemic situation as well as offer to supply any life saving drugs to the strategic partner. India is buying medical equipment from Beijing through private suppliers as China is the only country that has surplus supplies.

World heading to biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression, warns IMF

The IMF said global growth was going to turn negative in 2020 with 170 out of the 180 member countries likely to register a slide in per capita income. It also said that massive fiscal stimulus from governments will be required to get the economies going. "The global coronavirus pandemic is causing an economic crisis unlike any in the past century and will require a massive response to help in the recovery," IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday.

"In fact, we anticipate the worst

economic fallout since the Great Depression," she added. IMF official said the international body only expects a "partial recovery" next year, and which needed to be aided with government-funded "lifelines" for businesses and households if the hope of a recovery were to be entertained. She added that the worst of coronavirus pandemic was not over adding more uncertainty to the projection of an economic future. IMF warning comes amid indications that India's GDP growth for the current fiscal will

likely slow down to 4.8 per cent according to a UN report which also warned of significant adverse global economic impact of the pandemic that has sickened over 1.5 million worldwide. The report also added that the economic fallout could increase global poverty by as much as a half a billion.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also made a similar prediction on Thursday saying the global economy was heading into recession in 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic wrecks havoc on

global production, supply chains, trade and tourism. Indian government has announced a fiscal package worth 1 1.75 lakh crore to mitigate against the all-round economic losses caused by the pandemic and another similar package is expected to be announced soon. The government also sanctioned an additional Rs 15,000 crores for as India's Covid-19 emergency response and health system preparedness package, said the health ministry. The IMF is

set to release its World Economic Outlook for this year and next on Tuesday. It is expected to be grim.

"The bleak outlook applies to advanced and developing economies alike. This crisis knows no boundaries. Everybody hurts," Georgieva said.

Georgieva said that about \$100 billion of investments had been withdrawn from the emerging markets, which was three times more than the investments that had fled during the global financial crisis of 2008.

The mystery behind India's stance on HCQ

Currently, HCQ is allowed to be used in India as a prophylactic for frontline health workers in the fight against Covid-19 and household contacts of laboratory confirmed cases.

Ill-informed criticism of government's decisions should always be avoided, particularly so in these difficult times. However, an examination of the HCQ's decision's timing can neither be speculative nor its politicisation.

Government documents are revealing in respect of HCQ decisions.

On March 25, the Director-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) prohibited the export of HCQ through a formal notification. However, despite the prohibition, under the notification, Indian pharmaceutical companies were permitted to fulfil their existing export HCQ contracts.

Exports could also be made on

"humanitarian grounds, on case to case basis, on the recommendation of the Ministry of External Affairs".

On April 4, the DGFT issued another notification on HCQ exports in which it withdrew the exceptions made to the prohibition on export of HCQ in its March 25 notification. Clarifying the effect of this step, the April 4 notification stated, "The export of Hydroxychloroquine and formulations made from Hydroxychloroquine, therefore, shall remain prohibited, without any exception".

On April 4, US President Donald Trump called Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On the same day, at a press briefing, after the call, Trump said "I called Prime Minister Modi of India this morning. They make large amounts of hydroxychloroquine... And I said they — had a hold... And I said

I'd appreciate it if they would release the amounts that we had ordered. And they are giving it serious consideration".

The External Affairs Ministry statement of the Modi-Trump telephone conversation did not mention Trump's request. It did, though, note, "Stressing the special relationship between the two countries, the Prime Minister reiterated India's solidarity with the USA in overcoming this global crisis together. The two leaders agreed to deploy the full strength of the India-US partnership to resolutely and effectively combat Covid-19". At a press briefing on April 6, Jonathan Karl, the White House correspondent of ABC News asked Trump "Are you worried about retaliation to your ban of medical goods like Indian Prime Minister Modi's decision to not export hydroxychloroquine to the United States and other

country (sic)?" The question was asked in the context of Trump's decision of April 3 to disallow US companies from exporting personal protective equipment required by health care workers attending to Covid-19 afflicted patients. Canada was particularly enraged with the decision.

In a rambling response, Trump made several points some of which require interpretation — that he did not like India's decision to ban HCQ exports to the US; that he had not heard that Modi had personally taken the decision for the US; that he knew Modi had stopped it for other countries; that he had a good talk with Modi (comment: but he got wrong the day of the talk by mentioning Sunday, though the conversation happened on Saturday); that he would be surprised if Modi did not accept his request, for India has for many years taken

advantage of the US on trade. At the conclusion of his remarks, he said there may be retaliation.

This is obviously an indication that other countries may retaliate to his medical goods export ban.

On April 6, the Indian government decided to set aside its April 4 HCQ decision, and to revert to some aspects of the March 25 notification. The real issue is the basis on which government changed its mind. Did the concerned authorities not look at the HCQ situation fully before taking the April 4 decision? If they did, then why did the government take a different view on April 6? The external affairs ministry needs to clarify to prevent speculation that India came under Trump's pressure when he has banned export of essential medical goods himself.

Russia to block 'fake news' criticism of coronavirus measures

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's Prosecutor General's Office said it would start blocking from Friday access to "fake news" social media posts criticising quarantine measures taken by the city of Moscow to curb the new coronavirus. Moscow officials have unveiled a tracking app and also plan to roll out a QR-code system to show codes to police monitoring compliance with the lockdown in Russia, where there have been 94 deaths and nearly 12,000 cases. The prosecutor's office said that one video in which a man accused authorities of trying to set up a "digital concentration camp" falsely stated that a coup d'etat was underway. Another post falsely described a system of special passes allowing holders to move around the city freely, it said.

"The prosecutor general's office continues to take measures to restrict access to information resources where fake news about the situation with the new coronavirus are published," it said, adding that communications watchdog Roskomnadzor had been asked to remove the video. Russia last year passed legislation with tough new fines for people spreading misinformation or insulting the state, bringing criticism from some of increased censorship by President Vladimir Putin's government.

Coronavirus: World leaders' posts deleted over fake news

Facebook and Twitter have deleted posts from world leaders for spreading misinformation about the coronavirus.

Facebook deleted a video from Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro that claimed hydroxychloroquine was totally effective in treating the virus.

He has repeatedly downplayed the virus and encouraged Brazilians to ignore medical advice on social distancing.

It follows Twitter's deletion of a homemade treatment tweeted by Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

Both social networks rarely interfere with messages from world leaders, even when they are verifiably untrue. Twitter, for example, says it will "will err on the side of leaving the content up" when world leaders break the rules, citing the public interest. But

all major social networks are under pressure to combat misinformation surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. Twitter has updated its

and Instagram, which it also owns. The posts violated its community standards for causing harm, it told BBC News. Follow-up statements

issued to BuzzFeed and The Verge clarified the claim about hydroxychloroquine was the main reason for its deletion. The World Health Organization says while some drug cocktails may have an impact, there is no proven drug treatment.

And hydroxychloroquine and a related compound, chloroquine, are unproven,

experimental treatments. But despite the lack of clinical trials, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has now approved both compounds, listed as anti-malarial drugs, for "emergency use" in Covid-19 patients admitted to hospital. The potential for possible treatment outweighed the known risk, the FDA said.



Is isolation the new normal ?

However, another serious impact of the lockdown is how important information which comes through unfiltered. The virtual world is turning us into lonely machines reaching out into the unknown, without the comfort of a loving touch, or gentle words whispered into our ears, even during the riots in Delhi) hysteria can be whipped up through images, and a constant barrage

of information which comes through unfiltered. The virtual world is turning us into lonely machines reaching out into the unknown, without the comfort of a loving touch, or gentle words whispered into our ears, even during the riots in Delhi) hysteria can be whipped up through images, and a constant barrage

dying alone without anyone by your side. But even those of us who will (hopefully) live on to see the end of the virus or at least its decline, will have changed forever, with the six feet of social distancing creating uncivil cracks in our behaviour and leaving gaps where there were families and homes. Large get-

together may also be a thing of the past as we look at everything through the prism of safety and security. Keeping it digital may be a format we have to follow for a while. As families, we are together in our homes, finding bonds and joy with each other. I am spending more time with my parents, talking more to my children and husband, writing more and exploring my inner world much, much more, as the exterior world

is reduced to heartbreaking images on my phone or iPad or TV screen. Our interiority might make us better people as we understand and appreciate those close to us. But what does it do to those who rely on physical connectivity for survival? There is more social disruption on the horizon as Covid-19 makes the difference clear between those who can live secure in their ivory towers and those who cannot.

Team India must fight Covid-19 together

Today, each state is in desperate need of extra central funds and relaxation in fiscal limits. Even the Goods and Services Tax (GST) model — pitched as an exemplar of a reset in Centre-state relations — is now under scrutiny with many states complaining that they haven't received pending GST compensation. There is also a need for an effective nationwide protocol where the Union health ministry and apex bodies such as the Indian Council of Medical Research work closely with local state bodies on critical issues like testing permissions for private labs and ensuring swifter delivery of personal protective equipment for health workers.

This is where Modi needs to lead the way by rising above all political divides. As Gujarat CM, Modi would often complain about state autonomy being compromised by a dominant Centre. And yet, the prime minister (PM) held his first

meeting with CMs only on March 20 when the coronavirus-positive cases in the country had crossed 200; five days later, a national lockdown was put in place at four hours notice without allegedly intimating the CMs in advance. When a nine-minute-lights-off campaign was announced, CMs or state power ministers were not taken into confidence. When the Centre declared a financial package for the poor, there was again no attempt made to involve state finance ministers. It is only over the last few days that the PM has initiated a welcome dialogue with the Opposition leaders on the coronavirus, a step which should have ideally been taken weeks ago when Parliament was in session.

When he first came to power, Modi spoke of himself as captain of Team India, promising to replace excessive centralism with cooperative federalism. This is the moment

for him to walk the talk: Maybe even set up a national task force, comprising CMs, Opposition leaders, and domain experts to fight the coronavirus collectively. A general must lead the war effort but, this time, brigade commanders must get their due. Brand Modi must

2 lockdown violations that reveal the weak spot of Indian State

Others err no less while portraying it as a communal issue, which it neither was nor is. Such angularities have to be discarded because our purpose must only be to ensure that every resource, legal or otherwise, be applied effectively to contain this dreaded disease. To term this health and public safety issue as a communal issue, or alternatively castigate a community, is a breach of the law and may invite criminal action.

The pan-India effort to enforce our laws while dealing with Covid-19 is an issue of health, enforcement of criminal law, public safety and order. Whether

preventive action is sought to be taken by state authorities or prosecution launched, we, as Indians and as members of the human race occupying this planet must realize, that it is time for us to act as one world and one people, and in India as one nation. It is time to step beyond our differences and focus on the larger good — that the protection of 130 crore people in India is ensured by effective and equal enforcement of the law.

There are brave men and women in the field - doctors, paramedics, government employees, police officers all of

whom are risking their lives, and those of their families, to ensure that we tide over this crisis with minimal loss of human lives. Doctors who treat their patients do not examine or consider the caste, creed or religion while saving lives. Nor do police and government officers enforcing the lockdown.

