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## THE NEW NORMAL: WHAT'S NEXT?



We spend a lot of time wondering what post-pandemic World is going to look like.

Can our kids go back to actual classes?

How many of us are heading back to the office?

How many of us will feel comfortable shopping in malls or dining in restaurants?

The answers are mostly unknowable, at least for now. But what is clear is that the impact of the coronavirus on jobs is agonizing and will last a hell of a lot longer than we might have imagined.

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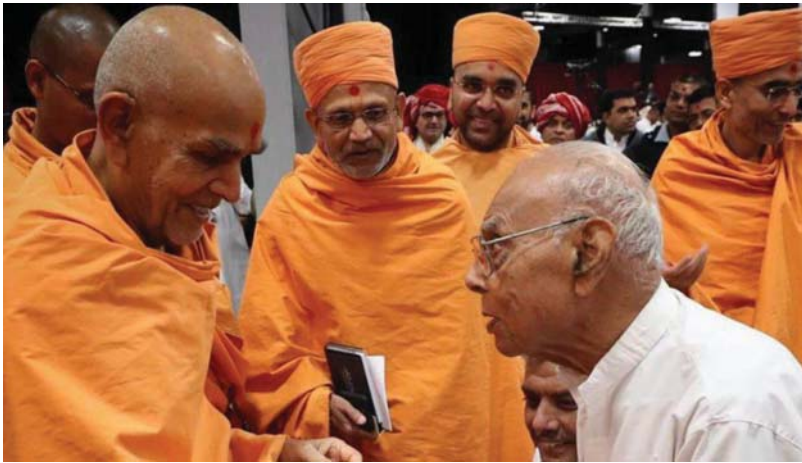
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**The first and primary Pujari (priest) of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, at 43-38, Bowne Street, Flushing, NY 11355, Pujari Pratapbhai Raval has passed away on May 13 2020, at the age of 93 years.**



to pay our tribute to the selfless sevak who dedicated his entire life in serving humanity and pray for the Divine Being to take this departed soul to His heavenly abode (Akshardham). South Asian Community Leader Dilip Chauhan said, Pratapbhai's loss is a loss for the entire Indian American Community. My sincere condolences to the entire BAPS Community of North America and India. He lived his life according to his guru's wishes, and has instilled the same values to his beloved grandson, Urdhva Raval.

(By our staff reporter) The first and primary Pujari (priest) of BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, at 43-38, Bowne Street, Flushing, NY 11355, Pujari Pratapbhai Raval has passed away on May 13 2020, at the age of 93 years. He is survived by his son Priyam Raval and

family. During his life he served as one of the first Hindu priests in New York at the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir New York. He had the honor of serving the Hindu community at the behest of his gurus His Holiness Yogiji Maharaj, His Holiness Pramukh

Swami Maharaj, and His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj for over forty years. He served BAPS in Mumbai and thereafter he served as the Pujari in both London and New York BAPS mandirs. With his exceptional service, he was instrumental in

guiding and encouraging hundreds of Indian-Americans over the years. He was an ideal example of a dedicated, selfless sevak. He has personally helped many many new immigrants. He went out of way to help the community. We would like

# The battle for a Green Card intensifies in the US

They are doctors, engineers and other professionals who came to the United States (US) from India. Some came to study with plans of staying on if things worked out, and others arrived on work contracts with dotted lines to permanent residency, also called Green Cards, and citizenship eventually. While waiting for their Green Cards, some of them have grown older, insecure, frustrated and now, more frightened than they have ever been. If laid-off because of the economic crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, as some have been, they will lose their spot in the Green Card queue and face deportation. As will families of those who were killed by the virus. They are desperate. And so desperate that, to their own amazement, they are taking on a powerful US senator who, they are convinced, is the only man standing between them and their Green Cards: Richard Durbin, the senior Democratic senator from Illinois. Indian Green Card hopefuls believe Durbin is

determined to see them deported, with their children who have not known any other country other than the US. Starting next week, these Green Card hopefuls plan to run running TV spots and full-page advertisements to highlight what they argue is plain bias. Immigration Voice, an activist group that has represented them and campaigned for changing laws to cut the Green Card waiting period, has accused the senator of being a "racist". The US grants around one million employment-based and family-based Green Cards every year. There is a cap of 7% for applicants from any one country in the work-based category. Indians in the queue outnumber nationals from other countries by a sizable number. Those left over from the annual quota, mostly Indians, are added to the backlog, which has grown so large that Cato Institute, a conservative think-tank, estimates that someone who applies now may have to wait for nearly 150 years — an impossible prospect. Efforts have been

underway for years to fix the problem. One solution, which has emerged as the most acceptable to both Democrats and Republicans, is to remove the country limit. The reform was passed in the House of Representative last August, but its passage in the Senate has been blocked by just one senator, Durbin. He has moved a rival legislation that seeks to address the backlog created due to the expansion of the number of Green Cards. The Indian government is aware of their plight — 306,000, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Service, and 1.5 million, according to Immigration Voice — and has quietly canvassed their case with US stakeholders. But it is unable to do more, constrained by the oddity of the situation — lobbying the US to accept more immigrants from India. It has still tried, to its credit. There is a larger message here for Indians planning to study or work

in the US with hopes of staying on. Life in the Green Card queue is

probably not worth it with something like Durbin (not attitude, mindset), waiting someone, which is a self- at the other end.

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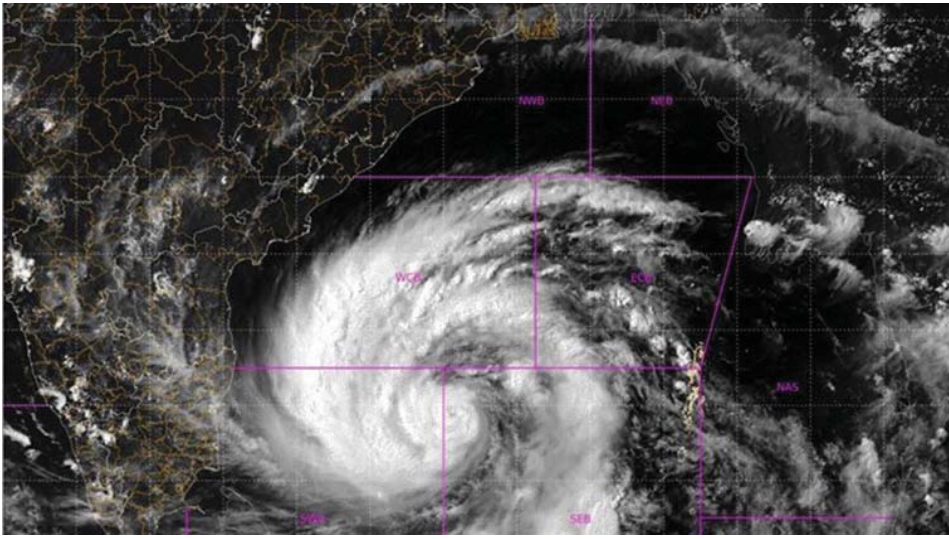


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# Fiscal Stimulus List includes States, MNREGA, Business



(News Agencies) FM announced seven steps in the last phase of announcements

The final tranche of announcement of the government's fiscal stimulus comes as the country is about to enter the lockdown phase 4. Union finance minister unveils the fifth and final session of the Centre's Rs 20 lakh crore package. The minister announced seven fresh steps. The list includes MGNREGA, health, education, businesses and COVID, decriminalisation of Companies Act, ease of doing business, private sector and state governments. **Lockdown 4.0 to continue till May 31 Unrestricted inter-state and**

**intra-state movement of medical professionals** According to an order by the National Disaster Management Authority, the nationwide lockdown 4.0 will carry on till May 31. It focuses on gradual revival of economic activities. The National Disaster Management Authority today issued a letter to Union Home Secretary, directing all ministries/ departments of the government of India and state governments/authorities to extend the lockdown measures. All states/UTs have been asked to ensure unrestricted inter-state and intra-state movement of medical professionals.

## The surveys can't be true: Modi's popularity has taken a beating with migrant crisis

The idea that nothing hurts Modi is bunkum. He gets too much credit for the opposition's inability to seize opportunities.

(News Agencies) Some surveys have suggested that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity ratings have shot up, with people approving handling of the pandemic. It's been a few weeks since these surveys came out last. People's patience with the economic cost of the lockdown had not begun running out yet and the migrant crisis had not peaked.

In any case, you have to be really gullible to believe Indian surveys. The credibility ratings of our opinion polls are clearly worse than media and politicians put together. Most

surveys can't even get exit polls right. It would be much more reliable to hear ground reports, or just talk to a diverse set of people around you. Both these things have been made difficult by the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown. Nevertheless, one would do well to believe a fine ground reporter like Jyoti Yadav when she says migrant labourers feel more hurt than angry with Modi.

This sentiment is similar to what one saw, heard and felt about Modi for much of 2018. Around that time, Modi voters and supporters were on a back

foot. The sentiment was that while voters didn't have a choice, Modi had failed to deliver much. Modi and BJP supporters' best argument was "Aur hai kaun?" — the TINA (there is no alternative) factor. That didn't say much about Modi's achievements. In December 2018, the BJP lost its strongholds Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh was in trouble with the SP-BSP alliance. The strongest indication was Rajasthan, a state Congress tried best to lose with factional fighting but still won.



## Cyclone Amphan takes at least 10-12 lives in Bengal, three in Odisha, total damage being ascertained

Several areas hit by the super cyclone in Bengal were cut off and ascertaining the extent of the damage caused will take time, said Mamata Banerjee.

(News Agencies) Super cyclone Amphan has taken at least 10-12 lives in West Bengal and at least another three in Odisha as it wreaked havoc in districts of North and South 24 Parganas after roaring past coastal districts of Odisha before making landfall between Digha in West Bengal and Bangladesh's Hatia islands late Wednesday afternoon. Uprooted trees, traffic signals and power outages were left in its wake.

At around 2:30 pm on Wednesday, Cyclone Amphan made landfall with sustained wind speeds of 155-165 kmph spiralling up to 185 kmph and weakening

to 130 kmph when it reached West Bengal capital Kolkata, uprooting trees and traffic signals and blocking arterial roads. Some portions of dilapidated buildings caved in.

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee said the cyclone had killed "at least 10-12 people" in the state and caused the maximum damage in the two districts of South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas, which were "totally devastated".

"There are 5 lakh persons in relief centers. Several areas are totally cut off and cannot be reached yet. We have no information yet - it will take at least 3-4 days to

assess the damage," Banerjee told reporters. The details of the reported casualties in Bengal are awaited.

Banerjee will remain at the state secretariat Nabanna, where she has been camping since Tuesday, to oversee further relief operations and take stock of the damage.

Early reports from coastal Bengal received on Wednesday evening indicated that thousands of mudhouses collapsed in the storm, while trees and electric poles were uprooted. Embankments were breached and saline water gushed into villages

in several districts in the S u n d a r b a n s . In neighbouring Odisha's Bhadrak district, a two-month-old baby was killed when the walls of his family's mud house collapsed early Wednesday morning due to overnight rain, while in Kendrapara district, a woman who had gone out fishing this morning drowned to death. Officials said that a team had been sent to Bhadrak district to ascertain the exact cause of death after an autopsy. A woman of Bhogarai block in Balasore district died after an electric pole fell on her. The woman had stepped outside for some



work when the pole uprooted due to the winds. While officials in Odisha had evacuated more than 1.5 lakh people from the coastal and adjoining districts into cyclone shelters till Tuesday evening, they could not clarify why the family of the deceased newborn was left behind. Amphan, the strongest storm since the 1999 supercyclone, first barreled along the Odisha coast, with maximum wind speeds of between 100-120 kmph in Paradip and the Dhamra coast of Bhadrak district respectively. It uprooted trees and bent electric poles in coastal Odisha districts of Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak and Balasore. Nearly 34 lakh power consumers in the state were affected as 65 numbers of 33 KV feeders were affected by the cyclone.

Last week, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled some major structural reforms in India's moribund defence sector, as part of a coronavirus disease (Covid-19)-related macroeconomic stimulus, and the increase in foreign direct investment in defence manufacturing to 74% is radical. However, these are all policy changes that have "potential" and need to be implemented effectively before their outcome can be objectively assessed. In the interim, India's military security challenges, both current and long-term, came into unintended focus in this month even as the nation is grappling with the pandemic and its tragic impact on millions of citizens.

In early May, the Handwara terror attack saw the Indian Army losing a colonel and other personnel, pointing to the abiding tenacity of the low-intensity-conflict (LIC) that has been simmering in Kashmir. This is a complex proxy war where the external Pakistani stimulus has permeated the internal security strand with all its corrosive communal elements. It is unlikely to end soon.

Currently, India is managing an anomalous territorial challenge exigency, albeit of a low order. The eastern Ladakh sector saw a stand-off between Indian and Chinese soldiers in the Pangong Tso sector. While



## India isn't prepared to meet its defence needs

**Recent reforms have potential. India must decide how to acquire effective military capabilities in a post-Covid world**

it is well below Doklam, media reports indicate that stones were used and it is encouraging that no ordnance was exchanged, as has been the pattern for well over three decades. But the long-festering territorial dispute with China, remains alive on the national security radar. The more intriguing element is that Nepal summoned the Indian ambassador on May 11 to lodge a protest against the construction of a road by India in an area (Lipu Lekh pass to Dharchula in Uttarakhand) that Kathmandu claims lies within its territory.

To add to the spectrum of challenges, reports have emerged of China enhancing its Indian Ocean (IO) footprint in an island proximate to Male in

the Maldives. Thus the possibility of a Hambantota kind of facility/access for the PLA navy in the IO cannot be ignored by Indian security planners. And to cap this opaque security challenge, May also symbolises India's complex nuclear-missile anxiety. The regional strategic environment became rough for India when China acquired nuclear weapons in October 1964; the subsequent Sino-Pakistan weapons of mass destruction (WMD) covert cooperation presented Delhi with a sui generis security conundrum. The Pakistani nuclear weapon that Beijing had enabled was being used to help terrorism stoked by religious fervour — what

one had described as the nuclear weapon-enabled terrorism (NWET) dilemma.

India sought to assuage its latent WMD anxiety in May 1998 through the Shakti nuclear tests under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's watch on May 11. Two decades later, the regional WMD-terror nexus has become muddier and the techno-strategic permutations are bewildering. Does India have the wherewithal to deal effectively with this complex spectrum of national security challenges — one part of which is further aggravated by the current domestic political-ideological orientation? The answer is no — and for years experts have been pointing out that

the annual defence allocation cannot sustain the kind of human, material and inventory profile that India needs. The last defence budget (excluding pensions) was Rs 3,37,000 crore. The amount available for modernisation of equipment and new acquisitions was shrinking to about 32% from the optimum of 40% of the budget. In the backdrop of Covid-19, India's macroeconomic challenge will worsen. The fiscal deficit is set to breach the recommended 3.5% limit; the only question is how high it would go. On May 8, the government pegged central borrowing for 2020-21 at Rs 12,00,000 crore — a significant increase from the budget estimate of Rs 7,80,000 crore. This

fiscal stress will have a bearing on sectors earlier referred to as "non-plan" in the budgetary allocation, of which defence is a visible component. Thus, it is unlikely that the armed forces will receive anything close to Rs 3,50,000 crore (approx \$46 billion). There are also unconfirmed reports of a budget slash in defence allocation due to Covid-19, ranging from Rs 40,000 to Rs 80,000 crore.

Given that the Covid-19 challenge and its accumulating debris of economic devastation and human destitution will be the higher national priority for some years, India will have to embark on a radical review of its security challenges and the road map to deal with this complex spectrum. Many nations are facing a similar predicament, but some abiding elements in the Indian context must be noted. Strategic geography and its attendant security exigencies will not change due to the pandemic. The low-intensity conflict stoked by Pakistan and the internal security fabric will be turbulent and the political apex will seek to assuage national sentiment in this regard. What kind of military capability India needs, its technological contour, and how this can be both nurtured and sustained in an affordable manner in a post-Covid-19 world needs careful and objective assessment.

## US says Covid-19 crisis gives India chance to become key part of new supply chain

**top US diplomat suggested that the Covid-19 crisis and the move by countries to carry out "a little bit of de-globalisation and of onshoring more of the critical production" could present an opportunity for India to become a bigger player in global supply chains.**



The Covid-19 crisis has presented an opportunity for India to become a key part of new trusted supply chain relationships but it will have to reduce tariffs and adopt more welcoming policies for foreign players, a top US diplomat said on Wednesday. Alice Wells, the outgoing head of the

state department's South and Central Asia bureau, said bilateral trade had totalled almost a record \$150 billion in 2019 but the US continues to have concerns about India's "protected market that can be difficult and sometimes not provide a level playing field for foreign companies". India and the

US had made concerted efforts to finalise a limited trade deal ahead of President Donald Trump's visit to the country in February but were unable to reach common ground on a range of issues. Before winding up the visit, Trump had held out hope for trade deal by the end of 2020. During an online briefing for journalists, Wells said she couldn't predict whether the US Trade Representative and the Indian government would be able to finalise an agreement this year, but noted that the "impetus for achieving a trade deal is very much present".

instead, Wells

suggested that the Covid-19 crisis and the move by countries to carry out "a little bit of de-globalisation and of onshoring more of the critical production" could present an opportunity for India to become a bigger player in global supply chains.

"I think there's a very vigorous effort to diversify supply chains. This is a real moment of opportunity for India, by adopting more open and welcoming policies, by reducing tariffs that allow manufacturing companies inside of India to be part of a global supply chain — it's a real moment of opportunity for us to create trusted supply chain

relationships with one another," she said.

India, as one of the world's foremost producers of pharmaceuticals, generic drugs and vaccines, can also play a "critically important role in the treatment and health of the world as we move out of the pandemic", Wells said. In recent weeks, India has supplied hydroxychloroquine and other drugs to dozens of countries, including the US, both through commercial sales and grants. It has also sent medical rapid response teams to several countries, including the Maldives and Kuwait. On the other hand,

Wells was very critical of China's Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, saying they were exposing countries such as Pakistan to "predatory loans". The US is concerned about the lack of transparency in CPEC projects, unfair rates of profits guaranteed to Chinese state-owned organisations and distortions the project has caused in Pakistan's economy, including a massive imbalance in trade with China, she said. "I think at a time of crisis like Covid, when the world is reeling from the economic consequences

# Quarantine fatigue has well and truly set in and that could spell trouble

**In some US states, bars are already packed again and you can even get your nails done. Will lockdown boredom lead to a dreaded second wave?**

Coronavirus is officially cancelled: the US is bored of it, so it is over. That is what it feels like, anyway. In Wisconsin, bars are packed; Texas has reopened restaurants; and Mississippi and Louisiana are reopening their casinos. People in Georgia can get their nails done. In New York, where I live, strict lockdown restrictions are still in place, but people are growing lax. The weather was beautiful over the weekend and the streets



were full of people drinking takeout cocktails with friends. Beaches were crowded. Quarantine fatigue has set in. That is not just my observation: researchers at the

University of Maryland tracked phone location data and found that, over the past few weeks, people have started going out more. While all the polls say that Americans

support stay-at-home orders, their actions tell another story. Unfortunately, we have a good idea how this story ends: during the 1918 flu pandemic, many areas saw a deadly second wave of infections. Looking at the current scramble to return to normality, it seems highly possible that history will repeat itself. It is a privilege to feel bored. Those of us lucky enough to be able to work from home owe it to the workers who are risking

their lives every day to suck it up and stay put. Nevertheless, I don't think there is anything to be gained in shaming those going out. We can't expect people to stay home for ever, particularly those of us who live in small inner-city apartments with no gardens. As the US magazine the Atlantic recently noted, "instead of an all-or-nothing approach to risk prevention", we need clear guidelines on how to live safely in a

pandemic. Instead of the UK's vague messaging about "staying alert" (which is still better than the US's lack of any federal governmental messaging), we need clear direction about what constitutes a high-risk activity and what constitutes a low-risk activity. This is a marathon, not a sprint; if we are going to get through it, we need a more nuanced, more manageable approach to lockdown.

**By Arwa Mahdawi, Courtesy The Guardian**

## The ugly face of Middle India

**Lessons from the pandemic: if you are poor or a migrant in today's India, you are in deep trouble even if the virus spares you.**

As of this writing, I have no clue when the lockdown will finally end. The economy is in trouble. The government's estimates of when we would flatten the Covid curve have been shattered --- we should have turned things around by the middle of May—but the number of infections keeps rising.

And yet, we are not doing so badly. Our mortality rate is low compared to many advanced countries. All governments (States and Centre) have done their best and we must remember that we are much better off than say the UK or the US.

My learnings from the Pandemic have not been about the disease (scientists are still figuring out how Covid functions) but about us as a people. Here are some of them.

Migrants: Does the urban middle class realise how much cities depend on migrants from the villages of India? I don't think many of us had any idea till the exodus began in the early days of the lockdown. Clearly the Centre had no clue how much of an issue migrant labour would become. Nobody announces a complete lockdown with just four hours notice, if the migrant issue has been factored in before taking the decision. So did the government not know? Or did it just not care?

Even when we finally

came to terms with the dimension of the migrant tragedy, too few of us showed any empathy. The sight of migrants walking home, on the road for hundreds of miles, each with his or her possessions in one little bag should have left a nation heartbroken.

Instead the horrors piled up. The returning migrants were lathi charged. They were told they could not go home. They were denied transport. They were rounded up like cattle and sprayed with poisonous bleach. Dead bodies of migrants were piled on blocks of ice in open trucks. When the ice melted, the corpses rotted. Even now, the Centre and the States act like migrants are sub-human. They are accorded no dignity and treated with contempt. Some people say that this is because migrants are not in their villages at election time and are not registered voters in the cities where they work.

No idea if this true. But it would explain a lot.

Domestic Help: The ugly side of the urban middle class is the one that domestic staff see. We are happy making domestic help work in our homes but at the slightest sign of adversity, we say "they are just servants" and treat them like dirt. I have lost count of the number of colonies and housing societies that refused to let servants in on the grounds that they were poor, so they

must be dirty, so they must be carriers of Covid. Many of their employers promptly turned their backs on them and refused to pay their salaries.

RWAs: The villains of the piece, at least when it came to domestic staff and other matters, were the Residents Welfare Associations. These are bodies that often do good work (my RWA has done some commendable things) but which, all too often, fall into the hands of little Hitlers.

Most of us are too busy earning a living to take much interest in RWA elections but these can sometimes rival Lok Sabha elections in their ferocity and viciousness. Nearly always, the winners are people with nothing else to do who treat their colonies as empires and run them like mini-Neros.

On Twitter, people have regularly complained about the men (and it is nearly always men) who run RWAs saying they are usually retired bureaucrats, who now look for new ways to seem powerful. Others have said many RWAs are run by the sorts of chaps who were retired as Major by the Army and sent packing.

I haven't conducted a survey so I don't know the background of all of these men but yes, it is true that some have behaved like small-time dictators, inventing their own rules, even ignoring government regulations when they regard

them as too liberal. Some won't allow delivery men. Others will throw out newspaper hawkers and so on.

It may be a great democracy outside but within the colonies, it is often a dictatorship of pygmies.

Liquor: The notion that liquor is evil has haunted India since Gandhiji's day. So, even as exceptions were made for food delivery during the lockdown, the Centre rejected all efforts by states to allow the sale of alcohol.

As experience with Prohibition has shown us again and again, the consequences were inevitable; it led to the development of a black market and an increase in criminal activity. When liquor sales were finally allowed, the police had to be called to control the mobs who crowded the liquor shops. It started out with the indefensible behaviour of the Tablighi-Jamaat which, in no small way, contributed to the spread of Covid in Delhi and other parts of India.

This was the cue for an outburst of anti-Muslim sentiment on social media, mostly organised by control rooms and political IT cells. The spread of Covid was blamed on Muslims in general and words like jihad were flung around. Stories were spread about how Muslim vendors infected with Covid were licking vegetables before selling them to

Hindus.