And while the law must be equally applied irrespective of caste, creed and religion, those who question the application of the law or alternatively seek to focus on this exclusively health and safety issue on communal lines are, in fact, obstructing the national cause.

Tech giants struggle to stem 'infodemic' of false coronavirus claims

Critics say efforts are too little, too late as research reveals vast majority of false claims appear online

Click over to Google, type in "coronavirus", and press enter. The results you see will bear little resemblance to any other search.

There are no ads, no product recommendations, and no links to websites that have figured out how to win the search engine optimisation game. Government, NGO and mainstream media sources dominate.

Algorithms and user-generated content are out; gatekeepers and fact checking are in.

Silicon Valley has responded to the "infodemic" with aggressive intervention and an embrace of official sources and traditional media outlets.

Across the social web – on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit, Instagram and Pinterest – search results related to Covid-19 are similarly predetermined.

Instagram delivers a pop-up urging US users to go to the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – or UK users to the NHS – rather than look at the memes and pictures tagged with #coronavirus.

On Facebook, a dedicated "Information Center" includes a mix of curated information and official medical advice. On Pinterest, the only infographics and memes to be found on topics such as "Covid-19" or "hydroxychloroquine" are those made by internationally recognised health organisations, such as the WHO.

It is a stark contrast to how social media platforms have dealt with misinformation in the past.

US-based platforms, shaped by Silicon Valley's libertarian ethos and protected by the first amendment, have long been reluctant to take a proactive editorial role or censor speech that could be considered political.

They have had to be pushed, prodded, cajoled, protested, and shamed into addressing hate speech, anti-vaxx propaganda and the harassment of victims of mass shootings.

On coronavirus, they have competed to be responsible and reliable sources of information. Yet still misinformation

continues to adapt and spread, largely on social media.

Research by Oxford's Reuters Institute looking at the spread of 225 false or misleading claims about coronavirus found 88% of the claims had appeared on social media platforms, compared with 9% on television or 8% in news outlets.

Nearly 30% of US adults believe Covid-19 was developed in a lab, according to a survey by Pew Research Center.

A conspiracy theory falsely linking 5G to the coronavirus pandemic has led to real-world consequences, including threats and harassment against telecom engineers and petrol bomb attacks on telephone poles.

Carl Bergstrom, a University of Washington professor of biology who also studies and has written a book about misinformation, says the efforts of the social media companies are too little, too late. "They've built this whole ecosystem that is all about engagement, allows viral spread, and hasn't ever put any currency on accuracy," he said. "Now all of a sudden we have a serious global crisis, and they want to put some Band-Aids on it. It's better than

not acting, but praising them for doing it is like praising Philip Morris for putting filters on cigarettes."

We've seen the US government becoming a significant purveyor of misinformation around the virus Carl Bergstrom

Some of the more radical steps taken by tech companies include Twitter's new policy to remove misinformation that contradicts official public health advice, such as tweets encouraging people not to follow physical distancing guidelines, and WhatsApp's strict new limits on message forwarding.

The platforms feel they can be much more aggressive on coronavirus misinformation than they have been on political misinformation, said Claire Wardle of the non-profit organisation First Draft.

"There are no two sides with coronavirus, so they don't have people on the other side saying: 'We want this,' the way you do with anti-vaxxers or political misinformation," said Wardle. "They are freer to act."

It is also relatively simple and straightforward for the platforms to select trusted sources of

authoritative information – the WHO, NHS, CDC, etc – without appearing politically biased.

Wardle faulted the tech companies for not being better prepared for the crisis, however. Facebook has long ignored the conspiracy communities that organise using Facebook groups, such as anti-vaxxers, followers of QAnon, and people who believe 5G is harmful. Coronavirus misinformation is rampant in those communities.

"The sad thing is to see those kinds of conspiracies moving to neighbourhood groups, and family groups," said Wardle. "It's like sparks are flying off the bigger [conspiracy] groups and moving into other groups. Everyone is so frightened right now that it's a tinderbox and these sparks are coming off and catching fire."

And while the scientific nature of the crisis may lessen some of the external political pressures over how to moderate speech, it also brings with it a slew of challenges. The coronavirus is brand new, and the scientific understanding of it changes daily. Bergstrom described this conundrum as an "uncertainty

vacuum". "Any reasonable authority will not give you a straight answer" to certain questions about the pandemic, "not because they're trying to mislead you, but because they don't know yet," he said. Another complicating factor is that normally trustworthy sources are not providing reliable information. "We've seen the US government, particularly the White House, becoming a significant purveyor of misinformation around the virus," Bergstrom said.

Facebook and Twitter have removed posts by prominent and powerful people over coronavirus misinformation, including the Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, but the real test of their resolve will be whether they ever take action against misinformation by Trump.

"We planned for years for this pandemic, but we never realised that we would be fighting a war on two fronts," said Bergstrom. "One against the pandemic, and one against all the disinformation and hate and fear that is being amped up and enflamed by political opportunists."

(By Julia Carrie Wong)

What We Pretend to Know About the Coronavirus Could Kill Us Today's propaganda is tomorrow's truth, and vice versa.

Mr. Warzel is an Opinion writer at large. Other than a vaccine or an extra 500,000 ventilators, tests and hospital beds, reliable information is the best weapon we have against Covid-19. It allows us to act uniformly and decisively to flatten the curve. In an ideal pandemic scenario, sound information is produced by experts and travels quickly to the public.

But we seem to be living in a nightmare scenario. The coronavirus emerged in the middle of a golden age for media manipulation. And it is stealthy, resilient and confounding to experts. It moves far faster than scientists can study it. What seems to be true today may be wrong tomorrow. Uncertainty abounds. And an array of dangerous misinformation, disinformation and flawed amateur analysis fills the void.

We've grown accustomed to living through an information war fought largely by hardened political operatives and trolls. But while the coronavirus crisis is political and will continue to be politicized, its most consequential fights will take place in the "fog of pandemic" where so much of our data — from health statistics to economic indicators — is flawed or evolving. Today's propaganda could be tomorrow's truth. Or vice versa. Even the good guys are working with limited information and hoping for the best. We are

not prepared for what's coming. The best illustration of this challenge is the changing consensus and public messaging on wearing masks. At the end of February, as the coronavirus was spreading in the United States, the surgeon general, Jerome Adams, argued that masks were not effective for the general public, tweeting, "STOP BUYING MASKS!"

Now it seems that information was, depending on your interpretation, overly simplistic, misleading or just wrong. "I'm not sure it's that the knowledge changed, but that our priorities changed," Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, the chairman of the department of medical ethics and health policy at the University of Pennsylvania, told me over the phone this week. He suggested that the priority was always to reserve masks for health care workers. "But I don't think we understood or put in context how masks might affect physical distancing in public," he said. "You're trying to juggle a number of considerations in real time, and the wrong balancing act was struck."

On Friday, President Trump announced that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had changed the recommendation on masks to say that all Americans should use "non-medical, cloth" ones. "You can do it. You don't have to do

it. I'm choosing not to do it," Mr. Trump said. "It's only a recommendation." But the reversal may prove costly for the World Health Organization's and the C.D.C.'s credibility. As Zeynep Tufekci, a University of North Carolina professor, wrote in a Times Op-Ed weeks ago, a lack of transparency up front created its own information crisis. "What should the authorities have said?" she asked. "The full painful truth."

Renée DiResta, an expert on disinformation at the Stanford Internet Observatory, suggested to me that the mask fiasco was a result of bureaucracies' responding on the fly to a new threat. "What you have is an institution that's not designed for real-time communication or the modern information world," she said. Ordinary citizens aren't used to operating on the same timeline as the scientific method. We struggle to understand how to interpret epidemiological models and we misread them. And we're unsatisfied with uncertainty, especially when it comes from our experts. Since entities like the C.D.C. are used to making pronouncements when science has reached a consensus, a virus can run around the world before they update their guidance.

(By Charlie Warzel, for NY Times)

A New Front for Nationalism: The Global Battle Against a Virus

President Trump and his leading trade adviser, Peter Navarro, have exploited the pandemic as an opportunity to redouble efforts to force multinational companies to abandon China and shift production to the United States. Mr. Navarro has proposed rules that would force American health care providers to buy protective gear and medicines from U.S. suppliers.

"We just don't have the production capacity," Mr. Bown said, noting that Chinese industry is restarting, while American factories remain disrupted. "Just as you don't want to be too dependent on China, you don't want to be too dependent on yourself. You have now walled yourself off from the only way you can potentially deal with this, in your time of greatest need, which is relying on the rest of the world."

Zero-Sum Mentality

For seven decades after World War II, the notion that global trade enhances security and prosperity prevailed across major economies. When people exchange goods across borders, the logic goes, they become less likely to take up arms. Consumers gain better and cheaper products. Competition and collaboration spur innovation.

But in many countries — especially the United States — a stark failure by governments to equitably distribute the bounty has undermined faith in trade, giving way to a protectionist mentality in which goods and resources are viewed as zero-sum.

Now, the zero-sum perspective is a guiding force just as the sum in question is alarmingly limited: Potentially vital supplies of medicine are in short supply, exacerbating antagonism and distrust.

Last week, the Trump administration cited a Korean War-era law to justify banning exports of protective masks made in the United States, while ordering American companies that produce such wares overseas to redirect orders to their home market. One American company, 3M, said halting planned shipments of masks overseas would imperil health workers in Canada and Latin America. On Monday, 3M said it struck a compromise with the government that will send some masks to the United States and some overseas.

In recent weeks, Turkey, Ukraine, Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia, Bangladesh,

Pakistan, South Africa and Ecuador have all banned the export of protective masks. France and Germany imposed bans on masks and other protective gear, lifting them only after the European Union barred exports outside the bloc. India banned exports of respirators and disinfectants.

Britain has prohibited exports of hydroxychloroquine, an anti-malarial drug now being tested for potential benefits against the virus. Hungary has banned exports of the raw material for that drug and medicines that contain it.

"The export bans are not helpful," said Mariangela Simao, assistant director general for medicines and health products at the World Health Organization in Geneva. "It can disrupt supply chains of some products that are actually needed everywhere."

President Trump has been especially aggressive in securing an American stockpile of hydroxychloroquine, disregarding the counsel of federal scientists who have warned that testing remains minimal, with scant evidence of benefits.

India is the world's largest producer of hydroxychloroquine. Last month, the government banned exports of the drug, though it stipulated that shipments could continue under limited circumstances.

"In this situation, each country has to take care of itself," said Satish Kumar, an adjunct professor at the International Institute of Health Management Research in New Delhi. "If we are not able to take care of our population, it will be a very critical situation."

After Mr. Trump demanded that India lift the export restrictions on Monday night while threatening retaliation, the government appeared to soften its position.

"In view of the humanitarian aspects of the pandemic," said India's foreign ministry spokesman Anurag Srivastava, the government would allow exports "to some nations who have been particularly badly affected" — an apparent nod to the United States.

Arithmetic suggested that a policy of stockpiling for national needs might leave other countries short. India is likely to require 56 metric tons, but now has only 38 metric tons, said Udaya Bhaskar, director general of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India, an industry body set up by the

government to promote exports of Indian medicines.

One manufacturer, Watson Pharma, owned by Teva Pharmaceuticals and based in the western Indian state of Goa, was seeking to triple its production of hydroxychloroquine over the next two weeks.

Genomics and Geopolitics
As global pharmaceutical companies explore new forms of treatment for the coronavirus — a complex undertaking even under ideal laboratory conditions — they are having to navigate an additional layer of real-world intricacy: geopolitics.

Companies steeped in genomics and the rigorous demands of manufacturing must find a way to develop new drugs, begin commercial production and also anticipate how the predilections of nationalists running major economies may limit supplies.

One of the most closely watched drugs, remdesivir, is made by Gilead, an American company. Though clinical trials have not yet been completed, the company has been ramping up manufacturing to meet global demand in advance of the drug's approval.

Like many newer drugs, remdesivir's formula includes "novel substances with limited global availability," according to a statement on the company's website.

Gilead is increasing production in part by expanding beyond its own facilities in the United States, contracting with plants in Europe and Asia, in a move that appeared to hedge its bets against trouble in any one place. "The international nature of the supply chain for remdesivir reminds us that it is essential for countries to work together to create enough supply for the world," said Daniel O'Day, Gilead's chairman and chief executive, in an April 4 statement.

Gilead says it has enough of the drug to treat 30,000 patients, while aiming to amass enough to treat one million by the end of the year. But outside experts questioned whether that would be sufficient.

"There is going to be a real fight over the allocation of the remdesivir supply if indeed it proves effective," said Geoffrey Porges, an analyst for SVB Leerink, an investment bank in Boston.

Another drugmaker, the New York-based Regeneron, is preparing a U.S. plant to

produce a cocktail of antibodies developed in genetically engineered mice, with tests planned for hospitalized patients and as a preventative treatment. A similar antibody cocktail proved effective against Ebola.

The company is planning the extraordinary action of shifting the production of some of its most profitable drugs — one that treats eczema, another for eyes — to a factory in Ireland to make room for the experimental treatment.

Regeneron's chief executive, Dr. Leonard Schleifer, said the decision to make the new drug cocktail in the United States was both geopolitical and practical.

"You want to make it close to where the need is, and we anticipate there will be great need in the United States," he said.

He acknowledged that making products overseas now posed risks that they could be subject to export bans in that country. In addition, Regeneron is receiving federal funds to expand its manufacturing of the vaccine, which carries the expectation that the company will prioritize the American market.

"It just made good sense to us to do this in the United States," Dr. Schleifer said.

China's Moment

China has seized on the pandemic as an opportunity to present itself as a responsible world citizen, in contrast to Western democracies that

failed to reckon with the threat — not least the United States, now the epicenter of the outbreak.

Ever since President Trump took office, unleashing tariffs on friends and foes alike, China's paramount leader, Xi Jinping, has sought to exploit the American abdication of global leadership as a chance to crown himself champion of the rules-based trading system.

Given that China is ruled by an unelected Communist Party that subsidizes state-owned companies and tolerates the widespread theft of intellectual property, those claims have strained credulity.

China's reputation has also suffered as it pursues its Belt and Road Initiative, a \$1 trillion collection of infrastructure projects stretching from East Asia to Europe and Africa that has been engineered to spread Beijing's influence and generate business for Chinese companies. Some recipients of Chinese credit have come to see the terms as predatory, prompting accusations that China is an ascendant colonial power.

China has dispatched doctors and ventilators to Italy while offering aid to France, Germany and Spain.

Last month, as the European Union banned exports of protective gear, Serbia's president, Aleksandar Vucic, embraced China's largess, even kissing the Chinese flag.

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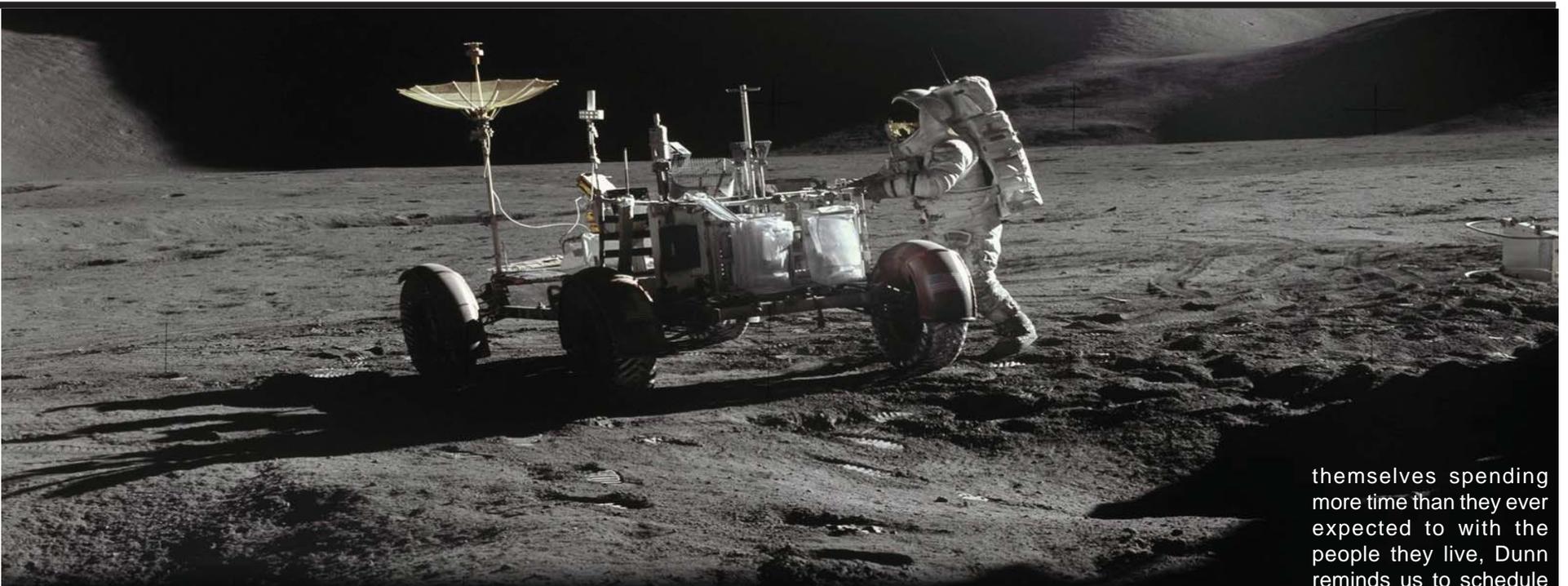
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An astronaut's guide to surviving isolation

Much of the world is having to learn fast about self-isolation. What tips can we glean from those who do it for a living?

In 2017, I tried to live like an astronaut. I didn't float around in weightlessness, conduct any ground-breaking experiments or see the Earth from space. But I did spend two days confined to my apartment, where I worked, worked out, and limited my meals to freeze dried food from a pouch. It was an attempt to explore the effects of living in isolation from society and confined in the same place 24 hours a day, like astronauts do aboard the International Space Station, or may one day do on Mars.

Fast-forward to 2020. Millions of us are socially distancing around the globe in an attempt to slow the spread of coronavirus and no longer have to imagine what it's like to spend the vast majority of the day in our homes.

As we grapple with our new routines, what advice can we glean from people who have already spent months in isolation? To find out, we caught up with two Nasa experts. The first is Kjell Lindgren, an astronaut who spent 141 days in space aboard the International Space Station (ISS) in 2015 with five crewmates. The second is Jocelyn Dunn, a human performance engineer who spent eight months living inside a dome habitat with five fellow volunteers as part of a Hawaii Space Exploration

Analog and Simulation (Hi-Seas) mission in 2014 and 2015. Here's what they suggest.

Stay busy and make a schedule

On the ISS, astronauts' days are scheduled down to five-minute increments with time for experiments, maintenance, conference calls, meals, working out and more. But even at home, Lindgren says it's helpful to stay busy with meaningful work, even if it's not your usual gig. "If you're able to work from home it's a gift," he says. "Many people don't have that opportunity. But finding some other meaningful work will help the time go fast. It is one of the blessings of being in the space station. The work can make six or nine months go very quickly."

Lindgren, who is currently socially distancing at home with his wife and three children, says he talks to his kids weekly about what they want to accomplish and make sure to carve time out for it in addition to their regular schoolwork.

Dunn suggests breaking the day into parts with transitions like working out or going for a walk. At Hi-Seas, the crew would end the workday and transition into leisure time via a group work out. "When you work from home it's easy to end up constantly working and never breaking," she says. In her forthcoming research

Dunn and her colleagues also looked at how different crews on four, eight and 12-month missions spent their time and self-organised in the habitat, which included less than 1,500 sq ft (139 sq m) of living space. The results suggest that given autonomy, most people spent about the same amount of time on different activities. In the habitat, participants spent about seven to eight hours on sleep, three to four hours on leisure activities, three to four hours on personal projects, an hour and a half working out, two hours on meals and half an hour on personal hygiene (which is low because shower time was extremely limited to simulate what life would be like on Mars). The rest of the time was spent on work.

Lindgren recalls spending three hours fixing an exercise machine on Expedition 44/45. He got all the way to the end and realised the bracket he was left with didn't fit. It turned out he had installed something that was intended for the left side on the right side of the machine and had to undo and redo all his work. "I was really down on myself and folks on the ground gave me great advice. They asked for feedback on how to make the instructions clearer so that everyone could get something from

my mistake," he says. "They told me not to feel bad about it and move on, otherwise it would compromise my ability to do other things. That attitude served us well on the space station and I think it'll serve us well here too."

So, if you forget to buy toilet paper at the store or burn dinner, don't sweat it, he says. It's important to manage expectations, both your own and those of your crew or the people you are living with, says Lindgren. And to regularly talk about what those expectations are.

In the Hi-Seas habitat, Dunn's crew had a schedule for splitting shared household duties. They also set aside time each Sunday to debrief how the previous week had gone. "We would take an hour to talk about the last week, reflect on things that went well, things that didn't go so well and look at any challenges coming up in the next week. We considered it a safe place to bring up any frustrations we had," she says. "Like our homes are now, the space station was our lab but also our home. So we had to find ways to have fun together. But it's also important to read your team. Sometimes people need time alone to decompress," says Lindgren.

On the Russian segment of his mission, the crew ended

their work week with a group dinner. On the US segment, they had movie nights. "We would bring little treats to those," says Lindgren. "On the weekend we spent time coming up with games we could only do in weightlessness. That was a lot of fun and some of my fondest memories."

On Earth, Lindgren's family tries to schedule in social activities like a weekly TV show. "Anything that's different from work that you can look forward to like staying in touch with loved ones over video conferencing – can be really helpful."