My learnings from this were, first of all, that social media (and a captive mainstream media) can turn anything in India into a Hindu-Muslim issue and secondly, that since some political parties spend a lot of money on social media to promote this kind of hatred, it must work at a political level.

Politicians may be liars but they are not idiots. So if they devote so much time, money and effort to the demonisation of Muslims, they must feel that there are votes to be won from hatred.

Which, in its own way, is even more depressing than the pandemic because all pandemics end eventually.

But hatred never dies.

The Media: It's odd but TV channels have rarely been more watched (viewing figures shot up during the lockdown) and less relevant. Some of them did an exemplary job of talking to global experts during the pandemic (for instance, NDTV and India Today) and keeping us informed. But all too often, channels stopped bothering to report the pandemic and went for the easy option of biased, noisy, and hate-filled debates.

It was like watching the World Wrestling Federation every evening. It was mindless and filled with make-believe good guys and role-perfect bad guys; none of it real but all of it vulgar, aggressive and inflammatory.

I doubt if anyone learned anything interesting, new or useful from watching most channels. Digital and social media broke the stories that mattered. Until Barkha Dutt

went out on the road, some channels pretended that there was no migrant exodus.

There is a broader lesson in that: If a single reporter with few resources and without a big network to back her, whose reporting was watched mainly on smart phones, can set the agenda, what does it say for the future of the established channels?

As for newspapers, the combination of misinformation spread on social media ("the virus thrives on paper" etc.) and the bans imposed by the little men who run RWAs, damaged them badly. Many people got out of the habit of even looking at them. But I still think papers will win back their readers after the lockdown. They have a huge advantage. You have to make conscious decision not to order a paper --- talk to your newsagent and cancel your subscription. With TV, you have to make a conscious decision to do the opposite: to select the channel. It doesn't come to you automatically. So newspaper subscriptions tend to be static whereas TV viewing habits can change overnight. So it's not over for papers --- by a long way. But I imagine that they will have to up their game to stay relevant once normalcy resumes. And finally: The news is not all bad. There were many acts of kindness and compassion. India is still, at its heart, a country full of decent, peaceful people. But the pandemic showed us that there is another face that we don't always see. And it is an ugly, frightening face.

**By Vir Sanghvi**

# No One Knows What's Going to Happen Stop asking pundits to predict the future after the coronavirus. It doesn't exist.

The best prophet, Thomas Hobbes once wrote, is the best guesser. That would seem to be the last word on our capacity to predict the future: We can't.

But it is a truth humans have never been able to accept. People facing immediate danger want to hear an authoritative voice they can draw assurance from; they want to be told what will occur, how they should prepare, and that all will be well. We are not well designed, it seems, to live in uncertainty. Rousseau exaggerated only slightly when he said that when things are truly important, we prefer to be wrong than to believe nothing at all.

The history of humanity is the history of impatience. Not only do we want knowledge of the future, we want it when we want it. The Book of Job condemns as prideful this desire for immediate attention. Speaking out of the whirlwind, God makes it clear that He is not a vending machine. He shows His face and reveals His plans when the time is ripe, not when the mood strikes us. We must learn to wait upon the Lord, the Bible tells us. Good luck with that, Job no doubt grumbled.

When the gods are silent, human beings take things into their own hands. In religions where the divine was thought to inscribe its messages in the natural world, specialists were taught to take auspices from the disposition of stars in the sky, from decks of cards, dice, a pile of sticks, a candle flame, a bowl of oily water, or the liver of some poor sheep. With these materials, battles could be planned, plagues predicted and bad marriages avoided.

In those places where the gods were thought to communicate verbally with humans, oracles and prophets were designated to provide answers on demand. The most highly revered oracles in the ancient Greek world were the high priestesses at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. When it came time to respond to a petitioner who had placed a question before her, the priestess would enter the inner sanctum and seat herself on a tripod erected over a crevice in the ground, out of which inebriating gases were thought to rise. These fumes paralyzed her rational faculties and put her in a trance of receptivity that allowed the god Apollo to speak through her in cryptic remarks and riddles. These would be interpreted by a second figure, the prophet, who answered the grateful petitioner in poetry or prose. It was a very successful start-up and made Delphi a wealthy town.

Prophets today are less flamboyant. Former prime ministers do not, as a rule, sniff drugs before appearing on CNN. They sit meekly in the green room sipping mineral water before being called on to announce our fate. Augurs have given up on sheep livers and replaced them with big data and statistical modeling. The

wonder is that we still cry out for their help, given that the future is full of surprises.

Professional forecasters know this about the future, which is why in the small print of their reports they lay out all the assumptions that went into the forecast and the degree of statistical confidence one might have in particular estimates, given the data and research methods used. But harried journalists and public officials don't read or comprehend the footnotes, and with the public buying for information, they understandably pass on the most striking estimates just to get through the day.

Ancient augurs and prophets were in high-risk professions. Many lost their lives when their predictions failed to materialize, either executed by sovereigns or pulled apart by mobs. We see a bloodless version of this reaction today in the public's declining confidence in both the news media and the government.

Take a banal example: snowstorms and school closings. A half century ago, when meteorological forecasting was less sophisticated, parents and children would not learn that classes were canceled until the storm began and it was announced on radio and television that very morning. We lived in harmless uncertainty, which for kids was thrilling. When snowflakes fell they even looked like manna from heaven.

Today, mayors and school superintendents, putting their faith in the meteorologists, routinely announce closings a day or more in advance. If the storm fails to arrive, though, they are sharply criticized by parents who lost a day of work or had to find day care. And if an unforeseen storm paralyzes the city, leaving streets unsalted and children stranded at school, the reaction is far worse. More than one mayor has lost a re-election bid because of failed prophecies, victim of our collective overconfidence in human foresight.

Our addiction to economic forecasting is far more consequential. Here the footnotes really do matter but politicians and the press encourage magical thinking.

The candidate declares: My plan will create 205,000 new jobs, raise the Dow 317 points and lower the price of gasoline 15 cents. Two years later, the gloating headline reads: The President's Unkept Promises. Stagnant growth, a bear market and war in the Middle East make re-election unlikely. Never mind that declining global demand slowed growth, that Wall Street is a drama queen and that a freakish tanker collision set off the war. A failed presidency is declared. And so the press and the public turn to fresher faces — who of course offer the same absurdly precise predictions. Not for nothing did Gore Vidal call us the United States of Amnesia.

(Contd on page 25)

# Coronavirus Crisis And The Future Of Mass Movements

Since the beginning of this pandemic, the world is experiencing higher growth of poverty, hunger and unemployment.

The spectre of pandemic-led crisis and its relationship with social transformation is not new. The Plague of Justinian and the Black Death had huge impact on weakening of feudalism in Europe. It did not pave the path for democratic movements in Europe but made people conscious about the difference in sufferings. The masses suffered in different plagues while the feudal ruling class protected themselves within their forts and castles. The political landscape in Europe changed after the pandemic. The agrarian capitalism in England, decentralised oligarchical commercial capitalism in Italy, partnership between aristocracy and monarchy in France and Spain led to the consolidation of capitalism and rise of authoritarian state in Europe. People's resistance movements and sacrifice paved the path for democracy in different parts of Europe. The history is repeating itself during this Coronavirus crisis in which rich live with their abundance, and masses suffer in deaths and destitutions. There is also growing tendencies of authoritarianism within and outside Europe.

Since the beginning of this pandemic, the world is experiencing higher growth of poverty, hunger and unemployment. The capitalist states have failed to respond to the crisis in any meaningful manner. Faced with the inability to find solutions, the right-wing ruling classes have unleashed reactionary nationalism as a weapon, that provides breathing space to market forces to recover from

the crisis. The market forces are doing everything in their power to capture the resources of the state. The states and governments are using lockdown as an opportunity to destroy the democratic space by spreading fear and xenophobia. Many governments are using this crisis to dismantle labour laws that protect the workers and handing over national resources to corporations. The pandemic works like a political lifeline for the authoritarian bigots and capitalist classes. The crisis is proliferating like the mutating power of the Coronavirus. The policy of physical distance is branded as social distancing, which further erodes social ties in the name of defeating the coronavirus from spreading. The social distancing policy is a way of reconfiguration of social and political relations necessary to socialise the fear of the virus and naturalise the crisis in the society.

The American and Eurocentric intellectuals are trying to normalise the crisis as a cyclic process. Such a narrative is already outlined by William Strauss and Neil Howe in their book on "The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy-What the Cycles of History Tell Us About America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny". The Strauss-Howe generational stage theory is essentialist and functional. It lacks empirical evidence. The old fault lines of class, race and gender continue to exist among different generations.

(Contd on page 25)



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# Supporting the unemployed

Job losses are rising across the board. The State needs to help

India was in the middle of an economic slowdown before the pandemic. With the coronavirus, and the national lockdown imposed to curb its spread, the slowdown has potentially turned into a recession. The government's announcement of ₹ 20 lakh crore package is an acknowledgment of the crisis at hand.

One key way in which this crisis is getting reflected is in the unemployment figures. Even before the pandemic, India was staring at relatively high unemployment — an official report indicated a 6% unemployment rate in 2017-18, the highest in 45 years. Over 12

million people enter the workforce every year, and India has struggled to create new jobs. This trend has now got accelerated. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the unemployment rate was 24% in the week ending May 17. Its April data shows that it was predominantly small traders and labourers, followed by entrepreneurs, and then salaried employees who lost their jobs. This is not surprising. If factories and shops are closed, if daily wage labourers and street vendors can't work, if companies begin losing revenues drastically, there will be job

losses. The problem is that the easing of the lockdown will not immediately restore these jobs. That is why a key component of any relief package has to take into account this rising unemployment. By pumping in an additional Rs 40,000 crore into the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the government is hoping to create a financial buffer for those who have returned home to their villages. And by unveiling structural reforms, it hopes to get the economy kickstarted. But this will not solve the immediate crisis — where people, in the absence of jobs, don't have incomes, which, in turn, makes basic



livelihood difficult. The poor will get most severely affected, but so will large sections of the middle class who are staring at salary cuts or job losses, which will reduce their purchasing power and ability to take and pay loans sharply. This, in turn, will have an impact across a range of sectors. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said that she is open to suggestions and, as the year progresses, there will be more measures. India

will have to look more carefully at both the United States, which is offering a generous unemployment allowance, and the United Kingdom, which has offered wage support to workers. There will be issues of resources, and identifying and targeting beneficiaries. But India may, sooner than later, need to introduce an unemployment allowance to help citizens overcome this crisis.

Courtesy The Hindustan Times

## Covid-19: The science behind India's trajectory

The predominantly asymptomatic course of the disease and limited number of critical cases merit more scrutiny

In the history of mankind, there have been several pandemics from the Justinian Plague in the 6th century to the Spanish Flu (H1N1 influenza) in 1918. The 21st century remarkably has already seen three coronavirus-related outbreaks — the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars) in 2002 which claimed 800 lives, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (Mers) in 2012 (862 deaths), and now the coronavirus disease (Covid-19). Despite advancements in medical sciences, it is impossible to predict when the next infectious disease outbreak will take place. So, we need to be on full alert. With India surpassing China in the overall number of infections, a comparison between the two in terms of infection trajectories is interesting. Compared to the more gradual increase of infections in India since mid-March, China witnessed a steep rise in January and February, forcing the administration to impose a strict lockdown in Wuhan on January 23 — two months earlier than India — lasting for over 70 days by which time the curve was flattened and has remained, by and large, static till date. The United States (US) and Europe have shown a trajectory similar to that of China, which makes India something of an outlier.

Noticeably, India recorded nearly 45% fewer fatalities than China, although active cases remain over 60% of the total number of persons infected, as against nearly zero in China. India's over 38% recoveries are higher than those of many nations at the same level

of infection, although still lower than hotspot European nations such as Germany, Spain and Italy. Further, while the disease remained primarily confined in China to the Hubei province in general, and Wuhan in particular, India witnessed a more widespread infection with the four states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Delhi accounting for two-thirds of India's total cases.

Higher recovery rates are indicative of effective adaptive immunity developing against the pathogen.

On the other hand, the largely inherent immunity of the Indian population might explain the comparative lower fatality/severity rates so far observed. At this point of time, the important question is whether people who clear a SARS-CoV-2 infection can ward off the virus in the future? An answer to this will have implications for creating better vaccines. Epidemiological and nutritional factors have been discussed to explain the population-specific differential susceptibility, progression and severity/mortality of Covid-19 across the globe. Nevertheless, deciphering genetic polymorphism of the immunologically-relevant genes that influence host immunity could reveal population-specific correlates of protection and/or vulnerability to the Covid-19 challenge.

The two most important of these are those encompassing the human leucocyte antigen (HLA) system and the Killer-cell Immunoglobulin-like Receptor (KIR)?genes, both of which



have evolved in humans to maintain a robust immune challenge to invading microbes. Substantial data exists on the genetic propensity of HLA and KIR systems in autoimmune and infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS. The highly polymorphic nature of the two genetic systems signifies their functional importance acquired during the course of evolution. They functionally regulate the body's immune warriors, namely, the cytotoxic T-cells on one hand, and the natural killer cells on the other, both of which directly target the virus and help to eliminate it. A deep understanding of these in Covid-19 will be vital in developing effective screening tools for predicting prognosis and response to therapy, including designing individualised therapeutic strategies. In

the Indian context, scientists must find answers to two critical observations. First, the observed predominantly asymptomatic clinical course of the disease, and second, the rather limited number of severe and critical cases in India so far. All efforts must be made to discover measurable immunological biomarkers that are predictive of severe disease and favourable treatment outcomes. Despite limitations in understanding the mechanistic aspects of Covid-19 pathology, the challenge is to develop strategies for recruiting innate and adaptive arms of

the immune system against the virus. A recent study found that some people who have never been infected with SARS-CoV-2 harbour T-cells that target this virus, indicating that they might have previously been infected with other coronaviruses sharing sequence similarities. Again, this is encouraging data for designing therapies. The question is how long does it take to develop reasonably effective treatments for contagious diseases? Historically, while smallpox and polio took thousands of years to get an effective vaccine, HIV/AIDS took a mere 15 years before antiviral drug therapy was developed although an effective vaccine has still not been found.

By NK Mehra

Courtesy The Hindustan Times



# The new normal is here?

## Activity is resuming just as cases are surging. Be careful

The fourth phase of the lockdown, announced by the government on Sunday, represents a departure from the past three phases. While relaxations were gradually introduced in each phase, India is now substantially opening up. Inter-state travel is allowed; markets — excluding malls — will resume business; there will be more vehicular movement, including of taxi aggregators; more people will now go back to offices; and the everyday rhythm of life, interrupted since March 25, will be restored to some extent. States have been given the authority to demarcate red, orange and green zones, and will have more liberty in

determining the extent of activity permitted in them. To be sure, there will be strict control in containment zones, but the big picture in lockdown 4.0 is of an India getting back on its feet.

Here is the paradox. India is opening up on the very day that it neared 100,000 positive cases. Delhi has crossed 10,000 cases, the fourth state to have hit the number after Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. In the last fortnight, the coronavirus disease also hit 180 additional districts, taking the total affected districts to over 550. Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh

witnessed the sharpest increase in the number of districts — which is primarily being attributed to the return of migrant workers home, who are now testing positive. This is the case at a time when most migrant workers have not yet returned home, or been tested. So with more relaxations and travel, expect a further spike in numbers.

Remember that India imposed the lockdown when there were just a little less than 500 cases. It is opening up when there is a clear surge. The lockdown, as this newspaper has argued, was yielding diminishing returns on the health front and was causing economic devastation of an unprecedented scale. The



relaxations are, therefore, legitimate. This period has also been used to ramp up health infrastructure to a limited extent — with more dedicated hospitals, testing kits, personal protective equipment, the evolution of a health protocol around testing-tracing-isolation-treatment, and consistent messaging on social distancing. India will now have to learn to live with this contradiction — between the rising number of cases and relaxations and resumption of

economic activity. Adjusting to this “new normal” will not be easy. Government systems will come under stress. There will be more panic as more and more people test positive. But there is no choice. Citizens can do their bit by abiding by social distancing norms, wearing masks and taking precautions, while the State must ensure that gains on the health front are not squandered, and the balance between lives and livelihoods is managed as well as possible.

# Centre's Covid-19 report card: It recognised the threat, but slipped on migrants, economy

As India prepares for the next phase in the battle, it should build on the strengths and remedy the weaknesses.

Fifty-five days after India went in for arguably the most stringent lockdown in the world, the country opened up substantially on Tuesday, though the lockdown has been officially extended to May 31. This is a good moment to evaluate what the Centre did right, and what it got wrong in this period.

Here is where the Narendra Modi government was right. One, it understood the gravity of the challenge posed by the coronavirus pandemic, did not underplay the threat, and emphasised the need for precautions and social distancing. Two, despite the economic costs, it took the right decision in imposing a lockdown on March 25 — the country needed it then to reduce the spread of the infection and prepare the health infrastructure. Three, once it recognised the importance of masks and personal protective equipment (PPE), it scaled up domestic production. Four, it recognised the centrality of the states in this battle, with Mr Modi regularly consulting chief ministers and taking into account their inputs. Five, the

prime minister's messaging by first emphasising lives over livelihoods, and then the need to reconcile both lives and livelihoods — as it became clear that the pandemic was here to stay — was important. And finally, it behaved responsibly by helping countries in need, and not using this moment to score geopolitical points.

Where did the government go

wrong? One, it underestimated the desire of migrant workers to return home, causing one of the most severe humanitarian crises India has seen. It was inconsistent regarding their travel policy, didn't provide adequate safety nets, and was insensitive when reports of them walking home emerged. Two, it slipped on the health front — by, first, having limited testing criteria, testing at low numbers for long, and not

providing enough PPE in the early stages. It is not clear if India still has the infrastructure in case there is a surge in cases. Three, it greatly delayed the economic package — and when the package was announced, it did not have a strong enough component to stimulate demand and provide immediate relief. Four, the Centre did not do enough to support the states financially. Five, it has been

sporadic and often not transparent in its communication, particularly on the spread of the disease. And finally, in the enforcement of the lockdown, the security apparatus often used excessive force and violated guidelines of the government itself. As India prepares for the next phase in the battle, it should build on the strengths and remedy the weaknesses.

## Lessons from the Great Depression for India

Like Roosevelt did for the US in the 1930s, India must fix past inconsistencies, realise its potential, boost industry

Swaraj, Suraj, Ramarajya, self-reliance — these ideas have influenced us for decades. Earlier, they pushed us towards freedom from colonialism. Today, they generate some amount of controversy. India revisited the idea of self-reliance when Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation last week. He told us that India will emerge from the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) crisis as a self-reliant nation. But what is self-reliance? How can we achieve it? Can self-reliance achieve the sort of freedom we once wanted? From the radicals to the moderates, people believe that freedom, as it stands today, is incomplete. But it is India's democratic set-up that allows them the right to dissent, to question, and to protest across the country. When the British left India, Winston Churchill

believed that the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims would not be bridged easily. Today, 73 years since, India stands a united country, having proved many naysayers like Churchill wrong. To overcome crises and grow as a country, leadership is important. The Great Depression, which gripped the United States (US) in the 1930s, is being discussed in the context of the economic aftermath of Covid-19. The economic downturn began in the US around the end of 1929, with a sharp dip in production and GDP, and a sharp increase in unemployment. Production also dropped significantly in other industrialised countries of Europe. It was in these dark days that Franklin D Roosevelt was elected president. He had a monumental task ahead of him, but he proved that leadership is forged in the crucible of crises. Roosevelt

took several hard decisions to stabilise agriculture production and improve the quality of life for farmers. In 1933, one-fourth of the workforce was unemployed. By forming the Tennessee Valley Authority, Roosevelt began the construction of dams and power stations. He took measures to control floods — a common occurrence at that time. In 1935, he instituted the social security Act which guaranteed pensions. The federal government took on the responsibility to ensure meals for children of the unemployed. Under the head of public work administration, his government provided direct financial assistance to at least three million people. To fund this, he increased the taxes on the rich. Roosevelt's efforts led to the birth of a new nation.



# The economic package unpacked

## Additional government spending is negligible. Demand will remain low. The crisis will persist

The announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi of an economic policy package amounting to Rs 20 lakh crore, described by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman as a stimulus, to counteract the impact of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) has turned out to be a case of flattering to deceive. It had been received with shock and awe as it had appeared substantial and bold. Even though it had been stated that the package included the financial counterpart of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s measures and the government's outlay under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana in March, the assessment was that the resulting stimulus would yet be substantial. The details, however, were revealed days later, and there is widespread disappointment at the contents. There is now shock that given the severity of the crisis, the central government has done so little after having remained silent for over seven weeks.

Before the details were announced, the guessing game had been to figure out the allocation of the enhanced fiscal outlay assumed to be coming. This is because the

economic impact of government spending will vary, depending upon whether it is used to rebuild Lutyens Delhi, build roads and bridges in the four corners of the country and in its middle, recapitalize public sector banks or retire public debt. Now that the contents of the economic package are public knowledge, this has turned out to have been a futile exercise. There will be negligible additional spending by the government.

Over and above the commitments already made by the government and RBI, the largest item in the package is a provision of Rs 3 lakh crore to guarantee loans to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector to be made by commercial banks. While this is creative from a financial viewpoint, it is similar to RBI's existing liquidity-enhancing initiatives. Thus, a little over half the package comprises liquidity provision, by RBI and the Government of India, and the government's relief package of March 26. The rest is a ragbag of funds aimed at various sectors of the economy. These, such as the proposal aimed at expanding

infrastructure for agriculture, cannot be faulted, but their impact may reasonably be expected only in the medium-term. The provision of loans amounting to Rs 90,000 crore from power public sector units to distribution companies in the electricity sector is imaginative too, but it remains a supply side intervention.

The guarantee for bank lending to the MSME sector, its largest and most applauded part, best demonstrates the unbalanced nature of the package. Though important in terms of employment, the sector is dependent on the rest of the economy for its market. Unless the rest of the domestic economy is revived, the MSME sector may face a shortage of demand, and its production may soon sputter to a close.

It is for this reason that an economic package for the economy emerging out of the lockdown requires a stimulus enhancing demand across the economy. The best way to have done this would have been to spend on infrastructure. Infrastructure spending uniquely creates structures that raise productivity

and extends spending power to the section of the population most affected by the lockdown, namely daily wage labourers. The crucial difference is that while liquidity infusion in the form of credit is an input made available, a stimulus is an injection into the income stream. The substantial increase in the allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a stimulus all right, but cannot, by itself, make much difference.

The lockdown has lowered aggregate demand, and a fiscal stimulus is needed. However, much of what we have seen by way of a policy response is something akin to a "backstop" in finance. This is unequal to the task of reviving an economy that has experienced a shock valued at around Rs 28 lakh crore, the estimated direct loss of output during seven weeks of lockdown. Only a fiscal stimulus of approximately Rs 20 lakh crore could have achieved this in relatively quick time.

Many observers, including this writer, had imagined the package announced on May 11 to be just that stimulus. We have been

proven wrong. The conclusion is that the government is keen on signalling fiscal prudence by sticking as far as possible to the deficit in the budget announced. We can now see that behind the finance ministry's announcement last week that it is raising the public borrowing limit for the financial year is the reality that the government's revenues are set to fall behind its expenditure, and not any preparation for the stimulus to come. This is mere rearguard action rather than acting on the imperatives of the present.

Now that the government's package is unpacked, we may surmise that the adverse economic impact of the lockdown will last longer than the lockdown itself. This because of the likely presence of hysteresis effects in market economies, whereby low output today depresses production for some time into the future. The missing plan for economic revival is a governance failure. By declaring the lockdown, the State took away access to livelihood. Even if this was done to save lives, the social contract behoves the State to restore the livelihoods lost.