Former Nasa astronaut Scott Kelly, who spent a year on the ISS, told the New York Times that he also made sure to make time for fun activities while on the space station – even if he was hurtling far above the Earth. That included watching all of Game of Thrones – twice.

For those finding

themselves spending more time than they ever expected to with the people they live, Dunn reminds us to schedule alone time too. "One of the main takeaways from Hi-Seas was the importance of scheduling alone time in a confined situation. It's fine to say I need 30 minutes on my own to do some meditation or journaling or just not have to talk to someone." It's easy to motivate yourself to work out when your ability to walk when you return to Earth is on the line. But there are still lessons we can learn from the space station as we distance ourselves at home.

"We had two hours a day to work out, it was carved out into our schedule and expected that we were going to do it. That made it as easy as you could ask for," says Lindgren. Still, Lindgren, who's now doing a group workout with fellow astronauts once a week over video chat, says we can make it easier for ourselves on Earth by removing as many barriers as possible. For example, schedule a specific time to work out, queue an internet workout onto your computer in advance, and prep any gear or clothes you need in advance.



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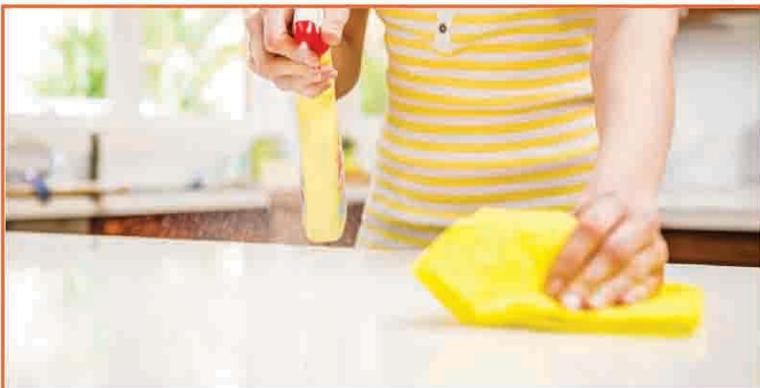
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In Pak script for Kashmir, 230 terrorists in waiting mode at the border

Intelligence reports says 160 terrorists from Pakistan are waiting at launch pads across the Kashmir region and 70 more, across Jammu



(News Agencies) With the Indian security forces stretched in Jammu and Kashmir in aid of civil administration to fight coronavirus spread, Pakistan-based terror groups have activated launch pads across the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir and the border in Jammu to infiltrate 230 terrorists over the next few weeks and months. The batch of five terrorists killed on Sunday in a

close-quarters battle with the army's Special Forces commandos was among the first in recent weeks. Jammu and Kashmir police chief Dilbagh Singh told HT soon after that there were many more at the terror launch pads.

India's national security planners have put a figure to this effort across the border to create a summer of discontent in the

Kashmir valley. There are around 160 terrorists belonging to Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) are ready to infiltrate into the Valley from across the LoC in Kashmir, people tasked with the analysis of intelligence about terror movements and camps told HT.

In the Jammu sector along the international border, around 70 armed and trained terrorists are at the launch pads to infiltrate into this area through unfenced riverine and nullahs. According to counter-terror operatives, Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists are camping at Samani-Bhimber and Dudhnial launch pads in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and waiting for the first opportunity to infiltrate into J&K. Similarly, LeT has been sending its terrorist

cadre to Leepa and Kel launching pads in Leepa Valley and Neelum Valley respectively to infiltrate into the Valley. As part of its plan to intensify infiltration for terror strikes in J&K, the JeM terror group have been consolidating their trained cadre across the international border in Sialkot sector since February. Intelligence inputs reveal that a group of armed JeM jihadists arrived at their Markaz in village Mundeke, Tehsil Daska in Sialkot district on 11 February 2020. Home Ministry officials say that there were 133 successful infiltration events along the LoC and IB in 2019. Most of the cross overs took place between April and September 2019. During January-February 2020, the Indian security forces managed to arrest 48 jihadists or overground workers and neutralize 24 terrorists including three

foreign nationals. "The 5 April Keran sector encounter in which five terrorists were killed reveals that the LeT has big plans to infiltrate from the Kupwara sector," one home ministry official said. The infiltration from Pakistan takes place in different sectors: Gurez, Machchil, Keran, Tangdhar, Naugam and Uri in Kashmir sector; Poonch, Krishna Ghati, Bhimber Gali, Sunderbani and Naushera in Rajouri sector; Jourian, Hira Nagar, Kathua, Samba and Jammu in Jammu sector. Counter-terror operatives said the main outfits involved in infiltration in recent years have been the Jaish, Lashkar and the Hizbul Mujahideen. But they have been picking up signals that Rawalpindi GHQ intends to revive Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HUJI) in Sialkot, Punjab and Kotli region of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

India's rejects China's reference to Kashmir issue

The spokesperson of China's permanent mission to the UN had said on Tuesday that Beijing "pays close attention to the current situation" in Kashmir.

(News Agencies) India on Thursday rejected China's contention that the Kashmir issue should be resolved on the basis of the UN Charter, Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements, saying Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of the country.

The spokesperson of China's permanent mission to the UN had said on Tuesday that Beijing "pays close attention to the current situation" in Kashmir. The spokesperson added: "The Kashmir issue is a dispute left from history, and should be properly and

peacefully resolved based on the Charter of the UN, Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements."

China also "opposes any unilateral actions that complicate the situation", the spokesperson said. Responding to these remarks, external affairs ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava rejected the reference to Jammu and Kashmir made by the Chinese spokesperson.

"China is well aware of India's consistent position on this issue. The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir has been, is and shall

continue to be an integral part of India. Issues related to Jammu and Kashmir are [an] internal matter to India," he said.

"It is, therefore, our expectation that other countries, including China, would refrain from commenting on matters that are internal affairs of India and respect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also expect China to recognise and condemn the scourge of cross-border terrorism that affects the lives of the people of India, including in Jammu and Kashmir," he added. On March 10, Pakistan's permanent



representative to the UN had delivered a letter from foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to the president of the Security Council, which called on the Council

to take up the Kashmir issue On the same day, at the request of Pakistan, China, as the then president of the Security Council, circulated the letter as an official document of the council.

To block Indian Covid-19 initiatives, Pak seeks to bring issues under SAARC secretariat

On Wednesday, Pakistan had skipped a video conference of senior trade officials of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), saying it chose not to participate since the SAARC secretariat wasn't involved in organising it.

(News Agencies) India's engagements with SAARC members on Covid-19 related matters are stand-alone events whereas Pakistan has sought to bring all issues under the SAARC secretariat in a bid to block Indian initiatives, people familiar with developments said on Thursday. On Wednesday, Pakistan had skipped a video conference of senior trade officials of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), saying it chose not to participate since the SAARC secretariat wasn't involved

in organising it. The people cited above, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said India's decision of keeping control of activities that emerged from the video conference of SAARC leaders, which was convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 15, had helped New Delhi to move much faster and without any hindrances on Covid-19-related matters. "We have described these activities as being stand-alone and outside the SAARC calendar of approved activities," said one of the people cited above.

"We regard the present activities as events under extraordinary Covid-19 circumstances focussed only on jointly dealing with challenges in the SAARC region in a result-oriented way, without being bound by any procedural formalities that could prove to be constraints," the person added.

On the other hand, Pakistan has been trying to bring all Covid-19-related interactions under the formal SAARC umbrella by involving the SAARC secretariat, which is based in the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu, the people said.

This was an attempt to score narrow political goals at a time when the people of the region are facing the Covid-19 crisis, they said. "By trying to get Covid-19-related interactions under the SAARC umbrella, they will get a free hand to block all our initiatives and proposals by using the SAARC Charter provisions and rules of procedure, including application of the principle of consensus for drafting the agenda and the outcome document, and for the concurrence of all member states for each and every thing every step of the way," the person cited above said.

Under the SAARC Charter, all issues have to be decided by consensus. This has often affected the working of the eight-member grouping created in December 1985. Pakistan's opposition, mainly due to its differences with India, has held up numerous initiatives.

Over the past few weeks, Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, has called for all Covid-19-related initiatives to be placed under the SAARC secretariat during his telephone conversations with counterparts from other SAARC states.

The coronavirus is found in bats. How did it reach us?

Wildlife trade and wet markets are virus mixing bowls. Unless strictly prohibited, they have the potential to bring another pandemic



The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has engulfed the world within a span of a few weeks, sending billions into lockdown. Amid the confusion and scare, “patient zero” has been traced back to a wildlife market in Wuhan, China. Preliminary studies indicate that the coronavirus from bats infected humans, through a wild animal, Malayan pangolins. The genomic resemblance between the Pangolin coronavirus and Sars-CoV-2 (Covid-19 virus) is what has brought about this assumption. Bats, pangolins and humans are not cohabitants, which acts as a “species barrier”, preventing the virus naturally found in bats from jumping to other species. But environmental crimes like wildlife

poaching and consumption result in the breaking of the species barrier. The presence of Malayan pangolins (natural inhabitants of Southeast Asia’s forests) in the Chinese meat market strongly points towards illicit wildlife trade and trafficking. Malayan pangolins are hunted for their skin, scales, meat and for ingredients in oriental medicine. All species of pangolins are included in Cites Appendix I, which means their international trade is prohibited. As per the World Customs Organization’s Illicit Trade Report, in 2018, customs administrations from 47 countries reported 2,727 seizures of flora and fauna – which amounts to 59,150 pieces and 3,60,495 kg of various flora and fauna. Being rich in biodiversity, the

Indian subcontinent, Africa and South America are most vulnerable for wildlife crimes and trafficking. In most of the cases, the destination remains China. Wildlife animals and products such as rhino horns, ivory, live pangolins and their scales, turtles and tortoises, snakes and their skin, mongoose, sea horses, sea cucumber, crocodile skin and porcupines are trafficked in substantial quantities.

Several Wuhan-type wet and dry markets are operational in China, Thailand and Vietnam that have a demand for exotic wildlife articles. In China alone, domestic wildlife farming is assessed as a billion-dollar industry. The rich and the privileged are the prime consumers of wildlife products, primarily because of the superstitions surrounding traditional Chinese medicine and false pride associated with the ownership of certain wildlife articles. Rhino horn, pangolin scales and tiger bones are used in traditional medicines, aphrodisiac recipes and in body-building tonics. Scientific studies completely condemn and disprove these beliefs. On the contrary, the Chinese wildlife market has seen an alarming rise in demand for rhino horn extract, due

to a false belief that it can help treat Covid-19. Wildlife farming and consumption of wild meat in China have historical reasons such as famine and poverty. Gradually, it evolved into a tradition. Wet markets sell live meat, fish and marine products. Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai and Burmese wet markets are notorious for selling game meat and other numerous wildlife items. They keep live animals in cages, stacked one above the other. If the topmost cage has bats and those below it have turtles, civets, ducks, porcupine and pangolins, it can lead to the mixing of their excreta and fluids. It makes the entire stock a natural mixing bowl, helping the virus cross the species barrier. Such congested and stressful circumstance reduces immunity and results in the multiplication of the virus, and infection and transmission of the disease.

When humans slaughter or dress the affected animals, they contract the virus. Inside the human body, the virus undergoes mutation, which can result in the pandemic of the current magnitude. The emergence of Covid-19 and the role of the Wuhan market is still under investigation. However,

the 2003 outbreak of the Sars (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) pandemic was ultimately traced back to masked palm civets (*Paguma larvata*) and raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), traded in China’s Shenzhen wet market. In 2010, Indian customs had prevented an attempt to import over 10,000 red-eared turtles from China. Later, it was found that, according to International Union for Conservation of Nature’s classification, the seized turtles were considered as one of the most invasive species on the earth. Its potential to outnumber the native turtle population and the microbial cargo it would have brought along give an idea about the severity of the crime.

A crazy pet culture poses yet another threat to the environment and global health. Many consider reptiles, turtles, wild lizards and other exotic species as new age pets. Close contact with such pets offers an opportunity for a virus like Covid-19 to cross species barriers and infect humans. Unless strictly prohibited, the illicit trade of wildlife and the new age pet culture have the potential to turn into another pandemic bomb.

PUNJABI CHAMBER FOUNDATION

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Not in God's hands: Why Tablighi Jamaat's actions are indefensible

Tablighi Jamaat: A population that lacks scientific temper can create an unprecedented crisis for the authorities



'Jahiliyat' is the only suitable word to explain the indefensible actions of Tablighi Jamaat leaders and their followers, who became one of the main vehicles of the spread of Covid-19 cases across India. Ignorance is a much milder term for this South Asian organisation that has spread its tentacles in several countries across the globe. It is not only in India, but also in Pakistan that the organisation drew flak from its authorities after about 2.5 lakh Tablighis gathered at their headquarter at Raiwind near Lahore on March 11. The ijtema was finally called off the next day, packing off everyone back, but not without the expected fallout in terms of spread of the

disease.

Bangladesh is also facing similar issues from this organisation, but fortunately for it the ijtema there was held in January this year. Tablighi holds the second largest gathering of Muslims after Hajj at Tongi in Bangladesh every year. But at the centre of Islam, Saudi Arabia, it remains banned, as the rulers there would find it inconvenient to deal and control its Ulemas, who are based in South Asia. Saudi Muftis allege it to be connected with Sufism and ask faithful to remain loyal to their form of puritan Islam by adhering to Ahle Hadis school, which they can easily handle by issuing fatwas as desired by ruling family.

The Tablighi movement, an

offshoot of Deobandi school of Islam, was formed in 1927 in Mewat, Haryana, that called for Islamic answers to the challenges to the personal and collective life of Muslims under British imperialism. It rejected both the theories of either emulating western ideas or assimilating Islamic and western concepts, which several Muslim scholars, including Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, were propagating. The Tablighi founders then believed that their religion was under threat of western ideas and values on the one hand and Hindu revivalist movements like Arya Samaj on the other.

Unlike Hizb-ut-Tehrir and Muslim Brotherhood, Tablighi remains an apolitical and non-sectarian organisation thereby escaping suppression by wary autocratic rulers in Muslim world. Tablighi largely remains a proselytising organisation inviting (Dawah) people to Islam and also preaching the "true and puritan" form of the religion among the faithful. Its

followers proceed for proselytisation and fan out in various mosques and Muslim localities. In India, it did not attract the attention of security agencies, as it did not play into the hands of Pakistan's security apparatus for sponsoring 'jihad' against India or supporting its narrative on the situation of Muslims in India. But that should not be the reason to allow such organisations to continue preaching obscurantist thoughts among people irrespective of the religion to which they belong. In the time of Covid-19 pandemic, a population lacking scientific temper can create an unprecedented crisis for the authorities and put under strain the health infrastructure of any country. More so, that of a developing country like India.

The facts remain that Gods of all religions are shutting their doors to the faithful. The Vatican has issued a decree calling upon priests across the world to observe Easter (April 12) observation without gatherings. It says "in the

countries which have been struck by the disease and where restrictions around the assembly and movement of people have been imposed, Bishops and priests may celebrate the rites of holy week without the presence of people and in a suitable place..."

Hajj, the largest gathering of Muslims at Saudi Arabia could be in peril, as the authorities there have asked faithful to delay plans to visit Mecca in late July. It is a rare occurrence with the last one being more than 200 years back. Mecca and Medina, the two cities pilgrims visit, have been closed down a month back with Saudis closing their borders for foreigners and restricting movements within the Kingdom.

The story is no different for Hindu shrines. Among the shrines that attract large crowds that have been shut are Vaishno Devi Shrine in Jammu, Tirupati Temple, Lord Jagannath temple in Puri, Kamakhya temple in Guwahati and Shirdi Sai Baba temple in Maharashtra.

So, there is no point looking towards heaven for some miracle to happen. If it happens, it will be in laboratories across the world where scientists are burning midnight oil to save the lives of people, irrespective of the religions to which they belong. Like Tablighi, anyone preaching that everything is in God's hands would be doing a disservice to their own community and humanity at large at this critical juncture. These thoughts can play havoc within their communities and those living in surrounding areas. A supportive population understanding the pitfalls of violating restrictions would be an asset to any government to deal with this unprecedented pandemic. A regular briefing by those in the frontline of fighting the disease is a better way of keeping people abreast of latest developments and keeping them well informed for better compliance. This will restrict the space for preachers of all religions to mislead the people.

The perils of political and religious extremism

China's authoritarianism gave the world the pandemic. Religious zealots accelerated the spread of the disease



The current global crisis has no parallel. The Chinese Communist Party, by initially covering up the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak, helped unleash the world's worst pandemic in more than a century. The "world is paying a big price," as United States President Donald Trump said, for what the world's largest, strongest and longest-surviving autocracy did. The inestimable human and economic toll has shown how one country's authoritarianism can ravage the world. Accentuating the

pandemic is another extremism — one grounded in religion. The role of two proselytising fundamentalist organisations in spreading the deadly coronavirus has exemplified how religious extremism threatens public health and national security. South Korea's secretive Shincheonji Church of Jesus sparked a major crisis by importing the virus from Wuhan, where it organised a congregation. More than half of South Korea's Covid-19 cases have been linked to this doomsday sect. Meanwhile, a transnational Islamist movement, Tablighi Jamaat, by

holding large gatherings in Malaysia, Pakistan and Indonesia, helped export the pathogen to multiple countries, from Southeast Asia to West Asia. This Sunni missionary movement's session in New Delhi spread the virus across India.

Through its large events, Tablighi Jamaat — which reportedly has long served as a recruiting ground for terrorist groups — has emerged as the super-spreader. Its four-day gathering of 16,000 at the Sri Petaling Mosque in Kuala Lumpur at the end of February spread the disease to six Southeast Asian countries. Its March 11-12 congregation in Lahore attracted up to a quarter of a million participants, but ended up creating the largest viral vector in the Sunni world and spreading the coronavirus far and wide — from Kyrgyzstan to Gaza. The lesson is that religious fanaticism is often deadly. Indeed, the blind faith of religious zealots has been a significant trigger in spreading Covid-19, as Iran's case

underscores. Qom became the centre of Iran's contagion because clerics, discounting the virus risks, invited the faithful to keep coming, and to lick the burial mound inside the Masumeh shrine, saying the holy city is "a place for healing" and thus safe from the contagion. Cases in countries stretching from Afghanistan and Iraq to Bahrain and Lebanon were later traced to Iran. Likewise, in Israel, ultra-orthodox Jews (who make up 12% of the population) have caused the coronavirus to spread rapidly by refusing to comply with the government's containment measures. The government has now deployed security troops to police ultra-orthodox neighbourhoods in order to safeguard the wider population.

In India, authorities halted a planned March 25-April 2 mass Hindu pilgrimage in the sacred city of Ayodhya by proactively imposing a ban on assembly and blocking the entry of outsiders. However, the Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in

New Delhi has shown federal and state authorities in poor light.

Indonesia banned a similar event on Sulawesi island but not before more than 8,500 Tablighis from 10 countries had already gathered. However, India inexplicably allowed the Tablighi Jamaat activists, including foreigners, to congregate in the Capital from March 13, a day after Delhi state declared an epidemic and shut all schools, colleges and movie theatres. Maharashtra, by contrast, cancelled permission for a parallel Tablighi Jamaat gathering in the state.

The New Delhi congregation stretched for 18 days until April 1, when 2,346 individuals were evacuated. Having allowed the gathering, authorities are now trying to close the stable door after the horse has bolted, including seeking to identify and quarantine all attendees. At least 1,445 people linked to the event have tested positive for Covid-19, with multiple deaths reported.

Google expands its automated AI calling service Duplex to Australia, Canada and the UK

An AI service was rolled out by Google in late 2018 in the US followed by New Zealand. Christened as Duplex, the AI is used for restaurant bookings or to book appointments on behalf of its user. Now it has been made available in Australia, Canada and the UK.



an automated system or a manual operator.

A list of numbers which Google states as legitimate are posted on the support page.

alls from these phone numbers will be from Google: Australia: +61-2-9160-9443, Canada: +1-780-851-3579, New Zealand: +64-9-884-7777, United Kingdom: +44-207-660-1362 and United States: +1-650-203-0000, +1-650-206-5555.

VentureBeat was the first to note the addition in the list of numbers from where Google Duplex will make calls. Google stated that it will use these numbers while calling from a distinct country using Duplex. Last year in April, Google Duplex started rolling out its

beta version in iPhones. However, this was limited to the users in the US. For iPhone and Android users, users only have to download Google Assistant App from the App Store and Playstore respectively and they are good to go.

This feature is currently available on Phones with the Google Assistant app, devices that can access Search or Maps, Google's support group page said. Google Duplex was launched back in 2018 but it has its limitations. The first issue was that there was no consent drawn from businesses or restaurant owners while these calls were made by the AI.

Secondly, there was no

certainty if the voice on the other end was that of an AI or a human. Google, since then has taken ample efforts to maintain more transparency with its users and businesses.

Google has tried addressing these issues by giving a disclosure at the start of the call. Moreover, the support page says that any business owner has the option to opt out if he does not feel like talking to an AI.

Previously, Google had stated that businesses could either tell the company over the phone - presumably in the form of feedback during or after an ongoing call -- or change their settings in Google My Business section of their Google accounts.

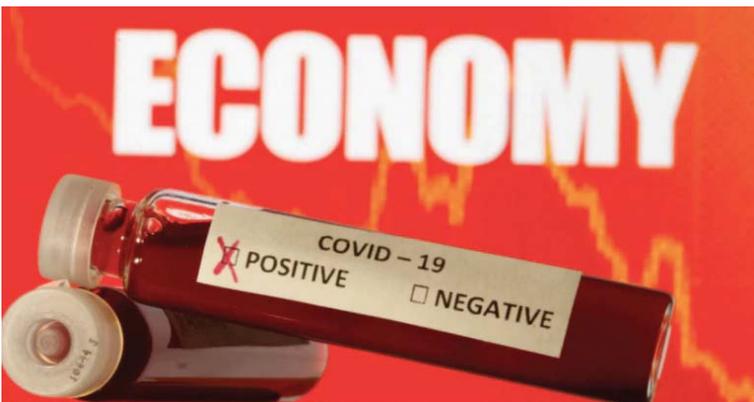
(News Agencies) Google's AI-powered calling service Duplex is now being extended to Australia, Canada and the UK. Initially, this service was available in the US and New Zealand. Google Duplex is used for hotel bookings or booking appointments on behalf of its

user. It is supported by devices which have Search, Maps or Google Assistant app.