# We're already in a Great Depression

Instead of an imagined "tradeoff" between reviving the economy and safeguarding health, President Donald Trump's policies are delivering both a great depression and tens of thousands of deaths at the same time. That's because a tradeoff between economy and health doesn't exist, except in Trump's fantasy. Unless people are confident about their safety in the midst of the pandemic, they will not resume normal life. By allowing a premature reopening, which ensures that the epidemic will rage, Trump most likely has condemned America to economic collapse. The fantasist promotes magical thinking, and perhaps even believes it himself. Trump said that the virus wasn't a threat. He said that it would go away by April. He said that it was fully under control. He said in March that we have all of the testing we need. The epidemic is controllable when government is serious. Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Taiwan, among others, all have kept deaths below 10 per million population,

compared with 271 per million in the United States. Those other countries implemented public health policies at national scale; the US did not. With US reported Covid-19 deaths nearing 90,000 - and almost certainly higher based on a comparison of deaths this year and last year -- Trump now tries to discredit the death count. In Trump's fantasy world, there are no deaths if they are not reported. Trump's maneuverings also won't save the economy, which is in a free fall. States can open now and thereby spread more disease and death. But again, economic fantasy won't replace reality. Consumers will not suddenly start buying. Builders will not suddenly build buildings when so many stand to be empty or underutilized. Some of Trump's followers may head to crowded places -- and if so, many will contract the virus -- but most Americans will not.

Of the record 20.5 million jobs lost in April, most will not come back any time soon, whether or not states declare their economies

open. The continued spread of the virus itself will block any meaningful rapid recovery. So too will deep structural changes that will cause a significant, albeit unknowable, proportion of today's job losses to be permanent.

Here are some of the jobs that are not returning: E-commerce will displace many brick-and-mortar retail jobs. Big name retail chains are now going bankrupt week after week. The result is that many retail jobs, down 2.1 million comparing March and April 2020, will likely not return. Jobs created as a result of online shopping won't equal those lost in brick and mortar stores.

Many business firms will reorganize their workflows to allow for far more work from home, and this will leave office complexes sparsely populated. Many companies will downsize their space, meaning new commercial construction will remain depressed for years to come.

New oil and gas drilling has collapsed and will not recover to past levels given the long-term glut

in world oil markets and the collapse in oil and gas prices. Travel and tourism will remain depressed as long as the epidemic is uncontrolled, keeping down employment numbers in accommodations, leisure, entertainment and restaurants. Trump's remaining idea is to force companies to return home from China and rebuild their supply chains at home. This is yet another fantasy. By intensifying the attacks on China -- including new measures to cut off Chinese companies from American semiconductor technology -- Trump will crush the growth prospects of much of America's high-tech industry, whose business includes international markets, including China's vast population. Trump's moves will invite Chinese retaliation and hasten the day when China competes with the US in various dimensions of semiconductor manufacturing and design, such as specialized chips for artificial intelligence and 5G.

One obvious area of retaliation will

be for China to buy planes from Airbus instead of Boeing. Even before the pandemic, Boeing was in a very deep crisis because of its flagrant mismanagement of the 737 Max. Trump's failure to contain the epidemic and his intensified attacks on China will deepen Boeing's woes. Boeing stock fell 2 percent on May 15, the day after Trump's new anti-China measures, and Boeing stock is down by more than 70 percent from the peak on March 1, 2019. Trump will try to save moribund companies, no doubt including his own family business. He will try to save the oil and gas sector, though no banks will touch it. He will prop up the failing companies of friends, cronies and campaign contributors. He will lie, try to hide data, blame others, and produce a deepening disaster. But there are three true steps out of the new great depression. First, and most urgently, we must end the epidemic through the public health measures -- testing, tracing and quarantining -- that Trump has consistently neglected.



## A Prayer For The Nation

### Phase II: INVOCATION TO GODDESS KALI

Saturday, May 23, 2020

12:30PM to 1PM

Please join us **virtually** to pray to overcome COVID-19 pandemic.



### **The Significance of Prayer to MOTHER KALI**



In this pandemic, when the knowledge that we know as humans is not sufficient to help us at the very moment that we need help then the resolution is to turn inward to pray to the ABSOLUTE, ETERNAL SUPREME POWER to save us and our planet. Prayer helps promote the strength of relationships and brings unity by extending our social bonds.

The power of prayer provides people with **HOPE**.

The special **GODDESS KALI** prayer will be chanted at Neelkanth Mahadev Mandir. Goddess Kali is the Supreme power. She is the mother who comes to rescue her children in crisis as stated in puranic literature.

### **Directions for virtually joining the Prayer For The Nation, Phase II.** **ZOOM MEETING**

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**Password: 7W5uML**

Contact #'s: Mrs. Uma SenGupta or Dr. Sumita SenGupta (718) 380-0724 and Neelkanth Mahadev Mandir (718)479-3513, or (516)800-7420.



# Let's Retain Pandemic-induced Healthy Lifestyle Changes, For They Will Help Build A Better World

## The COVID-19 pandemic has shown to us humans the immense scope for improvement and how even small lifestyle changes can bring about dramatic transformation in our environment, writes Manisha Mahalingam.

On May 9 this year, Kerala government released a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), declaring a total shutdown to be observed on Sundays until further orders. The first paragraph of the SOP read: "With a view to prevent the spread of COVID-19, improve the quality of life, reduce the carbon emissions, protect the environment and greenery of the State, the ... protocol would be observed on Sundays across the State"

It won't be wrong to say the SOP underlines state government's forward-thinking. The efficiency of the Kerala government in containing the spread of the coronavirus has been widely lauded. The May notification is yet another example of the state's strong social fabric and robust response to the pandemic. While preventing the rise of COVID-19 cases is their primary goal, they have not lost sight of new learnings this unprecedented time has led to.

Nature is healing. This is no secret or a lie. Various incidents from across the country have revealed the adverse impact

human activity has had on the environment. During this period of minimised movement of people, nature has got a well-deserved breathing space. A NASA study said that air pollution levels in India were at its lowest in over 20 years. The record number of flamingoes painting the city of Mumbai pink, the view of the Himalaya ranges from Jalandhar in Punjab, the crisp blue skies of Delhi, cleaner rivers and the drastically improved air quality are all examples of a much-needed wakeup call pointing towards the disastrous present state of the environment. It is also saddening that this respite afforded to nature is temporary and once the world returns to normalcy, we will revert to polluted waters and unclean breathing air.

This is already the case in China. Air pollution in China is estimated to cost around \$38 billion and around 1.1 million deaths per year. The pandemic had brought the country to a grinding halt and strict lockdowns ensued dramatic fall in air pollution. In March, the European Space Agency

released a video showing the air pollution over China disappearing during the lockdown period and returning as China began to resume businesses. Notably, in April, as China returned to normalcy, smog did too, erasing any positive changes seen during the lockdown.

Dealing with COVID-19 pandemic is a three-step process: respond to the health crisis and the threats thereof, recover from the impact of the same and finally, thrive from the lessons garnered. While countries have pulled all stops to respond effectively to the pandemic and to recover from the economic slowdown it is projected to create, the last step is perhaps more crucial and easier to overlook.

In a video talk recently, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said we needed to learn the art of living with Corona. The way forward must also be to learn the art of living after Corona. The last step is perhaps more crucial and easier to overlook.

The lockdown has taken us back to rudimentary ways of living to ensure safety: staying

home, venturing out for only essentials and resorting to non-motorized means of movement for small travel. Kerala's SOP restricts movement of motorized traffic on Sundays (barring for the needs of essential services and health emergencies), permitting only non-motorized traffic such as walking and cycling. The SOP's intention can be viewed to be two pronged: (a) continue efforts to curb COVID-19, (b) ensure the positive effects of the pandemic are not lost.

With other states taking steps such as suspending labour laws to ensure more production, this move by the Kerala government is novel and unique. And most definitely a necessity.

A 2018 Special Report on Global Warming called for "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes" in every facet of the society in order to avert the dangers of climate change. Such warnings are not new, yet we are to see these recommendations being effectively implemented. And then came COVID. The pandemic transformed our perception of nature. Stay at home orders, closure of nature

parks and forest areas has made us more respectful of these nature oases, particularly for those living in cities. There is an increased need for more greenery and our connection to mother earth has gotten more profound.

And the time to harness the power behind these feelings is now. Now is the time to keep the momentum on and take prudent actions.

There is an urgent need to bring modifications to our lifestyle and our priorities - both at the government level and people level. Asking industries to shut down or cut down on their functioning is unreasonable, however it is not so to expect ourselves to adopt cleaner ways of living, moderate our carbon footprint or as in the case of the Kerala Sunday lockdown, possibly reduce our activities once a week to give nature the time to rejuvenate. Governments are in a prime position to ensure such compliance - it would improve both government image and public reception.

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# Andrew Cuomo is no hero. He's to blame for New York's coronavirus catastrophe

His record was terrible before coronavirus, but his abysmal handling of the crisis should get him thrown out of office

Andrew Cuomo may be the most popular politician in the country. His approval ratings

California. By mid-May, New York City alone had almost 20,000 deaths, while in San Francisco there had been only 35, and New York state as a whole suffered 10 times as many deaths as California.



Federal failures played a role, of course, but this tragedy was absolutely due, in

part, to decisions by the governor. Cuomo initially "reacted to De Blasio's idea for closing down New York City with derision", saying it "was dangerous" and "served only to scare people". He said the "seasonal flu was a graver worry". A spokesperson for Cuomo "refused to say if the governor had ever read the state's pandemic plan". Later, Cuomo would blame the press, including the New York Times for failing to say "Be careful, there's a virus in China that may be in the United States?" even though the Times wrote nearly 500 stories on the virus before the state acted. Experts told ProPublica that "had New York imposed its extreme social distancing measures a week or two earlier,

the death toll might have been cut by half or more". But delay was not the only screw-up. Elderly prisoners have died of coronavirus because New York has failed to act on their medical parole requests. As Business Insider documented: "Testing was slow. Nonprofit social-service agencies that serve the most vulnerable couldn't get answers either. And medical experts like the former CDC director Tom Frieden said 'so many deaths could have been prevented' had New York issued its stay-at-home order just 'days earlier' than it did. On March 19, when New York's schools had already been closed, Cuomo said 'in many ways, the fear is more dangerous than the virus.'" The governor has failed to take responsibility for the obvious failures, consistently blaming others and at one point even saying "governors don't do pandemics". (Actually, some governors just don't read their state's pandemic plans.) But much of the press has ignored this, focusing instead on Cuomo's aesthetic presentation: his poise during press conferences, his dramatic statements about "taking responsibility" (even when he obviously hasn't), and his

invisible good looks. The mask mural is yet another publicity stunt mistaken by the press as a sign of leadership. On 29 April, Cuomo unveiled a wall of handmade cloth masks that had been sent to his office by concerned citizens all over America. He called it "a self-portrait of America. You know what that spells? It spells love." Since the arrangement of masks doesn't form words, the mural doesn't actually spell anything, but it is a perfect symbol of Cuomo's leadership failures. Handmade cloth face coverings are not as effective as N95 masks, of course, but if unsuitable for healthcare workers they would still have been perfectly appropriate to distribute to New Yorkers (some of whom have been brutally arrested for not wearing masks). But Cuomo, rather than putting the needs of New Yorkers first, chose to tack hundreds of cloth masks on a wall as a monument to himself. Cuomo's record was shameful long before coronavirus began. He enabled the IDC (Independent Democratic Conference), a group of conservative Democratic state lawmakers, in allying with the Republican minority to block progressive legislation. (Cuomo

denies any role in the IDC, but that stretches credulity.) Before the pandemic, he pushed through Medicaid cuts which shut down necessary hospital space in the name of "efficiency" despite the warnings of medical professionals. And on 3 April, as 3,000 New Yorkers already lay dead from the virus and hospitals like Elmhurst in Queens were overwhelmed with cases, Cuomo forced through further Medicaid cuts, slashing \$400m from hospital budgets.

As the state now staggers to its feet, Cuomo has partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to "reimagine education" (which almost certainly means privatization), and with the ex-Google chief Eric Schmidt to – as Naomi Klein puts it – "permanently integrat[e] technology into every aspect of civic life". All of this has happened without the democratic input of New Yorkers, who would likely prefer that the progressive legislators they elected could govern without interference, that their hospitals have enough money to function and that billionaires don't infiltrate and control every element of civic life.

have hit all-time highs thanks to his Covid-19 response. Some Democrats have discussed him as a possible replacement for Joe Biden, due to Biden's perceived weakness as a nominee. And there have even been some unfortunate tributes to Cuomo's alleged sex appeal. All of which is bizarre, because Cuomo should be one of the most loathed officials in America right now. ProPublica recently released a report outlining catastrophic missteps by Cuomo and the New York City mayor, Bill de Blasio, which probably resulted in many thousands of needless coronavirus cases. ProPublica offers some appalling numbers contrasting what happened in New York with the outbreak in

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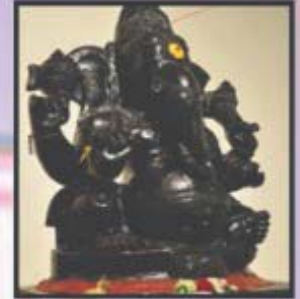
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# Real targets of Nepal PM Oli's new political map are in Kathmandu

Nepal's new political map that claims the Lipulekh Pass, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh as its own is part of an exercise in Kathmandu to consolidate PM Oli's support.



(News Agencies) Nepal prime minister KP Sharma Oli's push to fast-track release of a new political map on Wednesday is linked to his huge climbdown last month when he had to cancel an ordinance within five days, people familiar with the development said.

There is a concerted effort by the Oli government

with him and make India the casualty in the cross-firing between the two groups, a second person, a Kathmandu watcher, said.

Nepal's new political map that claims the Lipulekh Pass, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh as its own is only one part of this exercise. PM Oli's statement in parliament on Tuesday that claimed the coronavirus infection coming from India is "more lethal" than those from China and Italy is another. The two former prime ministers, who have been accused of destabilising the KP

Sharma Oli-led government, are seen to have played a lead role in the tug-of-war that played out in Nepal's power politics.

At a time when Nepal, like the rest of the world was battling Covid-19, the prime minister had surprised his country when he got twin ordinances notified.

These two made it easier for parties to split and register a new faction and were widely perceived to be part of an exercise by PM Oli to strengthen himself in the party and the government. But he had to stand down on April 23 and scrap the ordinances within five days to buy

peace with his prime detractors. Energy minister Barsaman Pun told the Kathmandu Post that the Cabinet scrapped the ordinance following what he described as "excessive criticism".

According to reports from Nepal, the Communist Party of China's international liaison department also stepped up efforts to broker peace between the comrades in Nepal. It was this shade of domestic power play at work when land management minister Padma Kumari Aryal on Wednesday held up a new map of Nepal. According to a report in the Kathmandu Post on her Press

conference, she hoped India would take Nepal's decision to publish the new map in a "positive way". She didn't elaborate.

The 80-km stretch of road that New Delhi built Uttarakhand's Dharchula to Lipulekh to make it easier for pilgrims to reach Kailash Mansarovar in the Tibet Autonomous Region offered the perfect opportunity. Army chief Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane brushed aside the shrill voices from Kathmandu, underlining that there was no dispute over the land on which the road had been built. Gen Naravane went on to suggest that the protests could be at the behest of "someone else" – a veiled reference to China.

## 'Reminder of threat posed by Beijing'

### US backs India amid border tensions with China

US diplomat's came against the backdrop of simmering tensions in Ladakh and Sikkim sectors of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), where India and China have deployed additional troops.

(News Agencies) The US on Wednesday strongly backed India amid its simmering border tensions with China, with the Trump administration's pointperson for South Asia saying such disputes are a "reminder of the threat posed by China".

Alice Wells, the outgoing head of the state department's South and

Central Asia bureau, said there like-minded nations such as the US, India, Australia and Asean states have rallied together in the face of China's "provocations and disturbing behaviour".

The remarks, made in the course of an online briefing for journalists, came against the backdrop of simmering

tensions in Ladakh and Sikkim sectors of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), where India and China have deployed additional troops. China on Tuesday also accused Indian forces of crossing into Chinese territory.

The top US diplomat also addressed India's role as a critical player in Afghanistan, saying it was



for New Delhi to decide whether it wants to directly engage with the Taliban. However, she suggested that with the Taliban set to join the emerging governing structure in Kabul, it would be necessary for India and any future Afghan government to have a "healthy relationship". Answering a question on the recent

India-China tensions, Wells replied: "The flare-ups on the border, I think, are a reminder that Chinese aggression is not always just rhetorical. And so whether it's in the South China Sea or whether it's along the border with India, we continue to see provocations and disturbing behaviour by China that raises questions about how China seeks to use its growing power."

She added, "What we want to see is an international system that provides benefit to everyone and not a system in which there is suzerainty to China. And so I think in this instance, the border disputes are a reminder of the threat posed by China."

China's actions have led to a "rallying of like-minded nations, whether it's through Asean or through other diplomatic groupings – the trilateral that the US has with Japan and India or the quadrilateral with Australia – and conversations that are taking place globally", Wells said. India is and will remain a "critical player" in Afghanistan and this was

reflected in US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad's decision to travel to New Delhi amid the Covid-19 lockdown for consultations with the Indian leadership last week, Wells said.

Khalilzad had said in an interview that India should engage with the Taliban. Asked about the issue, Wells replied: "We defer to India as to whether it wants to engage directly with the Taliban."

"But in a situation where we are seeking through a negotiated political settlement to have the Taliban as part of that political governing structure, that government's relationship with India should be close, and we believe that a healthy Afghanistan is going to need to have a healthy relationship with India." Wells was less forthcoming on a question about the US-Taliban agreement signed in February having no guarantees about Afghan soil being used by anti-India terror groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed that are known to have links with the Taliban.

## US urges China to waive off Pakistan's debt amid Covid-19 crisis

(News Agencies) ISLAMABAD: The United States on Wednesday urged China either to wave off or renegotiate what it called "unsustainable and unfair" debt of Pakistan as it once again raised serious questions about the lack of transparency in the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

"At a time of crisis like Covid-19, it is really incumbent on China to take steps to alleviate the burden that this predatory, unsustainable and unfair lending is going to cause to Pakistan," said Alice Wells, the outgoing US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia.

"We hope China will join in either waving off debt or renegotiating these loans and creating a fair and transparent deal for Pakistani people,"

Ambassador Wells said while addressing a farewell news briefing through a video link attended by journalists from South and Central



Asia.

This was not the first time the US and Wells in particular publicly questioned the viability of CPEC. Wells in the past also expressed similar views, declaring CPEC

detrimental to Pakistan's economy. China always dismissed the US claims and instead challenged Washington to match its economic assistance to Pakistan.

Ambassador Wells, who is retiring this week, said the US supports CPEC and other development projects as long as they meet international standards, uphold environmental and labour standards. "I enumerated my concerns and the United States government's concerns over CPEC, over the lack of transparency involved in the project, over the unfair rates of profits that are guaranteed to Chinese state organisations to the distortions it caused in the Pakistani economy including by the massive imbalance in the trade Pakistan now has with China," she argued.

# Pakistan: Man who kissed murdered girls in video arrested



(News Agencies) A man who filmed himself kissing two girls who were later murdered in a so-called "honour killing" has been arrested, police in Pakistan have said. Umer Ayaz, 28, is charged with making the video, according to a police statement seen by the

BBC. The father of one of the girls and another three of their relatives were arrested for failing to report the

killings and concealing evidence.

The man believed to have carried out the murders remains at large. Police say they are looking for Muhammad Aslam, and have also arrested another man on whose phone the footage was shot and who has been charged with sharing the video. The teenage girls, cousins aged 16 and 18, are said to have been shot dead by the suspected killer last week in the village of Shamplan, in Garyom region on the border of North and South Waziristan tribal districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Local district

police officer Shafiullah Gandapur told the Thomson Reuters Foundation they initially heard reports of the killings through social media. The officers who travelled to the village "found traces of blood, as well as blood-stained fabric". The girls' killing appears to be related to the video which was shared on social media. The video, seen by the BBC, shows a young man recording himself with three teenage girls in a secluded area outdoors. It appeared the video was shot nearly a year ago but went viral a few weeks ago. According to police, the third girl - who is not kissed by Mr Ayaz in

the footage - is the wife of the alleged killer, and is believed to be in hiding. Police say they are looking for her as her life may still be at risk. Human Rights Watch says that violence against women and girls remains a serious problem in Pakistan. Activists believe about 1,000 such "honour killing" murders are carried out across the country every year. Many such murders go unreported. The 2016 murder of social media star Qandeel Baloch, whose life and death caused a sensation in socially-conservative Pakistan, led to the government tightening the laws.

## Firmly opposed to US sale of torpedoes to Taiwan, China fumes

The Chinese foreign ministry reacted angrily after reports emerged from Taiwan about the sale valued at some \$180 million.



(News Agencies) China on Thursday said it firmly opposes the planned US sale of advanced torpedoes to Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy, which Beijing claims is a breakaway province. The Chinese foreign ministry reacted angrily after reports emerged from Taiwan about the sale valued at some \$180 million. Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Beijing had lodged "solemn representations" with the US to complain about the sale, adding that it firmly opposes the deal. Zhao said China urges the US to strictly abide by the "one China" principle, stop selling arms to Taiwan, and avoid further damage to Sino-US relations and maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Earlier, media reports said the US government had notified Congress of a possible sale of advanced torpedoes to Taiwan worth around \$180 million, a decision that was

bound to trigger angry reaction from Beijing. Washington like the majority of countries worldwide including India do not have official diplomatic ties with Taiwan, an island off China's southern coast. It is however bound by law to provide Taiwan the means to protect itself. The announcement of the sale coincided with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen searing in office, and saying that she strongly rejects China's sovereignty claims. China responded that "reunification" was inevitable and that it would never tolerate Taiwan's independence. The latest point of conflict between Beijing and Washington added to the existing problems between the two countries including the ongoing exchange over the origin of the pandemic-causing Covid-19 virus.

## US Couple's Honeymoon in Sri Lanka Goes on for Two Months due to Lockdown

(News Agencies) The pandemic has brought the world to a screeching halt with most countries being under lockdown since March. But for newlyweds Michelle and John Senyard, it has only been an extended honeymoon.

The couple were married in a ceremony on March 6 in California after which the couple traveled to Thailand and Sri Lanka for few weeks of honeymoon. But just after they arrived in Sri Lanka, the country announced a lockdown

with restrictions on travel. The couple has been stranded there since then. The couple is now making the best of their time in the island nation are documenting their experience on social media. Their pictures and videos have been going viral. Among them is Jon's 10-second TikTok clip swinging from a tree. The video has crossed over 4.7 million views. "When your flight has been cancelled three times now and your honeymoon turns into living in Sri Lanka for 2 months," the

couple captioned it. In another video, Michelle and John explained that their vacation "is over now," but they've been working remotely. They also only brought two carry-on bags, but are doing their best to "make it work." "No, we haven't been living in a resort. We've been hopping around surf hostels," they further explained. "Sri Lanka is an amazing country. And we stay goofy because... it hasn't always been easy, but we have each other. Even though we drive each other crazy sometimes!"

## Taliban says Kashmir India's internal affair, can't support Pakistan

The clarification came after some fake tweets claiming friendship between Islamic Emirate and India were attributed to Taliban spokespersons Suhail Shaheen and Zabiullah Mujahid.

(News Agencies) NEW DELHI: The Taliban on Monday, in a tweet, clarified that it does not support Pakistan's 'holy war' against India and that Kashmir was India's internal matter. The clarification came after some fake tweets claiming friendship between Islamic Emirate and India were attributed to Taliban spokespersons Suhail Shaheen and Zabiullah Mujahid. "The statement that has been circulated in certain media regarding India does not belong to Islamic emirate. The policy of Islamic Emirate regarding neighbour states is very obvious that we don't interfere in the domestic issues of them," a tweet



from Shaheen clarified. The Ministry of External Affairs was contacted on the issue but no response was received. Earlier, in an interview, Shaheen had said that the Taliban thinks India can play a crucial role for peace to prevail in

Afghanistan. Last year in August, after Article 370 was revoked, the group had rejected any link between the Kashmir and the Afghan issue. The statement in August was seen by pundits as Taliban's attempt to approach the

Kashmir issue in a more balanced way thus deviating from its earlier stand. It was seen as a move which was made to change the image of the Taliban, which has been considered a pawn of Pakistan.

# Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz Announces Human Trafficking Bureau

(By our staff reporter) New York: District Attorney Melinda Katz today announced the creation of a Human Trafficking Bureau that is exclusively dedicated to combating human trafficking in Queens County. This newly formed Bureau will combat sex and labor trafficking by aggressively prosecuting traffickers and buyers of sex and will also connect survivors of trafficking with meaningful services to empower them to escape their traffickers, and provide community outreach, education and information aimed toward preventing and identifying trafficking in our communities.

District Attorney Katz said, The sex trafficking industry

## First Prosecutors Office in City to Have Dedicated Bureau

is a brutal, degrading and illegal enterprise that far too often profits by forcing women, children and members of our transgender community into prostitution. But there are other forms of trafficking, such as forcing individuals to work with little or no pay. This new and dedicated Bureau within my Office, will combat those who would victimize others with aggressive investigations to end this industry. But, I want to be clear that we are also here to help the victims find a path to freedom with services and programs that will give them positive change in their lives and a future without fear. The

2019 Trafficking in Persons Report, issued by the U.S. Department of State, reveals that a staggering 24.9 million people are robbed of their freedom and basic human dignity by sex and labor traffickers. Here in the United States, traffickers often use violence, threats, deception, debt bondage and other manipulative tactics to force people to engage in commercial sex or to provide labor or services against their will.

Queens County is leading in New York City with its rich cultural and ethnic diversity. We are home to 2 international airports and home to a

large percentage of foreign born and undocumented persons. Therefore, Queens is a prime geographical location for traffickers to target and exploit those most at risk. Trafficking is not only a local issue, but one involving our world community. Traffickers often target already vulnerable and marginalized members of our society, such as our homeless youth, u n d o c u m e n t e d immigrants, those with substance abuse or mental health issues, as well as those who face discrimination or gender inequality, and have little

economic or social support systems. With respect to foreign born and undocumented persons, traffickers routinely use threats and fear of imprisonment and deportation to maintain control over their victims to continue their exploitation. In responding to this epidemic and advancing her anti-trafficking policies the District Attorney said this newly formed Human Trafficking Bureau will have a dedicated staff of assistant district attorneys, social workers, detectives and analysts. The Bureau will connect those who are

being victimized or commercially exploited within Queens County to meaningful services, support and tools to enable them to safely exit the sex trade industry or their traffickers. At the same time, District Attorney Katz said, she is focused on holding traffickers and buyers of sex accountable for their role in the facilitation of human trafficking. Recent prosecutions demonstrate this. In January 2020, 23-year-old Tyquan Henderson was convicted of sex trafficking a 16-year-old victim. This defendant is awaiting sentencing at which time he faces up to 9 years in prison.

## Queens Village Man Charged with Murder in Stabbing Death of his 22 year old Half Brother

(By our staff reporter) New York: Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz today announced that a 29-year-old Queens Village man has been charged with murder, criminal possession of a weapon and other crimes for a deadly stabbing that ended the life of his half-brother in a house on 208th Street in Queens Village last week. District Attorney Katz said, "This was an alleged act of fratricide, where a man grabbed a knife and violently stabbed his own half-brother to death. In an attempt to cover up the violence, the defendant is also accused of trying to conceal his guilt by hiding evidence." The District Attorney's Office identified the defendant as Wkorasky Voltaire, 29, of 208th Street in the Queens Village section of Queens. The defendant was arraigned late Friday night before Queens Criminal Court



Judge Mary Bejarano on a complaint charging him with murder in the second degree, tampering with physical evidence and criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree. The defendant was remanded without bail. Judge Bejarano ordered Voltaire to return to court on June 15, 2020. If convicted, Voltaire faces up to 25 years to life in prison. According to the charges,

said District Attorney Katz, just before 5 a.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2020, the defendant and his brother, McKenzie Placide were arguing at an uninhabitable house where the 2 men previously lived with their now deceased mother on 208th Street. The defendant, who brought 2 kitchen knives with him from an aunt's house, argued with his 22-year-old half-brother and allegedly stabbed the victim with one of the knives while inside the residence. That first knife broke and Voltaire allegedly retrieved the second knife he brought with him, followed the injured victim outside and allegedly continued to stab his sibling multiple times in the chest and torso.

## World Bank: Pandemic could force 60 million more people to live on less than \$2 a day

(News Agencies) The coronavirus pandemic could push as many as 60 million people into extreme poverty, the World Bank said on Tuesday. The warning suggests deepening pessimism among economists about the scale and duration of the fallout from what the bank described as an "unprecedented crisis." The World Bank, which provides loans and grants to the governments of poorer countries, predicted a month ago that this year would mark a historic step back for inequality, with the pandemic "likely to cause the first increase in global poverty since 1998." It said in a blog post on April 20 that its "best estimate" was that

49 million people would be forced into extreme poverty, which the bank defines as having to live on less than \$1.90 per day.

The worsening outlook is due to the outbreak shutting down economic activity and "erasing much of the recent progress made in poverty alleviation," World Bank President David Malpass said in a statement. A recent surge of cases in some countries is also forcing the bank to deploy what it considers to be its "largest and fastest crisis response" ever. It said its emergency relief efforts had already reached 100 developing countries, which are home to 70% of the world's population. The World Bank aims to help vulnerable communities by providing grants and loans to both individuals and businesses, as well as suspending debt payments for some of the world's poorest countries. Overall, it has pledged at least \$160 billion to combat the virus so far.

Some of the world's poorest people are already starting to feel the pain. Migrant workers across the globe have been losing their jobs as the pandemic stops work in various industries. As a result, the World Bank estimates that global remittances, or money sent home to families, could drop by 20%, or about \$100 billion, this year.

## As China faces a backlash in the West, Xi needs Africa more than ever

(News Agencies) Chinese leader Xi Jinping made preserving diplomatic ties in Africa a centerpiece of his opening address at the World Health Assembly earlier this week, as Beijing faces a backlash among some Western democracies for its role in the coronavirus pandemic. With the traditional big donors to Africa, such as Europe and the United States, focused on containing the continued spread of the virus, Xi moved to position China, which has its own outbreak largely under control, as the global leader in health. At the gathering of World Health Organization (WHO) member states, Xi pledged to give \$2 billion to the WHO over the next two years to assist developing economies -- and reminded Africa that its long relationship with Beijing had seen Chinese aid help treat 200 million Africans over the past seven decades. Xi committed to helping 30

hospitals in Africa, setting up a pan-African health authority on the continent and supporting an affordable vaccine there, once one has been found. Chinese President Xi Jinping speaking via video link to the World Health Assembly, on a giant screen beside a street in Beijing on May 18, 2020. But Xi's offerings weren't just about taking the lead in Africa: they were about securing support at a critical and precarious juncture in Beijing's relationship with the continent. While no African head of state has yet publicly criticized China's response to the virus, earlier this week the African group backed a European Union-drafted resolution co-signed by more than 100 countries calling for an independent inquiry into the coronavirus pandemic. That comes after African ambassadors last month wrote an unprecedented joint letter to Beijing

demanding answers for the mistreatment of African residents in China during the coronavirus crisis. As the coronavirus leaves China increasingly isolated on the world stage, Xi's speech made it clear how vital the support of African nations is to Beijing. China's diplomatic ties with African nations stretch back to the mid-20th century when Beijing befriended newly independent countries as it tried to position itself as leader of the developing world, and counter US and USSR influence during the Cold War era. Since then, Africa has proved to be a critical diplomatic bloc for Beijing -- the bid by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to expel the Republic of China (Taiwan) from the United Nations Security Council in 1971 succeeded largely because of the support of Africa, which provided 26 of the 76 votes it needed to win.



# A proposed mine in Alaska will endanger brown bears – and much more

(News Agencies) Towering over the average human and weighing as much as a grand piano, the bears found in southwest Alaska are considered among the best in the world to observe as they pad around in a largely untouched wilderness of soaring mountains, pristine rivers and rocky beaches.

About a third of Alaska's 30,000 brown bears are found on the Alaska Peninsula, which separates the Pacific Ocean from Bristol Bay, a place that hosts the most productive wild salmon fishery in the world and draws large numbers of bears to catch their food in the tumbling waters once they emerge from their winter hibernation. This idyll is under looming threat from the controversial Pebble Mine, a proposed open-pit gold and

copper mine that is planned for the headwaters of the Bristol Bay watershed. The local fishing industry, comprising 14,000 jobs that hinge on an environment that produces half of the world's sockeye salmon, fears the project will cause its demise.

But the mine, which will involve the destruction of thousands of acres of wetlands and miles of salmon streams, also poses a major threat to the bears that feed on the fish. Aside from ingesting pollution disgorged from the mine, the bears also face the prospect of their habitat being sliced up – an 87-mile transportation and infrastructure corridor to the mine will run right next to the largest concentration of brown bears in the world. In 2014, the US Environmental Protection

Agency determined the Pebble Mine would significantly harm fish populations and streams in the region – but the agency under Donald Trump has reversed its position, opening up a path forward for the development. Alaska Natives, fishing groups and environmentalists have sought legal action to block the mine ahead of a US army corp of engineers decision, expected this summer, on whether to grant it a necessary permit.

Opponents of the mine say much is under threat – a sizable fishing industry, the tens of thousands of tourists who visit the area each year, the health of prized salmon and one of the last corners of the world where significant numbers of bears live harmoniously around people. "Personally, I feel that

the mine's impact on this bear population would be a global loss, not just a local one," said Acacia Johnson, a photographer whose parents were bear guides. "I think that the opportunity to share a

landscape peacefully with an apex predator is a powerfully transformative experience, that can change the way people understand their own relationships to the planet and wilderness in general."



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# Brazil hits record high for new coronavirus cases

(News Agencies) Brazil hit a record high for new coronavirus cases Wednesday, after becoming the country with the third-highest number of confirmed cases in the world earlier this week. The country's health ministry reported 19,951 new cases in the previous 24 hours, bringing the total to 291,579 confirmed cases. This new surge tops the previous record set Tuesday. Reported deaths caused by coronavirus also increased by 888 on Wednesday, bringing to the country's total to 18,859 deaths, the ministry said. Asked about Brazil's

skyrocketing numbers on Tuesday, US President Donald Trump said that he was mulling a travel ban on Brazil.

"We are considering it," Trump said, adding: "We hope that we're not going to have a problem. The governor of Florida is doing very, very well testing - in particular Florida, because a big majority come in to Florida. Brazil has gone more or less herd, and they're having problems."

"I worry about everything, I don't want people coming in here and infecting our people," Trump said, "I don't want people over there sick, either."

Amid the spiraling health crisis, Brazil's lower house of Congress has approved a proposed law that would make use of personal protection masks in public spaces mandatory.

The proposed law would require people to wear any form of face covering in areas that are accessible to the public, including parks, sidewalks, public transportation and even private buildings where there is a high level of foot traffic. Individuals not wearing masks would be fined up to \$52.

The proposal needs approval by the Senate and Brazilian President Jair

Bolsonaro, who rarely wears facial coverings. It is unclear when the Senate vote will happen. Brazil's alarming numbers come days after Sao Paulo's mayor warned that its health system could be overwhelmed very soon if residents don't follow social distancing guidelines. Officials in the major city of 12 million have declared a five-day holiday in a bid to get residents to stay home. By Monday, Brazil achieved the grim record of having the third-highest number of coronavirus cases in the world, behind the United States and Russia.

## Daily death toll from Covid-19 could fall to almost zero by the end of next month, expert claims



(News Agencies) The daily number of deaths from coronavirus could be approaching zero by the end of next month, an expert suggested yesterday. It came as the number of deaths officially linked to Covid-19 in England and Wales fell for a third week in a row in the week ending on VE Day,

providing fresh hope the worst of the pandemic may be over.

Professor Carl Heneghan, director of the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine at Oxford University, said: 'I think by the end of June we'll be looking at the data and finding it difficult to find people with this illness, if

current trends continue.' The figures from the Office for National Statistics, which collects the official count of weekly deaths, were backed up by Downing Street numbers that showed a falling toll of victims with 545 deaths from Covid-19 in hospitals, care homes and private homes on Tuesday,

bringing the total during the outbreak to 35,341. Although the 545 daily count was a jump following the usual weekend lull in recording, it was a fall of 13 per cent on the 627 tally from a week earlier. Professor Dame Angela McLean, deputy chief scientific adviser, said yesterday that there was a 'sustained decline across all four of our nations' in the numbers of Covid-19 hospital patients requiring mechanical ventilation – a marker of those who have been worst affected after contracting the virus. She also said there was a continued 'steady decline' in the number of coronavirus-related deaths. In hospitals the falling number of victims even pushed numbers of fatalities below usual levels for this time of the year.

The ONS said that hospital deaths in the week

NUMBER OF DEATHS PER DAY IN THE UK



that ended on Friday May 8 were 114 fewer than the average number of hospital deaths in the past five years. But the 12,657 deaths registered in the week ending in the VE Day holiday were still 3,081 more than the average number in the same week over the past five years. The 'excess deaths' figure indicates the virus is continuing to take a heavy toll. Analysts say the low number of hospital deaths may reflect the fact that sufferers are dying from Covid-19 in care homes

rather than hospitals and those with severe non-virus health problems are also dying outside hospitals. The ONS figures also showed that the share of virus deaths in care homes continued to rise. There were 4,248 deaths in care homes in the week ending Friday 8 May, down from 6,409 in the previous week. Of these, 1,666 had Covid-19 on the death certificate. This meant that despite the overall fall, the share of virus-linked deaths among care home fatalities went up, from 37.8 per cent to 39.2 per cent.

## Trump administration signs contract for up to \$812 million with new biotech company to make coronavirus drugs on US soil

(News Agencies) President Donald Trump's administration awarded a contract worth up to \$812 million for a new U.S. company to manufacture drugs and drug ingredients to fight COVID-19 on American soil, aiming to end dependence on other countries. The administration has been looking to build up the ability to produce drugs and their raw materials in the United States after the global pandemic exposed the industry's dependence on China and India for its supply chain. 'For far too long, we've

relied on foreign manufacturing and supply chains for our most important medicines and active pharmaceutical ingredients while placing America's health, safety, and national security at grave risk,' Peter Navarro, director of the White House Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy, said in a statement. The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said on Tuesday that it had awarded a 4-year, \$354 million contract to privately-held Phlow Corp to make COVID-19 drugs, other essential drugs and

their ingredients. The contract can be extended for up to \$812 million over 10 years. It is not yet clear what drugs Phlow will be responsible for making, but one of its partners makes vancomycin, ketamine, lidocaine, fentanyl, and morphine, all of which doctors use in caring for coronavirus patients, the HHS said. Phlow, which was incorporated in January, said the contract will help it contribute to a national stockpile of active pharmaceutical ingredients

for essential medicines.

It said it had already started making pharmaceutical ingredients and finished dosage forms for over a dozen essential medicines to treat hospitalized patients with COVID-19-related illnesses. It has delivered over 1.6 million doses of five essential generic medicines used to treat COVID-19 patients to the US Strategic National Stockpile. Many of these medicines are in shortage and have previously been imported.

India and China account for a vast majority of active pharmaceutical ingredients used to make drugs in the United States. Phlow has partnered with other groups including Civica Rx, Ampac Fine Chemicals and the Medicines for All Institute to manufacture the medicines. Civica Rx makes a number of drugs used to treat coronavirus patients, including pain relievers like fentanyl, lidocaine and morphine. All pharmaceutical products by Phlow will be made in the United States, according to the company's website.

# Carlos Ghosn: two men accused of helping ex-Nissan boss flee Japan arrested in US

## Former special forces soldier Michael Taylor and son held Ghosn escaped to Lebanon to avoid financial misconduct trial

(News Agencies) US authorities have arrested a former special forces soldier and his son wanted by Japan on charges that they enabled the escape of former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn out of the country.

Federal prosecutors in Massachusetts said that former US Green Beret Michael Taylor and his son, Peter Taylor, helped Ghosn last year flee to Lebanon to avoid trial in Japan over alleged financial wrongdoing. Japan had in January issued arrest warrants for both men along with a third, George-Antoine Zayek, in connection with facilitating the escape on 29 December. The Taylors are scheduled to appear by video conference before a federal judge later on Wednesday.

Lawyers for the men could not be immediately identified. Prosecutors have reportedly asked the men be denied bail because of their involvement in previous escapes. The arrests were only the latest twist in the saga of Ghosn's detention in November 2018 followed by his dramatic flight from Tokyo over a year later.

His arrest shocked the automotive industry after almost two decades in charge of Nissan that had also seen him mastermind the alliance with France's Renault and Japan's Mitsubishi that produced one of the world's largest carmakers.

Ghosn fled to Lebanon, his childhood home, while he was awaiting trial on charges of underreporting

earnings, breach of trust and misappropriation of Nissan funds. Ghosn has consistently denied all the allegations, claiming he had fled Japan to avoid a "rigged Japanese justice system".

Prosecutors' documents allege that Peter Taylor met Ghosn seven times from July 2019 until his escape on 29 December. The meetings were recorded as part of Ghosn's bail conditions, according to the documents, which were published by Seamus Hughes, a George Washington University professor.

Peter Taylor allegedly met Ghosn the day before the escape. Michael Taylor and Zayek allegedly then flew a private jet from Dubai to Japan with empty boxes

made for audio equipment, telling immigration officials they were musicians. Ghosn met the pair and travelled to a hotel room in Osaka, where he allegedly hid in one of the boxes, which was not checked at airport security.

Lebanon does not have an extradition treaty with Japan, although the latter's justice minister visited his Lebanese counterparts in February to push for Ghosn's arrest to face charges.

US legal papers recount the details of Ghosn's escape, including his use of Japan's bullet train system, a hotel rendezvous and a departure from Japan hidden in a large black box onboard a private jet. The Japanese embassy in Washington and Nissan did not



immediately comment on the arrests. Earlier this month, a lawyer said Turkish prosecutors have prepared an indictment charging seven people, including four pilots and two flight attendants, over Ghosn's escape via Istanbul to Lebanon after he fled Japan. After Japan submitted requests for the pair's provisional arrest, the justice department obtained arrest warrants on 6 May. US law enforcement officials learned Peter Taylor had booked a flight from Boston to Beirut departing Wednesday with a layover in London and he was arrested by US marshals, as was Michael Taylor. Ghosn's former colleague at Nissan, Greg Kelly, also faces trial in Japan over charges he was involved in a conspiracy with Ghosn to underreport earnings. The trial was initially scheduled to take place in April but has been delayed, with no new date set, Kelly's lawyer said. Kelly denies the charges.

## Michigan: thousands evacuated after 'catastrophic' dam failures

(News Agencies) Rapidly rising water overtook dams and forced the evacuation of about 10,000 people in central Michigan, where flooding struck communities along rain-swollen waterways and the governor said downtown Midland could be "under approximately 9ft of water" by Wednesday. One of the dams, which the National Weather Service said saw "catastrophic" failures, had been under scrutiny by federal regulators since 1999. The Edenville dam, where there is a hydropower project, is about 140 miles north of Detroit and was built in 1924. Federal regulators revoked the project's license in 2018, after warning for two decades that it was vulnerable to significant flooding. "Given Edenville dam's high hazard potential rating, the potential loss of life and destruction of property and infrastructure is grave should the project not be maintained and operated appropriately, with consequences that could certainly affect the village of Sanford, Northwood University, city of Midland, Michigan, and other areas downstream," an order from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) said in 2017. Boyce Hydro acquired the Edenville dam in 2004. It was rated as in unsatisfactory condition by the state in 2018. It also owns another dam that failed, the Sanford dam, which was rated in fair condition. Both dams are in the process of being sold.

## Europe should brace for second wave, says EU coronavirus chief

(News Agencies) The prospect of a second wave of coronavirus infection across Europe is no longer a distant theory, according to the director of the EU agency responsible for advising governments – including the UK – on disease control.

"The question is when and how big, that is the question in my view," said Dr Andrea Ammon, director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

It has been the unenviable task of scientists to tell it as it is through the coronavirus pandemic. While politicians

have been caught offering empty reassurances, the epidemiologists, a job title new to many, have emerged as the straight shooters of the crisis, sometimes to their detriment.

And Ammon, a former adviser to the German government, speaks frankly in her first interview with a UK newspaper since the crisis began.

"Looking at the characteristics of the virus, looking at what now emerges from the different countries in terms of population immunity – which isn't all that exciting, between 2% and 14%, that leaves still 85% to 90% of the

population susceptible – the virus is around us, circulating much more than January and February ... I don't want to draw a doomsday picture but I think we have to be realistic. That it's not the time now to completely relax." Earlier this month the former hospital doctor, who worked through the various levels of healthcare bureaucracy to become ECDC director in 2017, announced that, as of 2 May, Europe as a whole had passed the peak of infections. Only Poland was technically not yet there, she said.

European governments have started easing their

lockdown restrictions, some to the extent that bars and restaurants will soon reopen, others rather more tentatively. Boris Johnson has tweaked his message to Britons from "stay at home" to "stay alert" and is seeking to send pupils back into schools in a fortnight. Ammon's job is to scrutinise the fallout and catch any rise in infections early. Talking through Skype from her kitchen at home, from where she has been working remotely for the last two months, she insists a disastrous second wave is not inevitable if people stick to the rules and keep their distance.

## Peru's coronavirus response was 'right on time' – so why isn't it working?

(News Agencies) Peru seemed to be doing everything right. Its president, Martín Vizcarra, announced one of the earliest coronavirus lockdowns in Latin America on 16 March.

In stark contrast to his Brazilian counterpart, Jair Bolsonaro – who has deliberately undermined social distancing and quarantine measures – Peru's leader strictly adhered to the World Health Organization's coronavirus recommendations and mobilised the police and army to enforce a stringent quarantine. But more than two months later the country is one of the region's worst-hit by Covid-19 and has been unable to flatten the curve of infections. Peru now ranks second only to Brazil in Latin

America with 104,020 confirmed cases and a death toll of 3,024 according to official figures on Tuesday. Vizcarra said on Friday that Peru had carried out 600,000 coronavirus tests – "more than any other country in the region". But while Peru's numbers could reflect increased and better targeted testing rather than an underlying trend, the jump in new cases is undeniable. In the past week, the number of new Covid-19 cases logged each day rose from more than 3,000 to above 4,000 a day, hitting a record 4,550 new cases on Tuesday. "Peru's response was right on time," said Elmer Huerta, a Peruvian doctor and trusted broadcaster on public health matters

for Latin American audiences. "It was the first country in Latin America to respond with a lockdown. "But the problem was people's behaviour," he said. "The fact that on the eighth week of confinement you have thousands of people who are positive [for Covid-19] means that those people got the virus while the country was in lockdown – which means they did not respect the law." Deadly outbreaks on Peru's northern coast and Amazon regions – where social distancing was routinely flouted – laid bare the gaping holes in Peru's chronically underfunded healthcare system. Covid-19 hit Peru's largest Amazon city, Iquitos, with deadly force before spreading to Pucallpa, on the country's eastern border with Brazil.



# Wisconsin is starting to resemble a failed state

Recent decisions have both undermined the government's legitimacy and endangered the people

failed state is one that can no longer claim legitimacy or perform a government's core function of protecting the people's basic security. Lately, the Wisconsin supreme court seems to be doing its level best to make its state qualify for "failed" status. Multiple decisions have both undermined the government's legitimacy and endangered the people.

First, there was the primary. Because voting in person is clearly risky during a pandemic, several states delayed their primaries to make sure everyone was able to mail in a ballot instead of having to go to a polling place. Not so Wisconsin. The state's Democratic governor signed an executive order for an all mail-in election but was thwarted by the Republican legislature. Then the governor issued an order postponing the election. Republicans challenged it, and the Wisconsin supreme court sided with them. The primary went forward, but was a disaster: there were "long lines in Milwaukee, where only five polling places in the whole city were open" and more than 50 people appear to have contracted coronavirus as a result. Ensuring that people can vote without risking their lives is a basic duty of government,

one at which Wisconsin failed.