Google's support page explains a how-to-know if a call is legitimate. It states that at the start of the call, the reason for the call will be stated. It further states that the call will be from

Coronavirus: Global economy to witness worst fallout since Great Depression, says IMF

Observing that the world is faced with extraordinary uncertainty about the depth and duration of this crisis, IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva said that it is already clear, however, that global growth will turn sharply negative in 2020.



(News Agencies) The year 2020 could see the worst global economic fallout since the Great Depression in the 1930s with over 170 countries likely to experience negative per capita income growth due to the raging coronavirus pandemic, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday. Georgieva made the remarks during her address on "Confronting the Crisis: Priorities for the Global Economy" here ahead of next week's annual Spring meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. "Today, the world is confronted with a crisis like no other. Covid-19 has disrupted our social and economic order at lightning speed and on a scale that we have not seen in living memory," she said.

The virus is causing a tragic loss of life, and the lockdown needed to fight it has affected billions of people. What was normal just a few weeks ago -- going to

school, going to work, being with family and friends -- is now a huge risk, she said.

Observing that the world is faced with extraordinary uncertainty about the depth and duration of this crisis, she said that it is already clear, however, that global growth will turn sharply negative in 2020.

"In fact, we anticipate the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression," Georgieva said.

"Just three months ago, we expected positive per capita income growth in over 160 of our member countries in 2020. Today, that number has been turned on its head: we now project that over 170 countries will experience negative per capita income growth this year," she said. The Great Depression was the worst worldwide economic downturn that lasted for 10 years from 1929, beginning in the US when the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street crashed and wiped out millions of investors.

The IMF chief said that given the necessary containment measures to slow the spread of the virus, the world economy is taking a substantial hit.

This is especially true for retail, hospitality, transport, and tourism. In most countries, the majority of workers are either self-employed or employed by small and medium-sized enterprises. These businesses and workers are especially exposed, she added.

Of the view that emerging markets and low-income nations -- across Africa, Latin America, and much of Asia are

at high risk, Georgieva said with weaker health systems to begin with, many face the dreadful challenge of fighting the virus in densely populated cities and poverty-stricken slums, where social distancing is hardly an option.

With fewer resources to begin with, they are dangerously exposed to the ongoing demand and supply shocks, drastic tightening in financial conditions, and some may face an unsustainable debt burden, she said. In the last two months, portfolio outflows from emerging markets were about USD 100

billion, more than three times larger than for the same period of the global financial crisis. "Commodity exporters are taking a double blow from the collapse in commodity prices and remittances, the lifeblood of so many poor people, are expected to dwindle, she said. The IMF, she said, estimates the gross external financing needs for emerging markets and developing countries to be in the trillions of dollars, and they can cover only a portion of that on their own, leaving residual gaps in the hundreds of billions of dollars. They urgently need help, she said.

Wall Street firm dangled up to 175% returns to investors using U.S. aid programs

(News Agencies) BOSTON (Reuters) - A New York investment firm pitched wealthy investors in recent days on a way to make returns of 22% to 175% using U.S. government programs designed to help Americans keep their jobs and boost the coronavirus-stricken economy, according to a marketing document seen by Reuters. Following questions posed by Reuters, Arcadia Investment Partners LLC, which has about \$1 billion under management, said it had put its plans on hold. The idea was in "formative stages" and the firm was not "presently moving forward with this strategy given reasons that include uncertainty surrounding the regulations," Dahlia Loeb, managing director at Arcadia, told Reuters in an email on Wednesday. She did not elaborate further. The firm had sent the pitch as recently as this weekend to "a limited number of sophisticated investors," according to the marketing materials, which are dated April 4 and marked confidential. In an email sent Sunday,

and seen by Reuters, Loeb wrote it was a "highly time sensitive opportunity" and had offered to discuss it with investors that day or early in the week.

Arcadia's pitch offers a glimpse into how some private investors are looking to quickly take advantage of the unprecedented government intervention after the novel coronavirus brought economic activity to a screeching halt. Under Arcadia's plan, which has not been previously reported, the firm would have raised money to finance loans to small businesses guaranteed as part of a \$2.2 trillion government aid package, the marketing materials show. It called the new vehicle the "Paycheck Protection Program Fund," named after the government initiative for small businesses launched on April 3. Arcadia proposed to juice profits by borrowing 90% to 95% of the money from funding markets that were backstopped in recent weeks by the U.S. Federal Reserve.

NASA astronaut, Russian cosmonauts launch to the space station during a pandemic



(News Agencies) Two Russian cosmonauts, Anatoli Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner, and NASA astronaut Chris Cassidy launched to the International Space Station from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Thursday morning at 4:05 a.m. ET.

The planned launch comes at a time when many events have been postponed or canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Travel restrictions prevented some of the astronauts' families, media and industry officials from attending the launch. Those involved in the launch were all seen keeping six feet apart and wearing masks.

But many of the health and safety precautions taken were standard for astronauts launching to the space station. NASA has a long history of quarantining astronauts before they go to space to

prevent illnesses like cold and flu from occurring off our planet. It was a concern even in the early days of the agency's astronaut program.

"The health and welfare of the crew is always paramount," said Courtney Beasley, communications specialist at NASA's Johnson Space Center. "All of our crew must stay in quarantine for two weeks before they launch. This ensures that they aren't sick or incubating an illness when they get to the space station, and is called 'health stabilization.'"

Ahead of quarantine, the astronauts followed the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations regarding coronavirus. NASA and the Russian Space Agency, Roscosmos, maintained the standard quarantine period of two weeks for the crew, Beasley said.

During quarantine, the astronauts live in their crew quarters — NASA has crew quarters for this purpose at Kennedy and Johnson Space Centers — and Roscosmos has them in Baikonur," she said. "They don't have direct contact with anyone who has not been pre-cleared by NASA flight surgeons. The time is spent preparing for flight, studying and resting, as well as working out and making video calls to friends and family members."

About six hours after Thursday morning's launch, the astronauts docked with the International Space Station at 10:13 a.m. ET. The hatches opened at 12:28 p.m. ET and they joined Roscosmos cosmonaut Oleg Skripochka and NASA astronauts Jessica Meir and Andrew Morgan.

Skripochka and Meir will return

to Earth on April 17 after spending six months on the station. Morgan, who will also return to Earth with them, launched to the station on the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing and had an extended mission of eight months. When Skripochka, Meir and Morgan return from their stay in space, they will be coming back to a very different Earth. When they launched, coronavirus wasn't a threat. Now, it's a pandemic.

NASA already has a protocol in place for returning astronauts that includes a post-landing medical check by flight doctors. The doctors and other NASA teams help the astronauts reacclimate to Earth's gravity, getting them up and walking soon after landing. In the weeks after, they're monitored to make sure they're healthy.

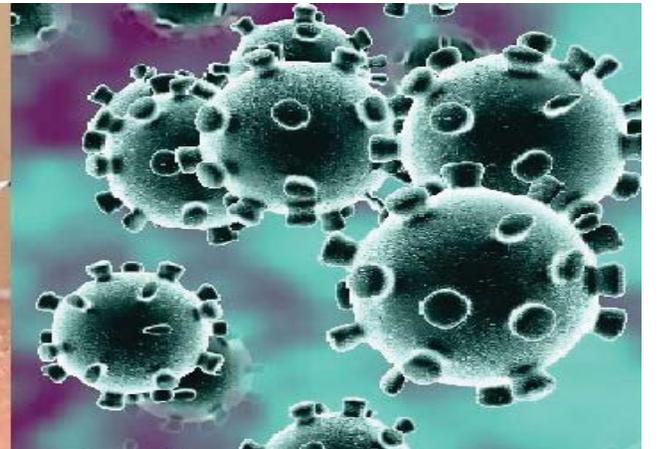
FBI, US government warn on spike in coronavirus scams

(News Agencies) Fraudsters are seizing upon the COVID-19 crisis to mount fresh attacks to get your money, the FBI and DHS said in separate advisories this week. The FBI advisory cites so-called Business Email Compromise (BEC) schemes — a kind of email fraud that targets funds transfers, often large sums.

In a typical scenario, you get an email that appears to be from a company or individual you normally do business with. The hitch is, the scammer will request funds be sent to a new account "or otherwise alters the standard payment practices," the FBI said in a statement. The FBI pointed to an increase in fraud aimed at municipalities purchasing personal protective equipment "or other supplies needed in the fight against COVID-19." In a recent example cited by the FBI, a financial institution received an email purportedly from a CEO who had scheduled a transfer of \$1 million. The fraudster requested that the transfer date be moved up and the account receiving the funds be changed "due to the Coronavirus outbreak and quarantine processes and precautions," the FBI said, quoting the fraudulent email.

One of the most devious tricks in the bad guys' bag of tricks is using an email address that looks the same as the legitimate email. In the case cited by the FBI, the email address "was almost identical to the CEO's actual email address with only one letter changed," the FBI said. "Hackers love emergencies and times of uncertainty because people are scared, distracted, and vulnerable, making them ideal targets," Ed Bishop, CTO and co-founder of Tessian, a firm that provides technology to prevent email fraud, told Fox News. Bishop listed ruses used by cybercriminals such as the "Fraudulent Third-Party," where hackers will impersonate people within an organization or suppliers and vendors associated with the company. And "Secure IT Support" where bad actors will pretend to be a company's IT support and send malicious links to employees.

Can mosquitoes spread coronavirus?



(News Agencies) Mosquitoes are a common summer-time foe that are known vectors of the West Nile Virus, Zika, Chikungunya and several other diseases that sicken humans, but what about the novel coronavirus?

As the weather warms and many move their stay-at-home orders to their backyard, the question of whether you can contract COVID-19 through a mosquito bite continues to surface.

There are several types of human coronaviruses, including MERS and SARS, which each caused deadly outbreaks of their own. COVID-19, however, has never been seen before, and is caused by SARS-CoV-2. As a whole, coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and can affect different species of animals, but rarely can an animal coronavirus infect a human and then spread between people. However, such instances were seen with MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV, and has also now been documented with COVID-19, which is caused by SARS-CoV-2. And recently, researchers confirmed that humans spread the virus to tigers at the Bronx Zoo.

There have also been reports outside of the U.S. involving pets — particularly cats — becoming infected after close contact with contagious people.

Typically, the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. However, it's also possible to be spread when an infected person's droplets are transferred to a surface, and an uninfected person then touches the contaminated surface and then transfers it to their face. This raises the question then, of if a mosquito bites an infected person, and then lands on an uninfected person, can the disease be transferred?

"There are no reports of any spread of coronavirus to humans by mosquitoes," Dr. Mary Schmidt, infectious disease and internal medicine specialist, told Fox News. "If this was a route of transmission, we would have seen it in the Middle East, where the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) caused by the coronavirus has been present for 6 years."

Schmidt referenced a study that revealed that if mosquitoes were fed a blood meal of the coronavirus MERS, it was detected for up to one day in the insect. However, for this to become a threat to humans, a series of particular events would need to occur. "In order for this to happen in real life, the mosquitoes would have to acquire the virus during feeding, the virus then undergoes replication in the gut tissue, disseminates to the secondary sites of replication, including the salivary glands, and is ultimately released into the arthropod's salivary secretions, where it may be inoculated into the skin and cutaneous vasculature of the host (human) during subsequent feeding," Schmidt said. Given those findings, Schmidt said that mosquitoes should continue to be monitored. The American Mosquito Control Association (AMCA) has also said that it will continue to monitor the situation in conjunction with public health officials. In early March, the World Health Organization (WHO) said there has been no information nor evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can be transmitted by mosquitoes.

Nearly a third of Americans didn't pay rent this month, new data shows

(News Agencies) With nearly 10 million Americans filing for unemployment in March, April 1 was always going to be a difficult day for US renters.

Now we know just how difficult: Nearly a third of American renters didn't pay their rent this month.

That's according to data from the National Multifamily Housing Council, a trade association for the apartment industry. Of more than 13 million units in the US that the report covered, 69% of renters paid their rent between April 1 and 5. During the same period in April 2019, 82% of households paid their rent on time, the report said.

And just last month, 81% of renters paid rent by March 5.

It's evidence of just how the

coronavirus pandemic is devastating the US job market, and as a result, Americans' financial health. The federal government's \$2 trillion stimulus bill will pad some Americans' falls: Renters in federally subsidized affordable housing can receive aid, including a 120-day moratorium on evictions and late fees.

But most rental properties are owned by private landlords and therefore aren't eligible, though some multifamily landlords with federally backed mortgages may receive a forbearance on their payments as long as they don't evict their tenants.

Ahead of the steep uptick in unemployment claims, at least half of states and dozens of cities temporarily halted evictions in March,

but rent was still due. And while missing a payment may not immediately result in eviction, continuing to skip them would.

There are other avenues for aid, though. Solomon Greene, a senior fellow in housing policy at the Urban Institute, suggested that tenants alert their landlords to their inability to pay and seek out aid from nonprofits, or use their stimulus check included in the \$2 trillion bill to cover some of their expenses.

And in other cases, strangers are footing bills. A CNN viewer surprised a guest on Erin Burnett OutFront by paying her rent. The guest, like millions of other service industry workers, had lost her job. While the data is concerning, it should be put into context, said Priscilla

Almodovar, CEO of Enterprise Community Partners, a national nonprofit developing affordable housing.

There are 44 million renter households in the country, and the NMHC data only reflects data from 13.4 million rental units and does not include subsidized housing, a lifeline for many low-income people.

Also, Almodovar said, there were likely logistical challenges to people paying the rent on time in April. Many offices were closed and standard operating procedures for much of daily life was disrupted. The 5th of the month, often when a late fee is incurred and when the NMHC survey period ended, also fell on a Sunday. We won't really



have an accurate picture of what the impact of unemployment will be until May, she said.

"People were working in March. April rent may have come from their savings," Almodovar said. "The rent check is probably the first thing they pay. Now they may be unemployed, and we don't know what resources will get to them in time for May."

Her organization is calling for direct rental assistance, in which struggling tenant's rents are paid to landlords by the government.

Nearly 70% of his renters took advantage of the discount, saving them nearly \$400,000 in rent altogether.

Coronavirus update: New York reports record 824 Covid-19 deaths in 24 hours despite flattening curve

The latest spike in deaths, which lag as an indicator of the virus's spread, comes as the rate of hospitalizations in the city and state is dropping sharply.

(News Agencies) New York City reported a record 824 deaths from the coronavirus in 24 hours, a grim reminder that despite flattening infection curves and lower hospital admissions, the health crisis in the largest US city is far from over. Statewide, the fatality rate

has worsened by the day. New York reported 799 new deaths on Thursday, on top of about 1,500 in the prior two days. Total coronavirus deaths in the state now exceed 7,000.

The city and state take snapshots of the virus's effects at different times of

day, which may partly account for why the city reported more deaths than the state did. A spokesman for the governor, Rich Azzopardi, said the city and state were working to come up with a unified reporting system to eliminate their discrepancies. The latest

spike in deaths, which lag as an indicator of the virus's spread, comes as the rate of hospitalizations in the city and state is dropping sharply. At his daily virus briefing on Thursday, Governor Andrew Cuomo said there had been only 200 net new hospitalizations



over 24 hours, the lowest number since the crisis broke out. That number had been as high as 1,400 just a week ago. Likewise, the rate of new intensive-care admissions and intubations -- when patients are put on a ventilator -- also plummeted. But New York State also reported more than 10,600 new positive cases on Wednesday, a second day above 10,000 after multiple days when the number was trending downward. At more than 159,000 infections, New York's cases have now eclipsed those of Spain and Italy. It's unknown how many people have been infected but never tested. About 18,000 people in the state are hospitalized for the virus. If New York is indeed

reaching a plateau, the statistics suggest that the state will need far less hospital capacity than it raced to build at the onset of the crisis. After early models predicted a wave as big as 135,000 coronavirus patients, New York nearly doubled its hospital capacity to about 90,000 beds, with hospitals filling hallways, lobbies and conference rooms with them. If the spread continues to slow, the question may become what to do with the excess capacity the state no longer needs. That wasn't a question Cuomo was prepared to answer on Thursday, saying it was too early to begin making such assessments.

US threatens to block China Telecom from serving American market

US agencies said China Telecom is vulnerable to "exploitation, influence and control" by the Chinese government.

(News Agencies) The top departments of the US government have endorsed cutting off Beijing-controlled China Telecom from serving the US market because of legal and security risks, the Justice Department announced Thursday. The departments, including Defense, State, and Homeland Security, said after a broad review that the Federal Communications Commission should "revoke and terminate" all authorizations for the Chinese giant's US subsidiary, China Telecom (Americas), to provide international telecommunications

services to and from the United States. "The Executive Branch identified substantial and unacceptable national security and law enforcement risks associated with China Telecom's operations, which render the FCC authorizations inconsistent with the public interest," the Justice Department said in a statement.

The agencies -- which also included the Justice Department, the Commerce Department, the US Trade Representative and US counter-intelligence -- said China Telecom is

vulnerable to "exploitation, influence and control" by the Chinese government. They said it has inaccurately reported to US authorities where it stores its US records and how it manages cybersecurity.

The agencies also made the recommendation based on "the nature of China Telecom's US operations," which they said allow Chinese government actors "to engage in malicious cyber activity enabling economic espionage and disruption and misrouting of US communications."

Downhill movie review

Will Ferrell's black comedy is a companion piece to Thappad

Will Ferrell and Julia Louis-Dreyfuss' new film, directed by Oscar-winners Jim Rash and Nat Faxon, is very similar to Anubhav Sinha's Thappad.

Downhill
 Directors - Jim Rash, Nat Faxon
 Cast - Will Ferrell, Julia Louis-Dreyfuss, Miranda Otto, Kristofer Hivju

A married couple is forced to reevaluate its relationship after an incident during a ski vacation in Downhill, the English language remake of the Swedish drama Force Majeure. Oscar-winning writer-director duo Jim Rash and Nat Faxon largely follow in the tracks of Ruben Ostlund's original film, but deviate drastically towards the very end, leaving their film to cascade down a cliff in the process.

Julia Louis-Dreyfuss and Will Ferrell star as the Stauntons, who in the film's opening scene arrive with their two teenage sons at an Alpine ski resort. It's a trip that the family has taken to help Pete (Ferrell) cope with the recent death of his father, sympathy for which Pete never hesitates in gathering. He brings it up at dinner, during random encounters with other travellers,

and even in an argument with his wife, Billie.

After a couple of days on the slopes, the family sits down for lunch at a pretty outdoor restaurant overlooking the grand Alps. Explosions to initiate controlled avalanches can be heard in the distance. While the Stauntons are deciding whether or not to order soup, a particularly loud explosion triggers an avalanche that hurtles straight towards their restaurant. Initially, the diners observe with mild curiosity, assuming it will fizzle out — like most controlled avalanches do — before hitting the town. But the cloud of snow grows larger and the rumbling under their feet becomes more intense. Suddenly, there's panic as the everyone begins running for cover. Everyone including Pete, who has abandoned his family at the table, left with no option but to cling to each other. A few moments later, the gust of snow settles down, and Pete sheepishly returns. Billie and

their two kids are shaking with fright, too stunned to speak. They decide they'll have the soup anyway.

But a cold, unspoken resentment lingers between Pete and Billie for the next few hours, until it explodes in one scene when she confronts him with what he has done.

In many ways, Downhill is like a cousin to the recent Anubhav Sinha film Thappad, also about a woman who is forced to reevaluate her marriage after a shameful act by her husband. Both films — and Force Majeure, of course — wonder if a single incident is enough to trigger someone into reconsidering the very foundation their marriage is built upon. Pete's selfish sprint opens up a whole can of worms that he simply isn't prepared to clean up. After the confrontation, Billie insists on spending time apart from him, which sends her on an adventure with a handsome ski instructor in one scene, and forces her to have a



frank discussion about her own needs and desires in another. Later, when Billie and Pete see a couple of Indian honeymooners giggling about their day, he attempts to overcompensate and grabs her hand, a gesture she gives the Melania Trump treatment.

Downhill, like its brash American protagonists, is far more abrasive about its intentions than the very emotionally reserved Force Majeure. It has less patience for silences, which the Swedish original absolutely revelled in. The lingering discomfort of that film has been replaced by a rather

straightforward approach in this one. While it was quite difficult to empathise with the father in Force Majeure, Will Ferrell has an inherent likability that quells whatever anger you might have towards him.

Downhill's steadfast feminist streak also seems slightly tacked on and is completely undone by the film's glaringly awful final moments. And there lies the problem with the remake — Rash and Faxon seem to have misunderstood the point of the original and have given a morally debatable scenario a black-and-white solution.

Maska movie review

Netflix and Manisha Koirala offer dollop of good-natured fun during dark times

Don't let an impending food crisis deter you from watching Netflix India's new film, about a Parsi cafe, starring Manisha Koirala, Javed Jaffrey and newcomer Prit Kamani.

Maska
 Director - Neeraj Udhwani
 Cast - Manisha Koirala, Prit Kamani, Javed Jaffrey, Shirley Setia, Mallika Chopra

I watched Maska, the new Netflix India original film, several weeks ago. A lot has changed since then. The need, for instance, to be reminded of more innocent times has greatly increased, as has our desire to be distracted, and entertained.