But the Wisconsin supreme court's latest decision is even worse. The conservative majority overturned the state's "stay-at-home" order, immediately leading bars to be flooded with patrons. Even as public health officials stress the danger in suddenly lifting restrictions, justices presented it as a freedom issue, with one writing that the "comprehensive claim to control virtually every aspect of a person's life is something we normally associate with a prison, not a free society governed by the rule of law". Public opinion is generally against the anti-lockdown protests, but if a conservative minority has power, the

"letting a deadly virus spread unchecked = freedom" perspective will triumph.

Courts are the least democratic branch of government to begin with; judges are like robed "philosopher kings" with the power to overturn measures overwhelmingly favored by the people. (Sometimes that's a good thing, but decisions as to what to let stand and what to overturn are almost always political.) Once a single party dominates at court, it simply has veto power over the entire democratic process.

The court's conservative majority has shown no hesitation in imposing its ideology on the state. As Akela Lacy reported in the Intercept, they have been

denying the rights of unionized workers, ruling consistently against criminal defendants, and even overturning a rule banning people from carrying weapons on public buses. Wisconsin's Republicans have succeeded in capturing power in the state even without having to capture popular approval. As Michael Li of the Brennan Center documents, the state has been heavily gerrymandered, meaning Republicans can exercise power without having to win majority support:

Gerrymandered maps make it virtually impossible for them to ever lose their legislative majority. Wisconsin's maps were crafted with such micro-

precision that even if Democrats managed to win a historically high 54% of the two-party vote – a level they've reached only once in the last 20 years – Republicans would still end up with a solid nine-seat majority in the state assembly. In fact, Wisconsin's maps are so gerrymandered that Republicans can win close to a supermajority of house seats even with a minority of the vote. Analyses of the maps in the lawsuit challenging the maps showed that Republicans are a lock to win 60% of statehouse seats even if they win just 48% of the vote." In a supposedly democratic country, this should be an outrage. How can a

government claim legitimacy if it does not require the people's support? But this is true far beyond Wisconsin. Republican rule is minority rule; as we know, thanks to our archaic electoral college system Donald Trump, like George W Bush, was able to win the election without winning the most votes, and the undemocratic Senate is Republican-dominated. The Republican agenda is unpopular, meaning that in order to impose it, institutions have to be crafted that will prevent the population from exercising its will. The easier it is for the masses to participate, the more difficult it is for Republicans to protect the 1%, who really should be winning exactly 1% of the vote. (Donald Trump admitted that if voting were easy enough Republicans would never win another election.)

What respect do people owe a government that cannot protect them and cannot claim democratic legitimacy? Very little. The more that Wisconsin Republicans act to impose their will unilaterally without regard to the safety or will of the people, the less we should treat Wisconsin as a functional government.

**Nathan Robinson is the editor of Current Affairs and a Guardian US columnist**





# LONELINESS IS UNAVOIDABLE IN A TIME OF SELF-ISOLATION. WHY THEN DO WE RESIST IT?

BY: SASHA MAHULI

Some days ago, an ex-boyfriend shared a story from The Paris Review, called 'Loneliness is Other People'. Of course, I thought to myself, who else but an ex would pick on my habit of thinking of people as both the cause of and solution to loneliness? After all, the gutting absence of people after an indelible presence is what that has defined my life — as it has for many others — over the last two months.

I read the essay with great interest, determined to make sense of the author's painful declaration. I looked for myself in every sentence, looked for words and turns of phrases and a proclivity for attention and affection that would remind me of me. Yet, I did not want to see myself in a story about loneliness. "It comes, and it goes. What more do I make of it?" I said to myself, triumphantly. I was convinced I didn't need to sit with my loneliness. It is not being lonely — I reminded myself of the overused, unimaginative adage — it is called being alone. I stressed on the word. I stressed, particularly, on the dignity of it. I had conquered an uncomfortable and undesirable truth by making it something I could desire and conquer. I refused to entertain any other thought or argument that would convince me otherwise. The stigma of loneliness, I decided, wasn't mine to carry. However, the mind is a strange little place. Every corner echoes with that which hasn't been brought to justice. My mind is a shapeshifter. It turns itself into a courtroom, into the inside of a hospital room, into the

streets and traffic lights of my hometown I forget about in the middle of conversation, and sometimes — when I resist the most — into a confession box.

So, I asked myself the difficult questions. In the middle of a crisis that has upended the idea of physical intimacy and made human contact so feverishly desirable, isn't loneliness perhaps the most overpowering, all-consuming, overwhelming emotion? If loneliness is only inevitable, why have I always resisted it?

Perhaps because the acceptance of loneliness isn't the end of it. Perhaps because after loneliness comes... more loneliness. I've often thought of loneliness like

being washed over by the waves of the sea. It doesn't recede as much as it sticks around like salt, burning in the sun, cooling down in the shade. It isn't a cleanse as much as it is the acute awareness of how resistance isn't the only way to address cruel, disconcerting, but inevitable imminent emotions.

Much of what the pandemic has taught us finds its roots in acceptance. Acceptance cannot exist in the absence of resistance. If there is acceptance, then it is almost always preceded by a fight. Loneliness, maybe, is one of the most widely resisted acceptances of unwanted quiet. It is imperative that we vanquish the feeling and erase it from

our bodies. The only immediate antidote is the human touch. That is how we seek to be replenished, rejuvenated, re-routed to who we once were. We want to emerge victorious because what could be worse than being lonely? Perhaps nothing. Perhaps everything.

However, when the deprivation of this touch is the cause of loneliness, how do we find a remedy that is equally desirable and irresistible in its unattainability? We have now begun to resist people with a similar reluctance that we once accepted them with. We have begun to accept absence as determinedly as we once resisted it. Loneliness has become a

battlefield — what desire do we act on and what desire do we leave behind on the field, hoping it looks out for itself?

As of this summer, we find ourselves facing a familiar enemy but fighting a different war. We look loneliness in the eye but have no weapons to raise. Are we guaranteed to be less lonely once the pandemic unfreezes the cycle of time? Or are we going to be more resigned to the inevitable, to the sudden, to the inflexible, to the rigid, to the sometimes fleeting and sometimes boundless waves of loneliness? Is touch going to be a reminder of what the absence of it can take away? Or is it a reminder of what the presence of it can give?

I come up with these

questions faster than I can answer them. I settle on a different answer every time. Loneliness, I conclude at the end of a quiet week, is nothing short of a love affair. It feels endless and ephemeral simultaneously. It is conflicted, fought for, fought against, desired, and undesired all at once. It often disintegrates but never dissolves. There is a brief respite in knowing that it is possible to forget what loneliness feels like, but it

washes over you every now and then — asking you to resist it, asking you to accept it — and finally, what the uneventful turning of days into nights into days, too, has demanded of us: asking you to live with it.

## Migrants across eras: Exodus caused by lockdown mirrors untold suffering of indentured labourers from 19th century

Over the last six weeks, they have crept into our consciousness. They have inspired pity, anger, hectoring and indifference. That they lived all around us was a detail we were barely conscious of before the nation-wide lockdown was put into place. They cleaned our homes and washed our cars, served us at restaurants and eateries, sweated and slaved away in the many small and big factories and workshops that one finds all over the urban sprawls that our cities have become.

Many of us were similar to them in that we too do not hail from the cities that we now live in. We, or someone in our family, had moved there to seek employment or start a business and then stayed put or 'settled down' as we, the well-heeled, put it. We then grew roots, purchased an apartment or built a home, sometimes two, and came to feel that we 'belonged'. 'They', on

the other hand, were birds of passage who did not put down roots or try to belong.

Sure enough, when the lockdown was announced, and then later, extended, they sought to 'return' home. The stories of their journeys which have been documented in the news and on social media have been gut-wrenching. Walking or cycling for days on end, on little food and water, families and meagre possessions in tow, sometimes collapsing and dying with their destination in sight, mowed down by trucks and run over by trains, the migrants have been the lockdown's most unforeseen casualty.

A century-and-a-half ago, many Indians — indentured labourers all — made similar journeys in cattle-like conditions on steamships, hoping to find paradise in a distant land where they would have sufficient

food, perhaps a plot of land and enough money to tide them through rainy days. Most ended up being cheated and denied a fair shot at life.

The journeys of migrants during the lockdown mirrors those journeys across the seas. One was the shame of the British Empire, which had set out to 'civilise' the 'natives' but ended up enslaving many of them. The current dispensation has shamed the citizens of the Republic of India and the hallowed Constitution, which the citizens gave unto themselves. The system of indentured labour (a 'second slavery' as many scholars have rightly termed it) originated in the 1830s when slavery had run its course in most of Europe and the larger public had expressed their outrage at the persistence of such an exploitative system. The destinations for indentured labourers were the

Caribbean islands, Mauritius, Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa), South America (British Guyana and Suriname), Fiji and Malaya.

This system sought to legitimise itself on the back of a contract, unlike slavery, which treated human beings as commodities. That the contract specified exploitative terms — poor wages, limited or no leave, loopholes in the clauses concerning release from contract etc — was given little consideration, since the parties were entering into it 'willingly'. But given that those who assented to this contract were unlettered men and women, mostly from India and China who did not understand the contract's fine print, was a detail that was conveniently swept under the rug. A second slavery was thus put into practice, and in 1834, the first group of indentured labourers was shipped to Mauritius.



# No One Knows What's Going to Happen

The public square is thick today with augurs and prophets claiming to foresee the post-Covid world to come. I, myself, who find sundown something of a surprise every evening, have been pursued by foreign journalists asking what the pandemic will mean for the American presidential election, populism, the prospects of socialism, race relations, economic growth, higher education, New York City politics and more. And they seem awfully put out when I say I have no idea. You know your lines, just say them. I understand their position. With daily life frozen, there are fewer newsworthy events to be reported on and debated. Yet columns must be written, and the 24/7 cable news machine must be fed. Only so much time can be spent on the day's (hair-raising) news conferences or laying blame for decisions made in the past or sentimental stories on how people are coping. So journalists' attention turns toward the future. But the post-Covid future doesn't exist. It will exist only after we have made it. Religious prophecy is rational, on the assumption that the future is in the gods' hands, not ours. Believers can be confident that what the gods say through the oracles' mouth or inscribe in offal will come to pass, independent of our actions. But if we don't believe in such deities, we have no reason to ask what will happen

to us. We should ask only what we want to happen, and how to make it happen, given the constraints of the moment. Apart from the actual biology of the coronavirus — which we are only beginning to understand — nothing is predestined. How many people fall ill with it depends on how they behave, how we test them, how we treat them and how lucky we are in developing a vaccine. The result of those decisions will then limit the choices about reopening that employers, mayors, university presidents and sports club owners are facing. Their decisions will then feed back into our own decisions, including whom we choose for president this November. And the results of that election will have the largest impact on what the next four years will hold. The pandemic has brought home just how great a responsibility we bear toward the future, and also how inadequate our knowledge is for making wise decisions and anticipating consequences. Perhaps that is why our prophets and augurs can't keep up with the demand for foresight. At some level, people must be thinking that the more they learn about what is predetermined, the more control they will have. This is an illusion. Human beings want to feel that they are on a power walk into the future, when in fact we are always just tapping our canes on the

pavement in the fog. A dose of humility would do us good in the present moment. It might also help reconcile us to the radical uncertainty in which we are always living. Let us retire our prophets and augurs. And let us stop asking health specialists and public officials for confident projections they are in no position to make — and stop being disappointed when the ones we force out of them turn out to be wrong. (A shift from daily to weekly news conferences and reports would be a small step toward sobriety.)

The categories like baby boomers, generation-x and millennials are not helpful to understand social and political transformations. William Strauss and Neil Howe's ideological narrative reflects American determinism based on exceptionalism and perceptions. These perceptions can neither be universal nor can be applied even within American context. Such a myopic theory is reviving during this pandemic as a tool to normalise and naturalise the crisis by diverting attention from the limits of capitalism. It is within this context, the liberal, progressive, and democratic forces need to develop alternative imaginary based on collective experiences of people during this pandemic. The days of top down approach of managing movements are over. The other traditional forms of social and political mobilisation for a mass movement is not possible under the current situation of social disconnectedness. The social disconnection is the breeding field of apolitical culture, that depoliticises the public consciousness. These are some of the serious ideological and structural constraints for a mass movement against the capitalist plunders during pandemic. Historically, revolutionary movements emerged during crisis. It is time for the intellectuals, activists and progressive leaders to articulate hopes and dreams of a better alternative that resonates with people,

and their everyday experiences. The principle of listening and learning from the people can create conditions of collective empowerment and solidarity. The collective imagination can help in creating political spaces of possibilities of a mass movement, with both short-term goals of achieving people's basic needs, and long-term visions for future transformations based on human emancipation from poverty, hunger, homelessness and all forms of inequalities. Constructing alternative narratives for this struggle mean rethinking the capitalist conditions of production, distribution and exchange mechanisms within international economic system. It is not about opposing technological automation; technology after all is a product of labour. So, it is about giving labour its due for a comfortable, dignified and leisurely creative life. It is about stopping further environmental damages. The framework of shared experiences and common visions can be used to shape local, national and transnational struggles for liberty, fraternity, equality and justice. The struggle based on sharing and caring can only transform the solitary atomised life under capitalism accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic. Crisis breeds mass movements both in its progressive and regressive forms. Mass movements lead to social, cultural, economic, and political transformations. The progressive, secular, liberal and democratic

It is bad enough living with a president who refuses to recognize reality. We worsen the situation by focusing our attention on litigating the past and demanding certainty about the future. We must accept what we are, in any case, condemned to do in life:

tap and step, tap and step, tap and step ....  
 (By Mark Lilla,) Mark Lilla is a professor of humanities at Columbia University and the author, most recently, of "The Once and Future Liberal." Courtesy NY Times.com

## Coronavirus Crisis And The Future Of Mass Movements

The categories like baby boomers, generation-x and millennials are not helpful to understand social and political transformations. William Strauss and Neil Howe's ideological narrative reflects American determinism based on exceptionalism and perceptions. These perceptions can neither be universal nor can be applied even within American context. Such a myopic theory is reviving during this pandemic as a tool to normalise and naturalise the crisis by diverting attention from the limits of capitalism. It is within this context, the liberal, progressive, and democratic forces need to develop alternative imaginary based on collective experiences of people during this pandemic. The days of top down approach of managing movements are over. The other traditional forms of social and political mobilisation for a mass movement is not possible under the current situation of social disconnectedness. The social disconnection is the breeding field of apolitical culture, that depoliticises the public consciousness. These are some of the serious ideological and structural constraints for a mass movement against the capitalist plunders during pandemic. Historically, revolutionary movements emerged during crisis. It is time for the intellectuals, activists and progressive leaders to articulate hopes and dreams of a better alternative that resonates with people,

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transformation of society and state depends on the emancipatory agendas of the mass movements. It is only the progressive mass movements, that fortify our present, shape our future and it will provide ideological directions to all future movements. The digital renaissance depends on our resolve to uphold the spirit of science and reason in one hand, and to fight against individualist market dogmas of capitalism and religious fundamentalism on the other hand. How can we fight capitalism and Coronavirus pandemic? History offers successful tools for revolutionary mass movements. The Non-Cooperation movement was one such movement which was launched by Mahatma Gandhi against British colonialism in India. The movement crippled the British colonialism in India as Indians stopped working for the British and boycotted British goods in Indian markets. The motto of the movement was based on the simple idea of independence and self-governance. The 'Non-Cooperation' as a tool can be used to mobilise and implement resistance movements even during this lockdown. Digital revolution and technological innovations can facilitate the resistance movement. Non-cooperate and boycott all forms of capitalist framework in everyday life can be the starting point in search of a better alternative to the pandemic of capitalism.  
 By Bhabani Shankar Nayak, Courtesy Outlook India

### PRAYER for the NATION..

On going Special Prayers for Our NATION from April thru July 2020 organized by Indo American Community of New York  
 Our Sincere Thanks to the Elected Officials, Dignitaries and Friends.

During times of Crises, It's the power of PRAYERS that UNITE people, restoring Hope, Faith, Peace, Love, Health and Inner Strength.



# Moving to the next stage of new normal

There is uncertainty about exactly what follows the COVID-19 crisis phase in our daily lives, our business and the economy. Discomfort often accompanies uncertainty and may draw our thoughts to the days when everything seemed so normal.

Ironically, what we perceived as normal in the past was simply a point on a continuum of change to which we became accustomed. With this pandemic, the rate of change accelerated dramatically. The question for leaders today is, "What comes next?"

The next stage of new normal awaits being written. The economy is an aggregation of individual and organizational actions aligned with some set of objectives.

Following systemic shocks, some organizations wait until after the dust settles to interpret and take actions toward a new normal. An alternate approach is to begin defining a new normal for your business now. Here are five ideas on how to begin defining your organization's next stage of new normal today:

Recast a rolling quarterly strategic plan. Operating plans established at the beginning of 2020 have been rendered irrelevant. Economic recovery will range from gradual in some sectors to accelerated in others. Take a strategic approach to recasting plans by revisiting the organization's vision, then deconstructing objectives into a new set of priorities and actions starting from today's adjusted baseline. Initially set sights on results through year-end 2021, distilled into six quarterly milestones and adjusting subsequent quarterly expectations as the economy moves toward a new normal.

#### Intentional discontinuation.

Many organizations have reduced activities to business-critical operations only. Before assuming reactivation of all previous normal activities, take inventory of what resource investments no longer serve the business. This means identifying activities, processes, products or services that can be eliminated. By exploring questions about which activities have outlived their usefulness, leaders can free

capacity to apply more effectively in the next new normal.

New offerings. What new needs has your organization observed with customers during the crisis phase that may be of benefit in a new normal? Throughout history, new ideas and offerings have emerged from extraordinary environments. During World War I, to help soldiers avoid being distracted by their pocket watches, manufacturers attached straps to the watch faces they produced. The idea wasn't new, but demand for wearable timepieces grew significantly following the war, allowing forward-thinking manufacturers a meaningful long-term growth opportunity.

Adaptive disruption to capture transformational opportunities. Business leaders often think of disruption being initiated by a competitor or new entrant to their market. The COVID-19 event proves there are other sources of disruption. Leaders can use this unfortunate disruptor like they would an industry challenger -- to examine their business models and reimagine their operating paradigms.

#### Development opportunities.

Leaders have learned about the efficacy of business continuations plans through the COVID-19 crisis phase. They have also observed strengths

and developmental needs of teams as the nature of customer engagement and operations adapted quickly during crisis. How can you use these observations and learnings to build a long-

term development plan for your organization? The next new normal is being defined today. This is the time to develop your plan on how your organization will navigate its next chapter.

## What will movie theaters look like in "the new normal?"

MADISON, Wis.— Memorial Day weekend usually marks the start of summer movie season at the box office. While Madison theaters remain closed for now, they're preparing to reopen with some major changes. You'll buy your tickets ahead of time. Managers at AMC say customers will likely be



required to purchase tickets online, or on a touchscreen kiosk, to eliminate person-to-person contact. You won't be seated next to anyone. Deadline talked to theater chains big and small and reports the seating configuration resembles a chessboard, with customers only in the black squares. That means there will be nobody next to you, nobody in front of you, and the nearest people will be off to an angle

behind you and in front of you. Get out the disinfectant wipes! Multiplexes will also make a big showing of cleanliness— with workers visibly disinfecting seats, armrests, and swinging trays between shows, along with everything from condiment stands to restrooms. Temperature checks are still on the table. AMC's CEO says he's currently "pricing out temperature-reading machines." According to Deadline, theaters nationwide are split on that move. While they agree their employees' temperature should be checked daily, they were split on whether or not to test customers. Cinemark's CEO calls the practice "invasive." He says you don't attract people to a theater by making it look like a hospital.

# Reopening In The COVID Era: How To Adapt To A New Normal

As many states begin to reopen — most without meeting the thresholds recommended by the White House — a new level of COVID-19 risk analysis begins for Americans.

Should I go to the beach? What about the hair salon? A sit-down restaurant meal? Visit Mom on Mother's Day? States are responding to the tremendous economic cost of the pandemic and people's pent-up desire to be "normal" again. But public health experts remain cautious. In many areas, they note, COVID cases — and deaths — are still on the rise, and some fear new surges will follow the easing of restrictions.

"Reopening is not back to normal. It is trying to find ways to allow people to get back out to do things they want to do, and business to do business," said Dr. Marcus Plescia, chief medical officer at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. "We can't pretend the virus has gone away. The vast majority of the population is still susceptible." So far, state rules vary. But they involve a basic theme.

"They are making assumptions that people will use common sense and good public health practice when they go out," said Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director with the American Public Health Association.

As states start to reopen, people will have to weigh the risk versus benefit of getting out more, along with their own tolerance for uncertainty. The bottom line, health experts say, is people should continue to be vigilant: Maintain distance,

wear masks, wash your hands — and take responsibility for your own health and that of those around you.

"It's clearly too early, in my mind, in many places to pull the stay-at-home rules," said Benjamin. "But, to the extent that is going to happen, we have to give people advice to do it safely. No one should interpret my comments as being overly supportive of doing it, but if you're going to do it, you have to be careful."

An added caveat: All advice applies to people at normal risk of weathering the disease. Those 60 or older and people with underlying health conditions or compromised immune systems should continue staying home.

"Folks who are at higher risk of having a more severe reaction have to continue to be very careful and limit contact with other people," Plescia said.

So, should I go to the beach?

There's nothing inherently risky about the beach, said Benjamin. But, again, "if you can, avoid crowds," he said. "Have as few people around you as possible."

Maintain that 6-foot distance, even in the water.

"If you are standing close and interacting, there is a chance they could be sick and they may not know it and you could catch it," Plescia said. "The whole 6-foot distance is a good thing to remember going forward."

Still, "one thing about the beach or anywhere outside is that there is a lot of good air movement, which is very different than standing in a crowded subway car," he said. Even so, recent images of packed

beaches and parks raise questions about whether people are able or willing to continue heeding distancing directives.

But if we're all wearing masks, do we really need to stay 6 feet apart?

Yes, for two reasons. First, while masks can reduce the amount of droplets expelled from the mouth and nose, they aren't perfect.

Droplets from sneezing, coughing or possibly even talking are considered the main way the coronavirus is transmitted, from landing either on another person or surface. Those who touch that surface may be at risk of infection if they then touch their face, especially the eyes or mouth. "By wearing a mask, I reduce the amount of particles I express out of my mouth," said Benjamin. "I try to protect you from me, but it also protects me from you."

And, second, masks don't protect your eyes. Since the virus can enter the body through the eyes, standing further apart also reduces that risk.

Should I visit Mom on Mother's Day?

This is a complex choice for many families. Obviously, if Mom is in a nursing home or assisted living, the answer is clearly no, as most care facilities are closed to visitors because the virus has been devastating that population.

There's still risk beyond such venues. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows 8 out of 10 reported deaths from the coronavirus are among those 65 or older. Underlying conditions, such as heart or lung disease and diabetes,

appear to play a role, and older adults are more likely to have such conditions.

So, what if Mom is healthy? There's no easy answer, public health experts say, because how the virus affects any individual is unpredictable. And visitors may be infected and not know it. An estimated 25% of people show no or few symptoms. "A virtual gathering is a much safer alternative this year," said Benjamin. But if your family insists on an in-person Mother's Day after weighing Mom's health (and Dad's, too, if he's there), "everyone in the family should do a health check before gathering," he said. "No one with any COVID symptoms or a fever should participate."

How prevalent COVID is in your region is also a consideration, experts say, as is how much contact you and your other family members have had with other people. If you do visit Mom, wear masks and refrain from hugging, kissing or other close contact, Benjamin said. My hair is a mess. What about going to the salon? Again, no clear answer. As salons and barbershops reopen in some states, they are taking precautions. States and professional associations are recommending requiring reservations, limiting the number of customers inside the shop at a given time, installing Plexiglas barriers between stations, cleaning the chairs, sinks and other surfaces often, and having stylists and customers wear masks. Ask what steps your salon is taking.

# What does the new normal look like post COVID-19? 15 CXOs answer

The new normal of work, business travel and multiple industries is being written as we speak as the economy tries to re-open after the COVID-19 pandemic.

While exact details are evolving, this earnings season provided a bevy of comments on what the future looks like.

Here's the tour. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella on the three phases of recovery.

As COVID-19 impacts every aspect of our work and life, we have seen 2 years' worth of digital transformation in 2 months. From remote teamwork and to sales and customer service to critical cloud infrastructure and security, we are working alongside customers every day to help them stay open for business in a world of remote everything. He added that recovery takes place in three phases. The first is where we are now. The second phase...

If you think about the next phase of recovery, it's more like a dial. Things will start coming back in terms of economic activity and we'll have to keep adjusting the dial. This hybrid work is going to be there with us for a period of time. That's where some of the sort of architectural product strength of ours will be very useful to our customers. We view the current global situation as having 3 distinct stages: pre-coronavirus pandemic, stay-at-home restrictions and then a recovery phase. The U.S. began the stay-at-home stage in March,

and it has continued into the second quarter. At this time, we are not able to determine the duration or depth of this stage or the resulting recession. We will leave those debates to the economists, and instead, we'll focus on keeping our employees safe, serving our customers and ensuring ample liquidity for our shareholders.

It is also likely that future consumer and business behavior may change as a result of this crisis, and UPS' transformation initiatives will help bridge us to new market realities by delivering more automation, increased network flexibility and new technology-enabled solutions that position us well for the future. I think substantially, the brick-and-mortar world has had a reset. What that reset will mean into the long term is not yet clear until we emerge into recovery. But I think that there is now a behavior that is baked, and we continue to assess now what our estimates are going to be: one, the penetration of retail in terms of digital platforms, and then what volume that creates for UPS. You have to remember that our strategy always has and is kind of a regional-for-regional or local-for-local production change. I mean, if anything, I'd like to accelerate that. I'd like to be really local-for-local. I mean, we're mostly there. And I think that's still very much the right strategy. You got to produce in the countries in which you operate and

leveraging those supply chains and operate locally. So I'm not sure that's a dramatic change from where we have been. If anything, it's probably an acceleration of the strategy that we already had. Until people movement becomes freer, we're going to struggle with service and project execution in the solutions businesses. While social distancing norms become clearer in the factories, that's going to have an influence over capacity and attendance and so on. But it's near impossible for us to put a number on that. It's changing almost daily, and it's different in every region of the country. It's going to be different in certain states in the U.S. I'm heartened by what we're seeing in China. Where we have been building a magnificent park in Beijing. As we all know, the first case of COVID occurred in China right around the Chinese New Year. Going into that holiday, we had 12,000 construction workers going full bore. But as a result of the virus, that number soon went to 0. As of today, we now have over 15,000 construction workers back at our site, even more than before the virus started. We have a safe working environment with many protocols in place. I'm pleased to announce we expect to be open amazingly on time and on budget in 2021. Beijing may be different, but perhaps it shows the mark of this crisis.

If you walk into our restaurants, the

doors will be open, there will be sanitizer right there at the front of the doors. You'll be sat at the table and the 2 tables next to you, for the most part, won't be sat. And so there won't be a table next to you that's sat. There'll be a table that's usually a sanitizing station. That has paper towels and sanitizer. The table will be clear of almost -- there won't be anything on the table, and the menu will be -- we're working quickly to get new menus out, but they'll either be paper, or they'll be easily cleanable menus, kind of 1 or 2 pagers.

The bars will not be sat at the bar top. So the bars -- we won't have patrons at the bar because that's very hard to distance and it's also hard to regulate. So we will have some tables pushed up to the bar. So the bartender could react with a party, interact with a party, but they'd be 6 feet away or more. And that's how it feels. And so when you walk in, again, the spacing is there, and all of our servers will be masked and gloved. And they will also have been asked before they can check-in several questions about how they're feeling, have they taken their temperature that day, we have a -- we have a thermometer in the restaurant that they can use if they haven't. And before they can check-in, they have to validate that they feel good and they're ready to work, and they haven't come in contact with anyone that they're aware of.

## 2 infectious disease experts explain what our 'new normal' will look like in offices, childcare, and restaurants

As states begin reopening, two infectious-disease experts discussed what the 'new normal' might look like in a variety of arenas. Workplaces should institute screenings and maintain distance between employees, for example, and young kids may be clustered in pods at school. Restaurant workers may wear shields and keep logs of their patrons. Visit Business Insider's homepage for more stories. Five months ago, Americans could weasel their way up to a crowded bar, literally bump into colleagues in the office, and greet first dates with a hug.

But as the coronavirus pandemic has worn on, it's become increasingly clear that emerging from the depths of it won't mean returning to those old ways, at least right away, but rather adapting to a new normal — if we don't want to virus to persist or get even worse. "As everyone knows, the response to COVID-19 has brought rapid and deep change to really every aspect of our life, not just healthcare, but how we learn, how we eat, how we travel, where and how we work, how we interact with our friends and neighbors," Dr. Preeti Malani, a professor of medicine in the University of Michigan's Division of Infectious Diseases, recently said during an Infectious Diseases Society of America webinar.

During the webinar, she and another IDSA fellow, Dr. Leonard A. Mermel,

medical director of the Department of Epidemiology & Infection Control at Rhode Island Hospital, discussed what that first phase of a "new normal" might look like in areas ranging from childcare to restaurants.

### Screening at workplaces, not testing

A manufacturing plant is different from a law firm, and a law firm in New York City is different than one in Montana. But no matter your work environment, screening for symptoms of COVID-19 — the disease caused by the novel coronavirus — will be a key step in keeping you, your colleagues, your family, and your community safe, Malani said.

"The most fundamental thing we can do to prevent workplace transmission and subsequent spread to the community is making sure that employees are not coming to work sick and if they are sick, getting them assessed and tested so that we know whether they can come back, and when they can come back." Constantly testing all employees, even when they don't show symptoms, is unsustainable and unrealistic, she said. So is making a test a requirement of employment, Mermel added. "Too much emphasis on testing will give employers and potentially employees a false sense of security," he said, since a test simply reflects a moment in time. More

important than testing is "a foundation of good infection control and prevention practice," Mermel said. That means making sure workers are screened for symptoms before coming to work, wearing masks, setting up hygiene stations, and having things like paper towels available as a barrier for high-touch surfaces like elevator buttons. Keeping workers at least 6 feet apart, perhaps by assigning people to shifts when they use the cafeteria, for instance, could help too.

### Childcare centers could use a "pod system" for kids

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends strategies childcare centers can use to minimize risk. For instance, Mermel said, centers could use a "pod system" in which a teacher is assigned just a small group of children they remain with all day, every day. "And that pod of children aren't physically interacting with another group of children, such that if they need to do contact tracing, we have a limited number of kids or instructors that they have to deal with," Mermel said. That's on top of making sure kids are screened for symptoms before being dropped off. Older children can be required to wear masks. While it seems children are less susceptible to COVID-19 and are less likely to be hospitalized, it's still unclear whether they can be asymptomatic carriers of disease and spread it to their

households, Mermel said.

### Restaurants may keep a log of everyone who dines there

In some cities and states, people are already experiencing the new normal of dining out: Eating a place that, at most, is half full; sitting at least 6 feet apart from other diners; eating with only a few others; and giving orders to masked or shielded servers. Those strategies are likely to be implemented as more restaurants reopen, Mermel said. Restaurants might also screen workers twice a day and keep a log of customers so if a worker or another patron ends up contracting COVID-19, it can implement contact tracing.

In all of these areas, Americans have a continued responsibility to keep each other safe, Malani said. Maybe that means turning the car around if the grocery store parking lot looks to be crowded, as well as continuing to carry hand-sanitizer, wash your hands frequently, and where a mask if you go somewhere where maintaining 6 feet from other people is difficult. "You can't eliminate risk. You can decrease risk. None of this is going to be perfect or easy, and there's going to be some residual risks no matter what," she said. "But some basic public-health-informed practices can help prevent large outbreaks and help protect our most vulnerable populations."

# Tough numbers: Is staggering unemployment the new normal?

We spend a lot of time wondering what post-pandemic America is going to look like.

Can our kids go back to actual classes? How many of us are heading back to the office? How many of us will feel comfortable shopping in malls or dining in restaurants?

The answers are mostly unknowable, at least for now. But what is clear is that the impact of the coronavirus on jobs is agonizing and will last a hell of a lot longer than we might have imagined. Yesterday's release of new jobless claims--2.4 million, bringing the total to over 38 million--is the latest shock to the system. And the usual Washington political battle is brewing over extending unemployment benefits.

But the bigger picture is not encouraging. "There is growing concern among economists that many jobs will never come back," the New York Times says. A Stanford University expert estimates that 42 percent of

recent layoffs will result in permanent job losses.

If that's even close to being true, it's an obvious calamity for those thrown out of work through no fault of their own. And the ripple effect on the economy will be devastating.

First there is the reduced spending power of the newly jobless, many of whom will struggle just to pay the rent or mortgage. They won't be buying that new winter coat or boots or going out to theaters. They won't be hiring contractors to fix up the house. And if some companies tell employees to continue working at home, they won't be grabbing lunch near the office or taking public transportation. What's more, even those who are working will undermine the recovery if they don't feel safe enough to frequent bars and restaurants or work out at fitness centers. It's a slippery slope because major parts of the economy are so interconnected. If schools stick with online

classes, many parents won't be able to report to work, especially if child-care centers remain closed or are deemed unsafe.

The numbers are so huge that they often seem abstract. Media cutbacks tend to get more attention, such as the Atlantic yesterday laying off 20 percent of its staff in part because its live-events business has vanished. But there are millions of ordinary folks caught in this net. The Federalist interviewed a Utah man who delivers custom cuts of meat, with demand so reduced he had to lay off his son.

In Washington, the latest clash is over unemployment checks. Congress added an extra \$600 a week to jobless benefits, but that expires in July. President Trump told Senate Republicans he's reluctant to extend the additional payments, and he's got plenty of company. Mitch McConnell told House lawmakers, according to Politico, that the GOP has to "clean up the Democrats' crazy policy that

is paying people more to remain unemployed than they would earn if they went back to work." Democrats, for their part, are accusing Republicans of caring more about tax cuts for the wealthy than taking care of working people.

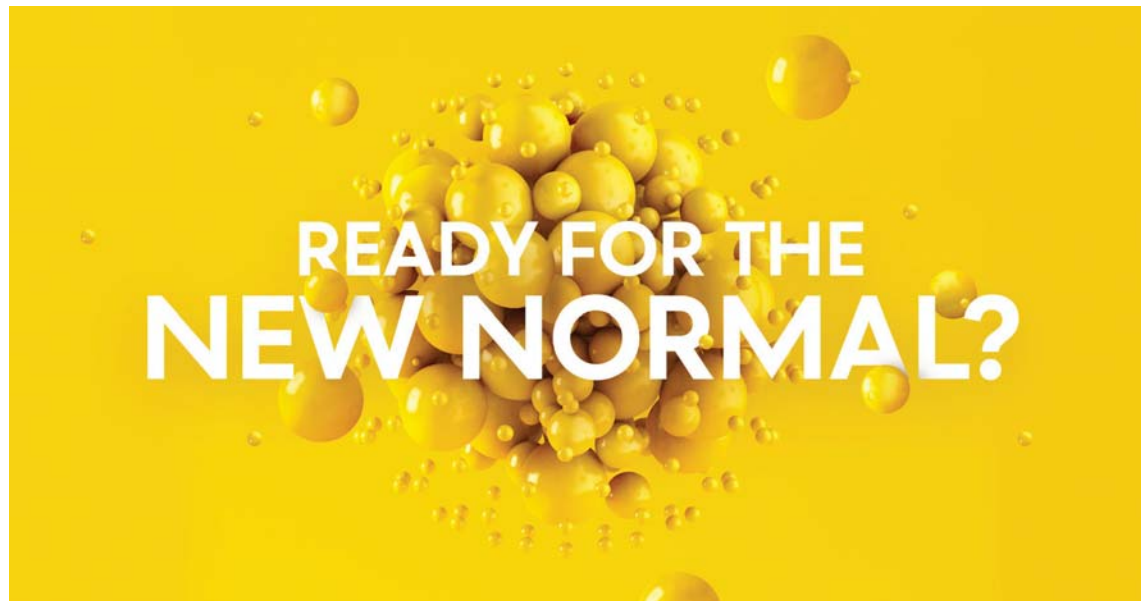
This is a replay of an argument that erupts during every recession severe enough warrant an extension of jobless benefits. Republicans accuse Democrats of making things so cushy that people will stay home, and Democrats accuse Republicans of heartlessness.

In this environment, though, I think the vast majority of those laid off are desperate to return to work: for the health benefits, to build a future, to regain a sense



of dignity. Unemployment is no picnic, especially when so many other people are also without work and the benefits don't last indefinitely. In all 50 states, people want to know when they'll be able to do the things they used to do before Covid-19 changed the face of America. The brutal economic news suggests that the new normal could be with us for a depressingly long time.

# Coronavirus: Flexible working will be a new normal after virus



Facebook and New Zealand's Prime Minister are the latest supporters of flexible working as companies mull back-to-office strategies. On Thursday, Facebook said it plans to shift towards a more remote workforce as a long-term trend. New Zealand's PM Jacinda Ardern this week suggested a four-day working week, partly to boost tourism in the country. As offices gradually re-open after coronavirus lockdown, more employers are looking at new ways of working. Facebook founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg told staff it

was "aggressively opening up remote hiring" in July. He expects half of its workforce to do their jobs outside Facebook's offices over the next five to 10 years. It follows moves by other tech firms in Silicon Valley, including Twitter, which said employees can work from home "forever" if they wish. Flexible working policies suit staff who are anxious about returning to offices while giving breathing space to companies as they introduce new social distancing measures. Ms Ardern has suggested a four-

day working week to help boost the economy and address work-life balancing. "I hear lots of people suggesting we should have a four-day work week. Ultimately that really sits between employers and employees. But as I've said there's just so much we've learnt about Covid and that flexibility of people working from home, the productivity that can be driven out of that," Ardern said in a Facebook live video.

## Tech giants lead

Tech giant Microsoft trialled a four-day working week last

year in Japan which was deemed successful in terms of employee feedback and productivity. It says it now has a "hybrid workplace strategy as worksites slowly start to open". "Working from home remains optional through October for most employees," said a Microsoft spokesperson. Both working from home and shorter working weeks have been applauded by human resources experts as an alternative to a mass return to offices. "It would also give better work-life balance for the people who need it such as part-time students, new mothers, parents who want more time with kids [or] looking after the elderly," said Alin Abraham, a Singapore-based consultant. "If after Covid-19 employers learn how to employ flexible workers that would be a huge battle won for human resource management," she added.

A shift towards more remote working also allows companies to rethink their expensive office space. Mastercard said it is currently looking at

consolidating some of its offices while Facebook has plans for working "hubs" across the US. "Post Covid-19, you can imagine many companies shrinking down their real estate and employees can just work from home. It will be an interesting proposition to see how employers can cater to different crowds," said Adrian Tan, of workplace IT firm PeopleStrong.

## The new normal

A growing list of business leaders are adding their weight to working from home and more flexible working arrangements, aided by technology and video-conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. "As we start to return to workplaces and find a new normal, alternative working patterns will also help reduce commuter traffic and with social distancing measures," said HR consultant Emily Draycott-Jones. "Covid has made employers move away from traditional thinking that productivity is contingent upon set hours within an office environment," she added.

# Old ways have to give way to new. Set up permanent community kitchens

The other day, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned that the central government has released Rs 11,000 crore to states as part of the Centre's contribution to State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF) to deal with the situation which includes provision of cooked food thrice a day to lakhs of poor migrant workers. Depending on which side of the political spectrum they represent, hearts of representatives of all political parties bled for the poor and destitute representing the 'soul of India'! This was mostly in response to visuals played by the electronic media. Some of these reports were focused on the plight of migrant labourers put up in quarantine centres in several states who had not been provided 'proper' food or clean water. Others put the spotlight on the migrant labourers traversing on foot with their families in tow in the scorching summer with little or nothing to eat. We have also seen how some of the

gurdwaras across cities, NGOs, volunteers associated with various organisations have also chipped in and used the 'community kitchen' infrastructure and the well-established 'supply chain' to serve quality food to a large number of urban poor and migrant labourers.

But state agencies have mostly faltered in their efforts to serve cooked food in this time of crisis despite their efforts. No government wants people walking hundreds of kilometres to their homes in rural areas. Or the arrangements made at quarantine centres crumbling under pressure playing out on national television. Yet this happened. Why? The short answer is that India's administrative system is not designed, trained or equipped to undertake this task. Despite 73 years of Independence, the revenue department and the district administration headed by the Collector are ill-equipped to perform this task.

Even when clear orders along with substantial funds are released to set up relief centres or quarantine centres, the district authorities generally zero in on school buildings – ubiquitous primary school buildings in rural areas and government secondary school buildings and such other infrastructure in urban areas. These generally have one India Mark II handpump and a set of 4 toilets for children with or without running water facilities in rural areas, and perhaps piped water supply and some more toilet sets in secondary schools in urban areas. There may be ceiling fans and tube lights but electricity supply in rural areas would largely be erratic. There is certainly no facility for cooking food for hundred or more persons who may be lodged there. Now apart from making arrangements of procuring folding cots, bedding etc from the local 'tent house', the urban and village level functionaries also have to procure cooking vessels, gas

cylinders, gas stove and trained cooks and their helpers who will stay and prepare food apart from arranging cooking material ranging from wheat flour, rice, pulses, salt, cooking oil, vegetables, tea, sugar, milk and the like. Lighting arrangements also need to be made at the place where food will be cooked for hundreds of persons and tens of cooks and helpers will stay. If only, all these could be done at the 'click' of the button. In a vast and diverse country like ours, we need to institutionalise the system of running community kitchens because we keep facing problems of this kind in varying degrees every now and then. In rural areas, 'community kitchens' with mechanised cooking facilities must be set up by the government in each gram panchayat under the control of Gram Panchayat. This facility can be used to prepare mid-day meals for school children and children attending Anganwadi centres which also now double

up as pre-school centres. So every day, this 'panchayat community kitchen' can be used to provide cooked food to children attending anganwadi centres, schools and may be, just about anyone who is prepared to pay Rs 10 for a meal. Gram panchayats should receive subsidised grains and funds earmarked for 'conversion cost' under the mid-day meal scheme and Mission Poshan. It should be the responsibility of the gram panchayat to ensure that no one sleeps on an empty stomach in the village. This facility will also come handy when a region faces natural disasters such as floods or the pandemic being faced today. Organising community kitchens in urban centers will have to be set up similarly under the municipal authorities. It is time to empower and strengthen community and local governments to enable them effectively respond to natural disasters be it floods, earthquakes or health pandemics. Old ways have to give way to new one.

## Hydroxychloroquine, Trump and Covid-19: what you need to know

### What is hydroxychloroquine?

Hydroxychloroquine, which Trump says he has been taking for about two weeks, was developed as an antimalarial but it is also used to treat conditions like lupus, an anti-immune disease, and arthritis, where it can help combat inflammation. It has been licensed for use in the US since the mid 1950s and is listed by the World Health Organization as an "essential" medicine.

### What is the link to Covid-19?

Researchers have been interested in chloroquines as an anti-viral agent for some time. A study in Virology Journal in 2005 found that chloroquine inhibited the closely related Sars virus in primate cells in lab conditions. However, evidence for the effectiveness of hydroxychloroquine in recent human trials during the coronavirus pandemic has been at best inconclusive, with some suggestions that it could worsen the outcome of severe cases. The WHO is looking at whether hydroxychloroquine could be an effective Covid-19 treatment, while the US National Institutes

for Health is also running a clinical trial to establish whether the drug, administered together with the antibiotic azithromycin, can prevent hospitalisation and death from Covid-19. In recent days, enthusiasm about hydroxychloroquine has been boosted by a study, which has yet to be peer-reviewed, that looked at the combination of hydroxychloroquine, the antibiotic azithromycin and zinc supplements.

It showed that patients who received the three-drug combination vs the two-drug combination of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin were 44% less likely to die than the second group. Joseph Rahimian, a co-author of the study, pointed out that the study's findings were limited to the possible promise of zinc, not of hydroxychloroquine.

**What's the state of the current evidence?** In May, the British Medical Journal reported on a randomised (although still problematic) clinical trial in China that found little evidence hydroxychloroquine worked, with serious adverse events

noted in two patients. A second study reported in the BMJ last week on a French trial also concluded that

hydroxychloroquine does not significantly reduce admission to intensive care or improve survival rates in patients hospitalised with pneumonia owing to Covid-19. Overall, 89% of those who received hydroxychloroquine survived after 21 days, compared with 91% in the control group. The US Food and Drug Administration in a safety alert issued on 24 April warned that it had received reports that hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine could have serious side-effects and that the drugs should be taken only under the close supervision of a doctor in a hospital setting or a clinical trial.

### What are the risks in taking hydroxychloroquine?

There are a number of side-effects. The most serious is that it can interfere with the rhythm of the heart. Other side-effects include headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, skin rash or itching or hair loss. Research published by the Mayo Clinic has suggested that "off-label" repurposing of drugs

such as hydroxychloroquine could lead to "drug-induced sudden cardiac death". Although Trump's official physician has said he was in "very good health" at his last official checkup, the president is 73 and his recorded weight would put him in a BMI category of "clinically obese".

### So why is Trump taking it?

Despite there being no conclusive body of evidence that it can be effective when used to prevent contracting coronavirus, the president apparently decided in conversation with the White House physician Sean P Conley that it was worth the risks. "After numerous discussions he and I had for and against the use of hydroxychloroquine we concluded the potential benefit from treatment outweighed the relative risks," Conley wrote. It is probably worth pointing out that Conley, a naval doctor, trained initially as an osteopath and then in emergency medicine, serving as research director at Portsmouth Navy Department of Emergency Medicine prior to his assignment to the White House medical unit. For his part, Trump, despite the FDA and other warnings, said: "I think it's good. I've heard

a lot of good stories. And if it's not good, I'll tell you right. I'm not going to get hurt by it. It's been around for 40 years."

### Have we been here before?

Yes. Trump has a history of personally advocating for the use of hydroxychloroquine, which he has described as a potential "game-changer". Although it has been reported that Trump has a small stake in a French company that makes hydroxychloroquine via an investment fund, this seems to be about Trump's own hunches and his desire to be both proved right and protected against the disease. On Monday, he also claimed lots of doctors were using the drug prophylactically and cited letters he had received from members of the public. As Paul Waldman, a columnist in the Washington Post, has suggested, this is more about Trump's psychology than anything else. "Trump compensates for his own insecurity by working to convince himself and everyone else that the experts don't know what they're talking about, and he knows more than them about everything," Waldman has written.

# Will Donald Trump end up in prison? He could be a step closer ...

Joe Biden has pledged that, if elected, he won't pardon Trump. Is the president's attempt to whip up a scandal about Obama because he is scared of going to jail himself?