While some might very rightly find the personal problems of a privileged youth difficult to invest in, given our current situation, or wonder why the rigours of running a restaurant are relevant at a time when more than half our country's population may face a food crisis, I feel films like Maska have more to offer now. What was serviceable mediocrity a month ago might have become a vital source of cheer.

This isn't to say there aren't better alternatives to be found -- there are -- but a certain audience will find Maska to be just the sort

of buttery comfort food that they need. Directed by debutant Neeraj Udhwani, the film tells the story of a teenage Parsi boy, caught between his dream to become an actor, and his mother's desire for him to follow in his father's footsteps, and take over the family business -- a charming Irani cafe in Mumbai. Manisha Koirala plays the overbearing mother, while Javed Jaffrey appears in an extended cameo as Rustom, popping up on occasion to offer advice to his son. The trouble with Maska is that it focusses on the least interesting of its three main characters. Rumi's confusion, after a while, comes across as a bit grating, mostly because of his delusional quest to become an actor. He simply isn't good enough, and it takes him awfully long to come to this realisation. It is, however, strongly implied that he is a skilled chef.

Rustom's bun maska is his signature dish, and in one of the film's better moments, Rumi

recreates it from scratch. The scene is shot lusciously, the warm hues and stylised lighting bringing to mind Linus Sandgren's work on The Hundred-Foot Journey, another 'food film' that touched similar themes of legacy and family. Rumi kneads the dough with his bare hands, as fine 'maida' hovers in the air, illuminated by light as golden-brown as the crust of freshly baked bread. He churns his own butter, playfully letting little specks fall on his face. All this while, his mother observes with a growing sense of pride. Her son is just like his father. As the eccentric bawwa, Javed Jaffrey is a scene-stealer. The actor has always had a knack for accents, and his smooth performance as the mischievous Rustom is, forgive the pun, his bread and butter. Both Rustom and his wife are far more interesting characters than Rumi. There's a sense that Rustom also went through a period of great angst in his youth, and that Diana --



that's Manisha's character -- sacrificed her own dreams to help her husband, and then her son. Both actors are experienced enough to allow these questions to linger in the viewers' minds, whereas the younger actors -- Prit Kamani as Rumi, Shirley Setia as a photographer, and Mallika Chopra as Rumi's girlfriend -- simply can't keep up with their illustrious older co-stars.

It is one of Maska's recurring problems that Rumi, like a typical Indian man, far too often relies on the women in his life to make the right decisions. And even

though he treats nearly all of them unfairly -- Rumi is rather self-obsessed -- the women are nothing short of angelic to him, showering him with attention and advice.

But the film has such an endearing charm that it becomes virtually impossible to hold a grudge against it, even when you realise that Maska (like the hundreds of chefs who've tried to mimic Manish Mehrotra's Daulat Ki Chaat) is essentially scene-for-scene rip-off of the 2009 film Today's Special, starring Aasif Mandvi and Naseeruddin Shah.

Cannes Film Festival postponed to June-July amid coronavirus crisis

The Cannes Film Festival, which was due to begin in May in France, has been postponed to June end or beginning of July, owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Cannes Film Festival – all set to run from May 12 to 23 – has been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic. Europe is now the epicentre of this infection.

The festival may now take place at the end of June and the beginning of July.

The festival said late Thursday evening: “At this time of global health crisis, our thoughts go to the victims of the Covid-19 and we express our solidarity with all of those who are fighting the disease.

“Today, we have made the following decision: The Festival de Cannes cannot be held on the scheduled dates, from May 12 to 23. Several options are considered in order to preserve its running, the main one being a simple postponement, in Cannes, until the end of June-

beginning of July, 2020. “As soon as the development of the French and international health situation will allow us to assess the real possibility, we will make our decision known, in accordance with our ongoing consultation with the French Government and Cannes City Hall as well as with the Festival’s Board Members, Film industry professionals and all the partners of the event”.

This move comes in the wake of several restrictions imposed by the French Government – one of them being the banning of gatherings of more than 100 people. France also joined the EU-wide lockdown preventing non-EU nationals from entering the Schengen zone.

In the past weeks, similar events were rescheduled or cancelled – The Cannes Lions Festival (on advertising, moved from April to

June). MIPTV, the international television market and TV festival CanneSeries, both scheduled for the end of March, were cancelled.

Leading figures in the Cannes Film Market, which runs along with the festival, had begun organising a “virtual platform” in the assumption that a cancellation would happen. In the history of the Cannes, there have been cancellations. Cannes, which began in 1939 had to draw its curtains two days later after screening just one movie, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, because Hitler’s army marched into Poland on September 3, signalling the start of World War II. Cannes could reopen only after the war in 1947, and in 1968, there was one more closure when French workers and students began a violent protest. Midway,



the Festival shut shop. But since then there has not been any impediment.

Several other festivals elsewhere have also been cancelled – like Beijing, Fribourg, etc.

An unfortunate fallout of the pandemic has been the postponement of the Red Sea International Film Festival – which was to have begun on March 12 in the old, historic city

of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. It was to have been the inaugural edition in a Kingdom where cinema and all other forms of entertainment were banned for 40 years. It was only in 2018 that Riyadh opened its movies, building tens of theatres and infusing a sense of joy in its people. But the festival could not risk hundreds congregating, and will it be held at a later date.



Kanika Kapoor returns home

Brother says ‘she’s doing fine, no one she came in contact with tested positive for Covid-19’

Singer Kanika Kapoor, who had tested positive for Covid-19 last month, has finally returned home after treatment. Kanika was being treated at a Lucknow hospital for almost two weeks.

Speaking to SpotBoye, Kanika’s brother Anurag confirmed the news. “Yes, Kanika is back. We all are very happy. She is doing fine now,” he said. He added that she has not been advised any precautions by her doctors and is doing well.

Anurag also mentioned how no one that she came in contact with since her return from UK has tested positive

for the disease. “We are glad Kanika has recovered and what’s even better is that none of the people who she came in contact with have tested positive,” he said.

Kanika was discharged from hospital on April 6 after her sixth overall and second negative test for coronavirus. She will now be interrogated by the Uttar Pradesh Police after she completes the 14-day quarantine period, as advised by the doctors.

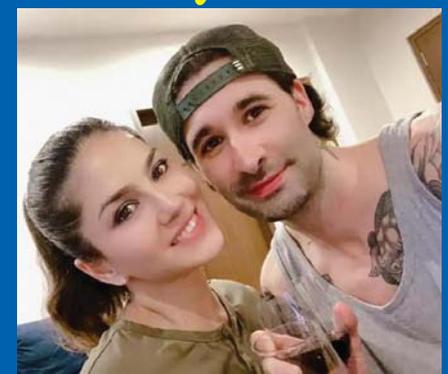
A case had been registered against the singer, last month, for hiding her travel history and attending parties after

returning from London on March 9. She was charged under IPC Section 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and Section 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life). Earlier, Kanika Kapoor confirmed that she had been infected with the novel coronavirus through an Instagram post which was later deleted. She had written, “I was scanned at the airport as per normal procedure when I came back home. The symptoms have developed only four days ago. I am feeling OK.”

Sunny Leone and Daniel Weber celebrate anniversary with wine

As Sunny Leone and Daniel Weber celebrate nine years of marriage, he wished her with a sweet Instagram post and promised a “more romantic date” when the coronavirus outbreak is under control and the lockdown is lifted. Daniel joked that Sunny has no choice but to bear with him every day. Sharing a picture of them holding glasses of wine, he wrote, “Happy anniversary to @sunnyleone!!!! Happy to at least have a glass of wine with you tonight!!! Promise you a more romantic date when your not locked up with me against your will ;!!!!x. Love you baby!!!! I would say, thank you for dealing with me everyday but you actually have no choice.” Wishes poured in for the couple from fans. One Instagram user wrote,

“Happy wedding anniversary to the most beautiful couple ever! You guys are an amazing example of couple goals! The way you guys treat and help each others is just awesome and cute!! Lots of loveee and once again wishing both of you a very happy wedding anniversary. Stay forever and have a wonderful night! XoXo.” Another commented, “Such beautiful couple.” Sunny and Daniel met at a club in Las Vegas. Though it was love at first sight for him, she knew that he was the one when he stood by her like a rock when her mother passed away. They got married on April 9, 2011, and have three children - a daughter Nisha and twin sons Asher and Noah. Last week, Sunny launched her own chat show -



Locked Up With Sunny - on Instagram, to entertain fans during the lockdown. “It was my idea to just have fun with our fans and people on Insta. It is all about light-hearted conversations with funny things and details about the guest,” she told IANS about her online show.

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India steps up medical diplomacy, flies plane loads of medicines to friends

Officials said the government was sending drugs to Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Seychelles, Mauritius and some African countries.



(Contd on page 21)

World heading to biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression, warns IMF

IMF is the latest international body to confirm that the world is slipping into a great economic crisis due to coronavirus outbreak.



(News Agencies) The International Monetary Fund has confirmed the fears that the devastation caused by the coronavirus was pushing the world into a deep economic crisis which is likely to be the worst-ever since the Great Depression- the worst economic downturn in the history that started in the US in 1929 and lasted ten years with varying degrees of economic devastations in almost every country in the world. (Contd on page 21)

'You can't relax'

Vigilance urged as New York sees signs of coronavirus progress

(News Agencies) NEW YORK (Reuters) - Americans must resist the impulse to ease social-separation measures at the first glimpse of progress now being seen in the coronavirus battle, state government and public health leaders warned on Thursday, as the U.S. death toll surpassed 16,500. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said it was important that people continue to stay home. "We've got to continue to redouble our efforts at the mitigation of physical separation in order to keep those numbers down and hopefully even get them lower than what you've heard recently,"

(Contd on page 20)

The mystery behind India's stance on HCQ

On March 25, India banned export of HCQ-with exceptions. On April 4, it banned it - without exceptions. On April 7, it lifted it. What changed?



(News Agencies) On April 7, the official spokesperson of the external affairs ministry (MEA) "discouraged" speculation or politicisation, inter alia, of the government's decision to allow the exports of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and paracetamol through licenses.

Specifically, he said, "With regard to paracetamol and Hydroxychloroquine, they will be kept in a licensed category and their demand position will be continuously monitored. However, their stock position could allow our companies to meet the export commitments that they had contracted." The spokesperson also clarified that "temporary restrictions on the exports of a number of pharmaceutical products" were placed to ensure that there were "adequate stocks" of these products

"for the requirement of our own people." Following these restrictions, a "comprehensive assessment was made of all possible requirements under different scenarios." The spokesperson emphasised that the decision of the export of drugs was made "after having confirmed the availability of medicines for all possible contingencies...". This statement is reassuring, but it would have been more so if it was backed with statistics of current and projected HCQ requirement, availability, proposed export, production capacity, and if active ingredients for it are needed from China. This is particularly because of apprehensions that India made the decision under pressure from the United States (US). (Contd on page 21)

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Ethnic Strategies

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