**B A M A G A T E !** OBAMAGATE! Donald Trump seems to think that if he yells "Obamagate" often enough and loud enough, it will magic a scandal into existence and send his arch-nemeses, Barack Obama and Joe Biden, to jail. On Monday, the US attorney general, William Barr, burst his boss's bubble and dismissed the possibility of a criminal investigation into Obama or Biden. Because, you know, they didn't do anything wrong. Trump responded to Barr's statement in his usual

fashion: sulking like a petulant child and saying: "Well, if it was me they would [investigate]" before continuing to babble incoherently. It may be wishful thinking, but I have a feeling that one reason Trump is so keen to accuse Obama and Biden of criminality is because he is starting to get nervous about going to jail himself. Last week, Biden pledged that, if elected president, he wouldn't use his executive powers to pardon Trump of potential crimes. This wasn't the first time the presumptive Democratic nominee has said he

wouldn't go easy on Trump. In October, Biden told an Iowa radio station that it had been a mistake for Gerald Ford to pardon his predecessor, Richard Nixon, after Watergate in 1974. Pardoning Trump, Biden said, "wouldn't unite [the US]" and would send the message that some people are above the law. Of course, as it stands, the US president is above the law. In 1973, amid the Watergate scandal, the Department of Justice adopted the position that a sitting president is "constitutionally immune" from criminal prosecution, a position it reaffirmed in 2000. As long as he is president, Trump is safe. When he leaves office, however, it is another matter: there are a host of charges he might face. These include obstruction of justice charges in relation to the Russia investigation; illegally

withholding military aid to Ukraine in order to pressure them to investigate his political rivals; and soliciting campaign donations from foreign nationals – all of which Trump denies. According to the investigative site the Intercept, the laws Trump has potentially broken in his interaction with Ukraine and China as president could land him 10 years in prison. And it is not just Trump's conduct as president that has opened him to potential legal trouble. There is also the matter of his financial and tax dealings, which are the subject of numerous lawsuits. Importantly, how long Trump stays in power has a bearing on any potential legal liability. The statute of limitations on obstruction of justice charges, for example, is only five

years. So if Trump gets another term, he will run down the clock on that. Honestly, if you want to do the crime without doing the time, it really pays to be president. If Trump ever goes to jail, it will be one of the happiest days of my life. Not everyone is so enthusiastic about "locking him up", however. Earlier this year, the then Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang said that, if he were president, he wouldn't investigate Trump: "If you look at history around the world, it's a very, very nasty pattern that developing countries have fallen into, where a new president ends up throwing the president before them in jail." Look, I understand that the US, where people die because they can't afford diabetes medication, doesn't want to be like a

"developing country". Nevertheless, there is a very nasty pattern into which authoritarian regimes have fallen, where the leader does whatever they like with no repercussions. I am not sure the US wants to be like that, either. I have no idea what the chances of Trump ending up in prison are, but I am pretty sure he is not happy that there is even a small possibility he might swap the White House for the "big house". But his approval ratings are dropping and the chances of a President Biden are rising. That means Trump is going to do everything he can to win re-election in November; he is not just fighting for another term, he is also fighting for his freedom. He is fighting to avoid the possibility of a Trumpgate.

• Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist

## The complicated truth about the National Enquirer



Most of us rarely think about the National Enquirer, if at all. Its circulation has fallen sharply from its peak, it hasn't invested much in the internet, and while it's still visible at supermarket checkout counters, it's less clear that the tabloid newspaper is still a viable business. Yet even in its diminished state, the Enquirer remains a classic piece of Americana, and its significance shouldn't be underestimated — not only because of its past influence, but because of

what the tabloid tells us about ourselves. All journalism is voyeurism, to a certain extent, but the Enquirer long ago learned how to tap into the dark side of the practice. It's not just that we want to see celebrities, but that we want to see them at their most vulnerable. "Tragic last days" and "Six months to live" are popular Enquirer headlines, even if they turn out to be inaccurate. A 1977 cover photograph of Elvis Presley in his casket sold more than 6.7 million copies — a record, according to the

publication. And while the Enquirer has often been dismissed as the home of reporting about aliens, that's not true. (The Weekly World News, which was owned by the same parent company, trafficked in that kind of lunacy on newsstands before its print edition shuttered in 2007.) Rather, the Enquirer has always focused on the foibles of the rich and famous, and there have been some notable scoops over the years. In 1996, the Enquirer published a photograph of O.J. Simpson wearing the

kind of Bruno Magli shoes which were apparently worn by the killer of his ex-wife and her friend. In 2007, the Enquirer revealed that John Edwards, then a candidate for president, had fathered a child with a campaign worker. Any news organization would have been proud to break those stories.

But these legitimate stories shouldn't obscure how shabby the Enquirer usually is. As I learned in 2017 when I profiled David Pecker, the chief executive of the Enquirer's parent company American Media Inc., the magazine is written so that it will not be successfully sued for libel -- not written to tell the actual truth. I think readers in a way understood the Enquirer's slippery relationship to the truth; they understood that the stories about celebrity breakups and illnesses might be true. And up until 2016, the magazine had been a sort of equal opportunity weapon. It targeted the

wealthy and famous to the satisfaction of its readers — editors carefully selecting the stars readers loved to hate most for the tabloid's covers — without a discernible political bent. But that changed when Pecker used the Enquirer as a vehicle to further his friend Donald Trump's presidential campaign. Pecker didn't just feature Trump on the cover repeatedly during the campaign and disparage Trump's opponents. As the head of AMI, Pecker helped orchestrate a payment of \$150,000 to former Playboy model Karen McDougal for the rights to her story of an alleged affair with the candidate so that she would not embarrass Trump during the campaign. Trump has denied McDougal's allegations.

This use of catch-and-kill was the Enquirer at its worst — serving the interests of its owners rather than the curiosity of its readers. And the suppression of relevant information about a presidential candidate had

a genuine impact on the outcome of the election. The Enquirer didn't deserve to wield that kind of power, especially when it was used, as it was here, to serve the private agenda of the publisher. To be sure, no one has ever read the Enquirer for moral uplift. It's always been, at best, a guilty pleasure. There are American institutions that remind us of the best of ourselves, and there are others, like the Enquirer, that remind us of who we really are. If real journalism conveys information, the Enquirer conveys feeling — most often schadenfreude, or joy in the suffering of others, especially if they were once successful. The Enquirer's talent for meeting this need is what cemented the tabloid's notoriety in American culture, and what fuels its online successors today. We can always look down on the Enquirer, and we probably should, but the sad truth is that when we're looking at the covers on the checkout line, we're really looking at ourselves.

# Where Hunger Pangs, Now Greater Than Ever, Smother The Chance To Hone Talent

The city has a silence, uncertainty and pain that reminds of the air the month after 9/11 in New York

## Groundhog Day

The sequel of Contagion is unfolding all over the globe. The eighth week of the lockdown in Mumbai is not really Day 56, I tell myself; it's just the same day all over again. The 'incidence rate', a term that has leapt from epidemiology courses to the media and everyday discourse, shows a shocking 600-plus new cases in Mumbai each day. There are over 10,000 active cases. Of course, this is a dream compared to New York City, where I moved from. The first line of a famous Tagore song reminds us, "We are all emperors in the kingdom of the emperor...or how else could we dance to His wishes?" With the novel coronavirus' machinations, we can only do a babel dance to 'His' wishes.

## Zombies In Queue

As I make my way to the supermarket war zone, the water near Haji Ali glistens more brightly than ever—like wet diamonds. This novel, less polluted Mumbai has a silence, uncertainty and pain that reminds me of the air the month after 9/11 in New York—a smell of burnt oil and lost dreams. After what feels like a cinematic escape from prison, which I re-enact every week, I reach the police-

patrolled supermarket parking lot. There are squares marked six feet apart, each circumscribing masked zombies waiting to enter a morgue. The once-upon-a-time Pavlovian cacophony of Ed Sheeran's saccharine numbers, chattering Pilates moms and retired Sensex men trading notes over mocha cappuccinos has been drowned out by the silence. When will it be normal? Never. The realities of our ghost cities have all merged, puncturing our delusions and coveted circles, creating a silent retreat for birds.

## The Cloak's Piercing

As I enter the emergency room-like zone, my short grocery list suddenly feels long and confusing. At the produce section, the carrots and beetroot look soggy. As if they have emerged from a war zone, beaten, bruised and pummelled. But then, Raju appears, gloved and masked. He has seen me hunting for the vegetables and quickly brings over a fresh lot. I am relieved to see him amid the unrecognisable. I recall my last meeting with him. Before the apocalypse engulfed our lives, a friend and I were sitting exactly here having coffee. The chairs and tables are now missing. Raju, in his twenties and well-

groomed, had gingerly walked over saying he had overheard I was working on a film. He is an actor and wondered if I had any leads. I was impressed with his forthright manner and told him I would keep him in mind. Raju handed me his card. As he trailed off with our cups, my friend raised her eyebrows. I was surprised by her reaction and said that I appreciated his spark and thought he was a 'seeker'. I admired seekers as my journey to Mumbai has been one of a reverse migrant from New York. I had appreciated Raju's drive to seize the moment, but dismissed it afterwards.

Today, however, things are different. A wicked witch from the East and then the West has pierced the urban cloak of apathy. I could be next—the thought was humbling. At the check-out counter, Raju's smile was unflinching. He looked as sunny as he did a month ago—his calm an oasis amid sloppy, raided shelves and panic buyers. I cautiously ask about his family. He says they are labourers who returned to Bihar without any income or savings. "The lockdown needs to end now. People will die hungry," he says softly.

## When This Is Over...

I think of Raju's hunger, his dreams that I callously dismissed two weeks ago. His is a patch on an endless quilt of lost dreams where hunger pangs, now greater than ever, smother the chance to hone talent. Besides, despite his charm and presence, Raju would never be seen as "fitting" the part. He will be typecast—a driver, butler or at best, a clerk. The truth of burnt oil and lost dreams. My thoughts suddenly shift. At Columbia, we studied how pandemics rebounded in a worse second wave. Would we be able to shoot the film by late fall? If so, with actors wearing masks? Perhaps not. The light at the end of the tunnel suddenly seems dim. I stop the shopping cart and turn back to Raju. "When this is over..." I pause. He nods knowingly, his eyes smiling above his mask. I am grateful.

As I leave the air-conditioned cold storage, my eyes meet the blinding sun. I gaze up to see the sunlight creeping through branches. It is a promise. A promise that beyond these burnt bodies and lost dreams, nature will give us another chance. She will give us a chance to be better for the planet and the humans who survived. I exit the parking lot and check my purse. Raju's card is still there.

## Could a patent get in between you and a Covid-19 test? Yes

Two US senators want to radically expand the powers of patent holders. The consequences could be disastrous for Americans

Imagine if one company held a patent covering all methods of testing for Covid-19 antibodies. The company could charge monopoly prices for its tests and prohibit competitors – including non-profit and university labs – from manufacturing or administering their own. If the company made itself the country's sole supplier, it would struggle to meet demand. The company would profit, but Americans would face waiting lists, confusion and inequitable access – and the virus would keep spreading. Would a patent holder ever exploit an outbreak of life-threatening infectious disease in this way? Yes. In 2001, the United States faced a credible threat of an anthrax outbreak, yet Bayer refused to license its patents on ciprofloxacin

(Cipro), the most effective antibiotic treatment for anthrax, to competitors, even as Bayer itself struggled to supply the nation's antibiotic stockpile. It may seem outlandish to imagine one patent creating a wide-ranging monopoly on diagnostic testing, but it happened. In the 1990s and 2000s, biotech companies obtained and enforced broad patents on medical diagnostics that gave them near-total control of testing for particular conditions. One company obtained patents on methods of diagnosing people at high risk of developing breast cancer and "attempted to eliminate ... testing at competing laboratories by sending cease-and-desist letters"; another became "the sole provider of genetic testing for many neurological and endocrine

conditions", including muscular dystrophy and Alzheimer's disease. By 2011, the American Medical Association submitted an alarmed amicus brief to the US supreme court, lamenting that "[i]t is hard to imagine how the clinical diagnostic community will continue to provide quality patient care and how physicians will continue to practice medicine in an ethical and effective manner under" a patent regime that permits broad patents on "the body's natural responses to illness and medical treatment". The supreme court listened. Between 2012 and 2014, in a trio of important cases – Mayo, Myriad and Alice – it confirmed that if a patent is directed to an abstract idea, natural phenomenon or natural law, it must claim

something new and attributable to the inventor – an "inventive concept" – to become eligible for patent protection. A patent can't broadly claim a fundamental building block of knowledge – like the human body's antibodies to Covid-19 – and tack on ubiquitous, conventional technology – like using a needle to draw a blood sample containing those antibodies. These supreme court decisions helped restore patent law's traditional balance between inventors' incentives and public access to technology. The United States's innovation economy has grown under Mayo, Myriad and Alice, with benefits to healthcare – and not just diagnostic testing. For example, in 2013, Justus Decher developed a



telehealth product that enables patients to consult with doctors remotely. A few years later, Decher was accused of infringing an older patent so broad it covered the basic idea of remotely consulting patients – even by telephone. Fortunately, a court invalidated the patent under the supreme court's Mayo and Alice precedents. Decher's and other telehealth technologies have provided an important lifeline in the Covid-19 pandemic. Freed from overbroad patents on fundamental knowledge, we see an explosion of efforts to build and disseminate new tools to fight Covid-19, including 3-D printed and open source masks and ventilators and clinical trials on dozens of potential treatments and vaccines. While the US lags on deploying diagnostic testing, inventors are busily inventing: the FDA has authorized dozens of different Covid-19 tests.



## 10 of the best novels set in Greece-that will take you there

Greece may be one of the most written-about countries, so while choosing this list has been a pleasure, there has been agony involved as well. I first went there more than 30 years ago, and it was books that inspired me – not always novels, and I have cheated a couple of times in my choices here. There is a great deal of excellent non-fiction about Greece – I would pick out Patrick Leigh Fermor and Henry Miller, though I also wish I could have made more choices by Greek authors, particularly as the past few years have inspired some brilliant writing (check out *Austerity Measures* if you like poetry, and there are several novels). However, this is a selection for the English reader – “a transport to Greece” in troubled times. Hopefully, these books will take you there and lead you on to other things.

First cheat – some would say this isn’t a novel; I would say it’s one of the first. I have never stood on the deck of a Greek ferry, watching the islands slip by, without thinking of the magnificent, mercurial character of Odysseus. And the descriptions of Greece! “Rosy-fingered dawn” is undeniable. Some people have problems with the “wine-dark sea”, but really, take a good look at the right time. The only problem is picking the best translation. I’m a fan of Lattimore, Fagles and Fitzgerald. I am also very excited to read a new one by Emily Wilson. In fact, I’ve read the same book in several different versions, which must count for something, including a bad attempt at the original Greek. It’s a foundation for all reading.

**The King Must Die by Mary Renault**  
Mary Renault was one of the writers who sent me to Greece in the first place. I read her in my early teens and her “historical” takes on myth are still a firm favourite. This, and its sequel *The Bull from the Sea*, are a retelling of the life of Theseus, and the first book has action in the Peloponnese, Crete and Athens – all places that have played an important part in my life. Renault does not shy away from the difficult aspects residing in these tales. There is dark stuff here, and no real

heroes, either. If you enjoyed *Game of Thrones*, Renault might be where to go next.

When I asked people what novel conjures up the landscapes and scents of Greece, this was among the most popular replies. I’m not 100% behind it, but agree in general. It’s similar to the movie, which looks gorgeous but has off-putting aspects (the lead actor, for example); in the case of the book, it is some of the politically based caricatures of the communist resistance during the second world war. It caused a lot of controversy when it came out and some of my Greek friends won’t go near it. But its evocation of a lost Kefalonia, the still-beautiful island it’s set on, is perfect. Above all, Pelagia is a character that many who know Greece will recognise – feisty and passionate.

**Little Infamies by Panos Karnezis**

The location of the unnamed village in *Little Infamies* is not given, and Karnezis has said it is not necessarily even Greek, although all the names and details point in that direction. I like to imagine it in the Peloponnese, but perhaps only because that’s the region whose villages I know best. A series of interconnecting short stories lays bare the local life, and anyone familiar with this environment will find it deeply familiar. Even the mythological touches make sense – you’re always half-expecting a centaur to pop up in Greece and engage you in conversation. There are dark secrets beneath the surface of the village, but Karnezis always treats his characters with deep affection.

**My Family and Other Animals by Gerald Durrell**

My second cheat, I’m afraid, as this is clearly more of an autobiography, but it does read like a comic novel and much of it contains an element of fiction – for instance, Larry, or Lawrence (see below), didn’t live in the same house as the others. He also called the book “very wicked [but] very funny”. As a description of an eccentric, dysfunctional family the book

is a blast, making you half grateful and half sorry that your family is not similar; but it’s on this list for its descriptions of Corfu, and specifically the landscape and nature. A friend of mine, who has not read it since childhood, recently summed it up perfectly, “I can still hear the cicadas and see the lizards scuttling over sun-drenched rocks.”

**Uncle Petros and Goldbach’s Conjecture by Apostolos Doxiadis**

With all this myth and nature roiling around it is good to remind ourselves that the Greeks are also famous for science, maths and logic. Not that this book is without emotion. Uncle Petros is a mathematician laid low by an unsolvable problem, and generally considered a failure. Only his unnamed nephew still thinks he may be redeemable. Don’t be scared off by the maths: this is essentially a study of a human relationship. In between all this we get a superb rendering of a certain facet of Athens, with its old houses and apartments, courtyard gardens and elegant decay.

**Freedom and Death by Nikos Kazantzakis**

Crete, particularly its mountains and southern coast, was one of my first loves in Greece, so I have to include a couple of books about the island. I must also include some Kazantzakis. Zorba is too obvious, although I do recommend it, and it (secretly) took its inspiration from the Peloponnese, despite being set in Crete. This brooding tale of Captain Michalis (the original title of the book) takes place during the Turkish occupation, and the fact that the local Turkish bey is his blood brother shows the complications of the time. It all boils up into a properly Shakespearean tragedy while showing the characters’, and the author’s, deep love of their island.

**The Dark Labyrinth by Lawrence Durrell**  
Caves are important in Greece, providing a connection between our world and the hidden one. Herakles and Orpheus both descended to Hades through one, and Theseus’s labyrinth is surely another. I once climbed down a steel ladder into a

deep cave in the Cretan mountains. At the bottom was a rather macabre shrine to a local saint, lit only by my feeble torch. I had an absolute panic attack, and blame much of it on this book, an intriguing mix of adventure story, mythology and horror. It’s not a masterpiece – Durrell’s non-fiction on Greece is better – but it nails that chthonic feeling that rests just below the blue skies and waters of Greece.

Talking of dark undercurrents, this little-known book by a famous author gets beneath the skin of Greece magnificently. It is partly set in the Mani, a rocky and often barren part of the southern mainland where my family lived for several years. It is a starkly beautiful area, dotted with tower house fortifications and small Byzantine chapels, but there is always something lurking in the landscape. Imagine a breeze through olive trees for a moment, and then see what DeLillo does with it: “Wind blew across the olive groves, causing a wild tremor, a kind of panic, treetops going silver.” Anyone who has visited this part of the world outside of the somnambulant summer will instantly know this.

**Atticus the Storyteller’s 100 Greek Myths by Lucy Coats and Anthony Lewis**

This is possibly my favourite book on this list, mainly because I have spent many an evening reading it to my kids. The Greek myths can be deeply weird and confusing – check out the Robert Graves version if you don’t believe me – but children seem to cope with them much more intuitively than adults. The premise behind this collection is genius. Atticus, a tale teller, sets off from his home in Crete to a festival of stories near Troy, travelling through much of Greece. On the way, in exchange for food, lodging and transportation, he relates the myths that are appropriate to the area, starting with the birth of Zeus and ending with the Trojan war. It’s ostensibly a kids’ book, but I would happily read this to myself, and much of my knowledge of Greek mythology rests on it.



# Isolating on a desert island

## Polish YouTube star skips lockdown

It's 5.30 a.m. on Yemen's remote island of Socotra, a 3,625 square kilometer desert paradise 60 miles east of the Horn of Africa. The sun barely reaches over the island's towering sand dunes and rocky cliffs, but Eva zu Beck is out of her tent and at the water's edge.

Armed with a snorkel mask and a long piece of wood topped with a fierce-looking metal hook, she dives into the calm Indian Ocean in search of her breakfast: Socotran lobster.

Remote island life has become the new normal for the 29-year-old, an adventure YouTuber and travel documentary host from Poland.

While the rest of the world stays inside, Zu Beck, who grew her social media following to over 1 million with her travel vlogs on off-the-beaten path destinations like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Syria, has spent the last two months wild camping on deserted white-sand beaches, fishing for grouper in the open ocean and climbing 10 story-high sand dunes as she waits out the pandemic on one of the world's most isolated islands.

The only catch? She has no idea when she'll be able to leave.

**A marathon stay on a desert island**  
Zu Beck arrived on Socotra -- an island with an ecosystem so unique it's often referred to as the "Galapagos of the Indian Ocean" -- on a weekly commercial flight from Cairo on March 11.

The travel vlogger, along with 40 other international tourists, arrived that day to take part in Socotra's first-ever marathon event and was due to stay for two weeks.

Unbeknownst to Zu Beck and her fellow marathon runners, however, the world was quickly

shutting down due to the rapid spread of the novel coronavirus. On March 15, after she and the other participants had completed the race, Socotri officials announced that the island would be closing its borders, and that the marathon runners should return home as soon as possible.

"We were woken up in the middle of the night in our tents," says Zu Beck, "and told that we should make our way to the airport immediately."

She was faced with a difficult decision: should she leave Socotra, and risk contracting the virus on her 5,000 kilometer journey back to Europe? Or should she stay in paradise, and accept the possibility of being stuck on a desert island for the foreseeable future?

Zu Beck knew almost immediately what her decision was. "I have so much love for the island," she says. "I'd visited last year and I swore I'd return one day for an extended stay. I took what was happening as a sign."

With permission from Socotri officials, Zu Beck and four other tourists decided to stay. The rest, including Zu Beck's Canadian boyfriend, returned to Cairo on the last flight out of Socotra.

She says she didn't realize how serious the coronavirus outbreak was when she arrived in March, and medical screening upon entry reassured her that she wasn't introducing the virus.

But not everyone agrees with Zu Beck's decision to visit a remote and potentially vulnerable island as the pandemic took hold. Since this story published early on May 19, Zu Beck has heard from a number of critics via social media through the campaign #Respect\_Socotra, who argue

that her presence is endangering the local community.

In a May 19 Instagram post, she said that the situation in Socotra has evolved.

"Thank you to everyone who has been so concerned about my stay on the island. #Respect\_Socotra, You have given me a new perspective and I apologize if I sent the wrong message before," she said.

"My intention was never to encourage active travel to remote places during a pandemic. Rather, I wanted to share the beauty of a place I was already in, a place that's little-known and needs to be protected," Zu Beck wrote in the post.

Local hospitality makes an extended stay possible

With the last flight gone and with no signs of borders reopening, Zu Beck settled right into island life in mid-March.

"Life on Socotra is slow," she says. "I spend most days outside reading a book, writing in my journal or hiking in the mountains."

While Socotra's most comfortable hotels are in the capital, Hadibu, she spent much of her first two months wild camping or renting basic guest rooms from local goat-herder families in Socotra's less populated rural villages, only returning to Hadibu for Wi-Fi, laundry services and electricity to charge her devices.

"Hadibu is chaotic and noisy," says Zu Beck. "I prefer to be out in nature and living alongside rural communities, who have been kind enough to welcome me into their homes."

Local hospitality has allowed her to keep costs down while living in Socotra, a destination which, due to its remote location and

lack of tourist infrastructure, is notoriously expensive to visit.

"There's a code of hospitality in Socotra called Karam," she says. "It dictates that guests should be welcomed unconditionally, so traditional hosts are very reluctant to take money from guests."

Despite this, Zu Beck says she insists that her hosts accept \$150-200 per month to cover her food and accommodation.

'Parallel universe': Movement has been largely unrestricted

Zu Beck's close contact with the local community was facilitated by Socotra's lack of lockdown restrictions. She isn't aware of any reported cases of coronavirus, and the island is one of the few places on earth that continued to operate as normal.

"There are no social distancing or lockdown measures on Socotra," Zu Beck said in a recent interview. "We are free to visit friends and move around as we please. It's as if we're in a parallel universe."

But that freedom has decreased over time, Zu Beck reported via Instagram on May 19.

"Before, it felt safe to travel to different places around the island, but that's no longer the case. Over the last 3 weeks, I've been spending the majority of my time in a family home in one village and intend to keep it this way," she wrote.

Before increasing concerns over coronavirus slowed movement from place to place, Zu Beck spent her 29th birthday riding her new 150cc motorbike -- Socotra's ubiquitous form of transport imported from Al Mukalla in mainland Yemen -- across the island's southern region, a windswept, sparsely

populated area known for its alien-like dragon blood trees, an endangered plant species endemic to Socotra.

Being stuck in paradise hasn't all been smooth sailing.

Zu Beck was admitted twice to the hospital in Hadibo, first for a nasty cut on her leg she acquired while hiking the island's steep cliffs, and later for suspected heat stroke and a viral infection. "I've been very impressed with the professional care offered by the hospital staff on Socotra," she says.

Unlike mainland Yemen, which has been devastated by the ongoing civil war, Socotra's healthcare system is supported by the UAE, meaning care for minor illnesses and injuries is relatively good.

But Socotra isn't immune to clashes. A recent armed conflict there between the Saudi-backed government forces and UAE-backed southern separatists was deescalated in early May.

Missing loved ones is the hardest part. Aside from recovering from her recent illness, missing loved ones -- and a lack of internet to connect with them -- has been Zu Beck's toughest challenge.

"The Wi-Fi isn't strong enough for Skype or Facetime, and power cuts are common," she says. "I have to make do with just an ordinary telephone call whenever I have signal. I miss them all dearly." While Zu Beck initially said she doesn't regret her decision to stay in Socotra, her position has evolved. "From the perspective of time, given the knowledge I have now about the spread and nature of the virus, would I have made the decision to come here in the first place? No," she said in her Instagram post on May 19.





# Type 2 diabetics are twice as likely to die from Covid-19.

(News Agencies) Patients with Type 2 diabetes are twice as likely to die from coronavirus – and being obese increases the risk even further, research reveals today. A third of deaths from the virus have occurred among individuals with diabetes, which is linked to excess weight and a lack of exercise. The study by the NHS and Imperial College London also found that those with Type 1 diabetes – which is not linked to obesity – were three and a half times more likely to die. The findings provide further evidence that certain groups of patients are at much higher risk of suffering fatal complications. But they also suggest that lifestyle strongly influences someone's susceptibility to the virus. Lead researcher Professor Jonathan Valabhji, the NHS's national clinical director for diabetes and

obesity, analysed the deaths of 23,804 patients in England from coronavirus between March 1 and May 11. Professor Valabhji, also a consultant diabetologist at Imperial College Hospitals,

found that 31.4 per cent had Type 2 diabetes and 1.5 per cent had Type 1. The study also found that patients with Type 2 diabetes doubled their risk again if they were severely obese, with a body mass index (BMI) above 40. They were twice as likely to die than those patients with the condition who were in the overweight or normal

category. Patients with Type 2 diabetes who also had high blood glucose levels because their condition was poorly controlled increased their risk of death by another 60 per cent. Professor Valabhji said: 'This research shows the extent of the risk of coronavirus for people with diabetes and the different risks for those with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes.

Importantly, it also shows that higher blood glucose levels and obesity further increase the risk in both types of diabetes. 'This can be worrying news but we would like to reassure people that the NHS is here for anyone with concerns about diabetes – and has put extra measures in place to help people and keep them safe, including

online sites to support people to care for themselves, digital consultations, and a dedicated new helpline for advice and support for people treated with insulin.' The Government is carrying out a major review into whether obesity, ethnicity and gender increase their chances of dying or becoming severely ill with the virus.

## 'Super-spreader' events like choir practices, gym classes and business conferences may be responsible for 80% of coronavirus cases, scientists say

(News Agencies) Choir meetings, gym classes and business conferences can be coronavirus 'super-spreading' events, scientists claim. Experts analysing the pandemic found many outbreaks of COVID-19 infections can be blamed on so-called 'super-spreading' events. One of the best examples of this, they said, is a choir rehearsal in Washington State where 87 per cent of the 61 singers ended up with the infection.

Scientists at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine say, in most cases, these outbreaks are traced back to a singular highly infectious person.

Around one in ten people who get the virus are so-called 'super-spreaders' because they are very infectious and pass the coronavirus on to lots of people.

The majority of COVID-19 cases, around 80 per cent, are caused by this small group of highly infectious people. The researchers said the focus of controlling the epidemic should be to limit events where super-spreaders could wreak havoc. Super-spreading is known to occur in care homes, hospitals and religious places - but the scientists say other unusual events can lead to clusters of cases. The research

by LSHTM and the Alan Turing Institute suggests there is variability in the number of people that an individual passes the virus on to. They applied a mathematical model to outbreaks in various countries and published their findings in Wellcome Open Research. The findings show that around 80 per cent of COVID-19 transmission was caused by a very small number of individuals. These people make up around ten per cent of all infected patients, therefore their attack rate is very high. They may be called 'super spreaders'. The other 90 per cent

of individuals are responsible for the remaining 20 per cent of COVID-19 transmission. But one of the authors of the paper, Dr Adam Kucharski, told MailOnline that super-spreader events are not just due to people but also the environment. He said: 'We should be cautious about assuming there are a few specific people that always drive transmission.'

'It's likely that events and environments are more important than specific individuals. It's probably more a case of "super-settings" than "super-spreaders".'

### 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.



### 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.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



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](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)



[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

# Paw patrol! Footage shows Boston Dynamics' robot dog Spot herding sheep on a farm in New Zealand



The latest evolution, that really steps things up,

© Rocos / YouTube

(News Agencies) This is the moment a robotic dog tries its metal paws at herding unruly sheep on a farm in New Zealand. Spot gathered together the

animals before pushing them through the field, with the help of two biological sheepdogs. Developed by Boston Dynamics, it can reach speeds of up to 3mph

and costs less than a car, which average £30,000, to lease, according to reports. It has been heralded as the future of farming. The clip, which could offer a glimpse



into the future of livestock care, also shows the robot marching through an orchard, along a road and navigating its way down a grassy verge.

'The use of autonomous robots in agriculture is increasing the efficiency of food production,' said Rocos, which published the clip.

'Robots, like Spot from Boston Dynamics, increase accuracy in yield estimates, relieve the strain of worker shortages and create precision in farming.' The machine, which has also been offered for work on building sites, in mines, and in healthcare, can carry up to two stone. And in a recent

announcement, Boston Dynamics said it can be controlled from any location due to their partnership with cloud-based software platform Rocos. It can be purchased on lease through an 'early adopter programme' which costs less than a new car, reports Spectrum.org. 'Our general guidance is that the total cost of the early adopter program will be less than the price of a car - but how nice a car will depend on the number of Spots leased and how long the customer will be leasing the robot,' said the company's business developer, Michael Perry.

## Antarctica could turn GREEN as climate change causes algae to bloom across the surface of the snow



(News Agencies) Antarctica could turn green as climate change causes algae to bloom across the surface of the snow — and penguins are partly to blame, a study has found. Botanists from the University of Cambridge created the first ever large-scale map of microscopic algae blooming along the Antarctic coastline. The researchers combined satellite data with on-the-ground observations taken over two summers spent at the South Pole detecting and measuring green algae.

They found that — although each individual alga is microscopic in size — collectively they can turn snow bright green and can be seen from space when grown en masse. Algal growth appears to be

encouraged by bird and mammal excrement — with 60 per cent of blooms found within 3.1 miles (five kilometres) of a penguin

colony. Experts believe that this 'green snow' will spread further and faster as global temperatures continue to increase under

man-made climate change. This is a significant advance in our understanding of land-based life on Antarctica, and how it might change in the coming years as the climate warms,' said paper author and botanist Matt Davey, of the University of Cambridge. 'Snow algae are a key component of the continent's ability to capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis.' Blooms of green snow algae are found around the coastline of the southern continent — particularly on islands along the west coast of the

Antarctic Peninsula. They grow in relatively 'warmer' areas, where the average temperatures reach just above 0°C (32°F) during the Southern Hemisphere's summer months that run from November through to February. The Antarctic Peninsula is the part of the continent that experienced the most rapid warming in the latter part of the last century. The researchers found that the distribution of the green snow is strongly influenced by birds and mammals, whose excrement acts as a highly nutritious natural fertiliser. In fact, 60 per cent of algal blooms were found within

3.1 miles (five kilometres) of a penguin colony. Algae were also seen to be growing near the nesting sites of other birds — including skuas, a type of predatory seabird — and in the areas where seals come ashore. 'We identified 1,679 separate blooms of green algae on the snow surface, which together covered an area of 1.9 kilometres squared — equating to a carbon sink of around 479 tonnes per year,' Dr Davey explained. This, the researchers explained, would be equivalent to the amount of carbon emitted by roughly 875,000 car journeys in the UK.

## SCIENTISTS DISCOVER A RARE 'SUPER-EARTH' AT CENTRE OF THE GALACTIC BULGE GALAXY

(News Agencies) Scientists from the University of Canterbury (UC) have discovered a rare new Super-Earth planet that lies towards the centre of the galaxy, also called the Galactic Bulge. The planet — one of the handful to have been discovered to date — is comparable to Earth in terms of both size and orbit. The results of the find have been published in The Astronomical Journal. The research was led by Dr Antonio Herrera Martin and Associate Professor Michael Albrow, both of whom are a

part of an international team of astronomers who came together on Super-Earth research. Speaking about the discovery, Dr Herrera Martin, the paper's lead author, explained, "To have an idea of the rarity of the detection, the time it took to observe the magnification due to the host star was approximately five days, while the planet was detected only during a small five-hour distortion. After confirming this was indeed caused by another 'body' different from the star, and not an instrumental error, we

proceeded to obtain the characteristics of the star-planet system." The researcher added that the host star is 10 percent the mass of our Sun and that the planet has a year of approximately 617 days. According to Dr Martin, the planet was discovered using a technique called microlensing where the combined gravity of the planet and its host star causes light from a more distant background star to be magnified in a particular manner. This microlensing

event was first observed independently in 2018 by the Optical Gravitational Lensing Experiment (OGLE) using a telescope in Chile. It was reconfirmed by the Korea Microlensing Telescope Network (KMTNet) to which the UC astronomers belong, using three identical telescopes in Chile, Australia, and South Africa. As per a report in Tech Explorist, the planet has a mass somewhere between that of Earth and Neptune. It orbits at a location between Venus and Earth from the parent star, the report added.

## Swiss Digital Game Developer Settles FTC Allegations that it Falsely Claimed it was a Member of COPPA Safe Harbor Program

(News Agencies) A digital game maker has settled Federal Trade Commission allegations that it misled consumers about its membership in a program aimed at ensuring companies adhere to requirements of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). In a complaint, the FTC alleges that Miniclip, S.A., a Swiss-based company that makes mobile and online digital games, falsely claimed it was a

current member of the Children's Advertising Review Unit's (CARU) COPPA safe harbor program. Under the FTC's COPPA Rule, companies are deemed in compliance with COPPA if they are a member and adhere to the guidelines of an FTC-approved COPPA safe harbor program, such as the Better Business Bureau's CARU program. The COPPA Rule requires companies that collect personal information

about children under 13 to provide parents with notice of their collection practices and obtain verifiable parental consent. "Consumers rely on companies to tell them the truth, especially when it comes to how they treat personal information about children," said Andrew Smith, Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "When companies like Miniclip promise consumers that they are an

approved participant of a safe harbor program even after they're removed, the FTC will take action." Miniclip joined CARU's safe harbor program in 2009 and remained a member until 2015, when CARU terminated Miniclip's participation in the program. From 2015 through mid-2019, Miniclip falsely claimed on its website and on its Facebook games privacy policy page that it was a member of CARU's safe

harbor program, according to the FTC complaint. As part of the proposed settlement Miniclip is prohibited from misrepresenting its participation or certification in any privacy or security program sponsored by a government or any self-regulatory organization, including the CARU COPPA safe harbor program. Miniclip is also subject to compliance and recordkeeping requirements.

## Foreign investors pull out \$16 billion from India due to Covid-19

(News Agencies) Amidst global economic recession due to coronavirus, foreign investors have pulled out an estimated USD 26 billion from developing Asian economies and over USD 16 billion out of India, a latest Congressional report has said.

"Foreign investors have pulled an estimated USD 26 billion out of developing Asian economies and more than USD 16 billion out of India, increasing concerns of a major economic recession in Asia," independent Congressional Research Center said in its latest report on global economic

effects of COVID-19.

In Europe, over 30 million people in Germany, France, the UK, Spain, and Italy have applied for state support, while first quarter 2020 data indicates that the eurozone economy contracted by 3.8 per cent, the largest quarterly decline since the series started in 1995, it said.

In the US, preliminary data indicated that the GDP fell by 4.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2020, the largest quarterly decline since the fourth quarter of 2008 during the global financial crisis, the CRS said.

According to CRS, the pandemic crisis

is challenging governments to implement monetary and fiscal policies that support credit markets and sustain economic activity, while they are implementing policies to develop vaccines and safeguard their citizens. In doing so, however, differences in policy approaches are straining relations between countries that promote nationalism and those that argue for a coordinated international response. Differences in policies are also straining relations between developed and developing economies and between northern and southern members of the eurozone, challenging alliances, and

raising questions about the future of global leadership, the report said.

While almost all major economies are shrinking as a result of coronavirus, only three countries China, India, and Indonesia are projected to experience small, but positive rates of economic growth in 2020, it said. The IMF in its recent report argued that recovery of the global economy could be weaker than projected as a result of lingering uncertainty about possible contagion, lack of confidence, and permanent closure of businesses and shifts in the behaviour of firms and household, the CRS said.

## Worldwide Payment Processor and Payments Industry Executive to Pay \$40.2 Million to Settle FTC Charges of Assisting Fraudulent Schemes and Credit Card Laundering

(News Agencies) Defendants allegedly processed payments for numerous scams, harming hundreds of thousands of consumers. One of the biggest payment processing companies and its former executive will pay more than \$40.2 million to settle Federal Trade Commission charges they knowingly processed payments and laundered, or assisted laundering of, credit card transactions for scams that targeted hundreds of thousands of consumers. According to the FTC's complaint,

Atlanta-based First Data Merchant Services, LLC (First Data) allegedly ignored repeated warnings from employees, banks, and others that Chi "Vincent" Ko, through his company that served as an independent sales agent (ISO) for First Data, was laundering, and First Data was assisting and facilitating laundering, payments for companies that were breaking the law over a number of years. Ko was later hired as an executive at First Data.

"First Data is paying \$40

million because it repeatedly looked the other way while its payment processing services were being used to commit fraud," said Daniel Kaufman, Deputy Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "When companies fail to screen out fraudsters exploiting the payment processing system to steal people's money, they're breaking the law – and injuring consumers." According to the complaint, Ko, through his prior company, First Pay Solutions LLC (First Pay), opened hundreds of merchant

accounts for at least four scams – three that were the subject of FTC actions, and one that was the subject of a U.S. Department of Justice criminal prosecution. The FTC alleges that, from 2012 to 2014, Ko opened accounts under false names, provided Wells Fargo Bank with deceptive information to open the accounts, and ignored evidence that his clients were engaged in fraud. The \$40.2 million to be paid in the settlements will be used to provide refunds to consumers harmed by these scams. The complaint alleges First Data ignored

numerous warnings about Ko and First Pay's activity. Among the warnings was a 2014 e-mail from Wells Fargo's executive vice president, saying "Why is First Data signing ISOs like [First Pay]? They are going to get First Data and Wells Fargo in trouble with the FTC and CFPB due to consumer deceptive practices..." In addition, a 2014 Visa investigation required First Data to pay back \$18.7 million in charges processed by Ko and temporarily banned First Data from bringing on high-risk merchants.

## FTC Sending Refund Checks Totaling More Than \$8.5 Million to Consumers Defrauded by Misleading Claims for Dietary Supplements

(News Agencies) The Federal Trade Commission is mailing 143,636 refund checks totaling more than \$8.5 million to consumers who bought three dietary supplements deceptively marketed by National Urological Group, Inc. (NUG) and several related companies.

The mailing announced today is the largest distribution to consumers who bought the defendants' deceptively marketed

products. Previous distributions in this case have resulted in more than \$6 million returned to over 100,000 consumers.

The FTC's case against the defendants began in November 2004, when it filed a complaint charging them with making deceptive claims about the efficacy and safety of two supposed weight loss supplements, Thermalean and Lipodrene, and one supposed

erectile dysfunction treatment, Spontane-ES. The complaint named NUG, National Institute for Weight Loss, Inc.; Hi-Tech Pharmaceuticals, Inc.; Jared Wheat; Thomas Holda; Stephen Smith, Michael Howell; and Dr. Terrill Mark Wright.

At the FTC's request, in December 2008, a federal district court ordered the marketers to pay \$15.8 million, and banned them from the allegedly deceptive

conduct. The FTC first began mailing checks for this matter in August 2012. Additional funds were collected, so the FTC is mailing another round of checks to affected consumers.

Consumers who receive a refund check from the FTC should deposit or cash it within 60 days, as indicated on the check. All affected consumers were eligible to receive a total refund of \$102.32. Some consumers in this mailing already

received partial refunds and will now receive the remainder they are due.

Epiq, the refund administrator for this matter, will begin mailing checks today. The FTC never requires consumers to pay money or provide information to cash refund checks. If you do not get a check, but believe that you should have, please contact the refund administrator at 1-877-483-2883.

# Kim Kardashian West's face masks provoke controversy

**The reality star's non-medical masks, launched through her shapewear company, suggest the line between fashion and necessity is becoming increasingly blurred**



(News Agencies) The reality TV star Kim Kardashian West is the latest designer to capitalise on the coronavirus crisis by launching a line of face masks – and has sparked a race row in the process.

Launched over the weekend under the celebrity's shapewear label, Skims, the non-medical seamless masks come in five skin tones and reportedly sold out in less than 30 minutes. There is now a waiting list for them.

But their runaway success came hand in hand with accusations of "casual racism", according to some on social media, who pointed out that one of the masks was not the right nude shade for a black model. The Skims site has now changed the model and

the mask she wears. Skims had not responded to the Guardian's request for comment at time of publication.

Skims announced that it would donate 10,000 masks to various local relief charities in Los Angeles, where wearing a mask is mandatory if physical distancing is not possible. This public act of generosity has been widely reported, alongside news of sales. A host of other fashion brands have responded to the coronavirus pandemic by rearranging their supply chains to manufacture masks and other pieces of personal protective equipment, in many cases not for profit. At the same time, some large profit-making companies have been accused of

"coronawashing" or using the pandemic as a public relations vehicle. Others, such as ASOS and Boohoo, have faced criticism for profiteering from the crisis by making "fashion masks" in leopard and paisley prints that offer little or no proven protection. The Skims masks cost \$8 each, and are available in colours named sand, clay, sienna, cocoa and onyx. Given that the masks are "non-medical" – the website cautions that the mask is "not a respirator and will not eliminate the risk of contracting disease or infection" – wearing them would appear to be as much about style as pandemic precaution.

There is concern that should mask-wearing become

mandatory, this line between necessity and fashion statement is going to blur, and this arm of the industry will get bigger. The masks currently sit under "accessory" on the shapewear label's site. It is not the first time Kardashian West's brand has stoked racial controversy. Skims was originally launched in 2019 as Kimono, a name that drew criticism for its appropriation of Japanese culture, with the mayor of Kyoto, Daisaku Kadokawa, writing an open letter to Kardashian-West requesting that the word kimono should "not be monopolized[sic]", and asking her to reconsider the brand's name, which she duly did.

## 'We can't be silent' how fashion is speaking up about Covid racism

**Asian American designers such as Phillip Lim and Prabal Gurung are using their clothes to fight against the rising tide of corona-related xenophobia and help the relief effort**

(News Agencies) Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, an anti-Asian sentiment has been on the rise – and now the fashion community is putting itself at the forefront in tackling the hate. In the UK, racist incidents have rocketed and hate crimes have increased by 21%, while in the US, there has been an increase in racially motivated attacks against Asian Americans.

"The upturn of violence and discrimination really hit way

too close to home for all of us," says the US designer Phillip Lim. "When we see people who look like us, our friends and family members, colleagues being attacked, we can't be silent." Lim's 3.1 Phillip Lim label and Prabal Gurung are among the fashion brands contributing clothing, including t-shirts and hats, with proceeds going to the All Americans Movement, a campaign to help those from marginalised communities who have

been affected by Covid-19. "It's a cross-cultural movement, which reinforces the idea that there are many different ways to be American," says Gurung, the Nepalese-American fashion designer who is based in New York. "It is an idea: a confluence of different cultures, communities and dreams. When different minority groups stand up and stand together, there is an astounding level of support

that can change the tides for a more equitable and peaceful future."

It is a potent message, in the climate of racially based Covid incidents and Donald Trump labelling the pandemic the "Chinese virus". "Assigning a race to this virus is exactly the type of misinformation we have to fight against to ensure we are well informed," says Gurung. Lim agrees that the incendiary language around Covid is having a



toxic effect. "It is frustrating to watch the leaders of this country blatantly gaslight the American public with this type of xenophobic rhetoric," he says.

"I genuinely believe that most people want to do good," says Gurung. "That said, I was not surprised by the racism. While I see the incredible beauty of this country, I have always been aware of the cracks in its foundation and the systemic racism that pulses under the surface." Gurung has been political in his work before. He sent models down the runway with statement T-shirts featuring slogans such as "The future is female" and "Our bodies, our choices, our power" and "I am an immigrant". He stopped his 10th anniversary New York

fashion week show being held at Hudson Yards when he found out that the owner hosted a Trump fundraiser. Provocatively, in the era of Trump's immigration ban, his Spring/Summer 20 show featured a diverse cast of models wearing prom-like sashes asking: "Who gets to be American?". He said the idea for the collection came to him while he was in a business meeting. "I was sitting across from a group of businessmen, telling them about my goal to redefine the Americana aesthetic, and one of them said: 'You don't look American, so how can you define what America is?'" He said this exchange, along with Time magazine's Who Gets To Be American cover, set off the central idea for the collection.

## What we wear now: Instagram Live styling session

**With lockdown set to move into the summer, the Guardian's styling editor, Melanie Wilkinson, and the Observer's fashion editor, Jo Jones, answer your questions on how to dress for now**

(News Agencies) For those of us working from home, or juggling childcare with a job, the pandemic has arguably redefined the way we dress. Not least because it was spring when we went into lockdown and now it's summer. If you are working from home, trying to stay cool without buying a new pair of shorts, or simply wanting to refresh your wardrobe for video conferences, we want to hear from you. With a focus on re-styling your pre-existing wardrobe rather than buying anything new, send us your questions. Are you struggling to avoid wearing jogging bottoms day in, day out? Maybe you want to know how to style a Breton striped T-shirt in a work-friendly, babyproof way? Or, if you are going to shop, you might like to find the best place to buy a white T-shirt you will wear for ever, the most sustainable and socially conscious brands to support, or the best place to find affordable earrings for Zoom calls.



## Non-discrimination is an important part of society's growth: Shruti Haasan

The actor-singer strongly believes in banishing ignorance with ample of true information and speaks up against discrimination against the ailing and healthcare workers during the coronavirus lockdown

(News Agencies) One must realise that Covid-19 doesn't discriminate. Hence, to see people discriminate is pointless and quite painful," says Shruti Haasan. She believes that ostracising coronavirus positive patients is the root cause of most mental health disorders. She explains, "Anxiety, depression and suicide are very real problems. If you can drive someone towards them through discrimination, it needs to be addressed." She says that spreading awareness about doing the right thing is the need of the hour, which is why she decided to convey the message on her social media. She shares, "Discrimination is a form of bullying and harassment. And especially in a situation like this, it shouldn't be encouraged by any means. Those who

can see it happening in front of them should step in and change that mind-set." The actor-singer says that the vicious cycle of rumours is also to be blamed and verification of information is the first step towards eradicating ignorance. "A lot of people are being sucked into the vortex of fake news and conspiracies and there's a sense of fear attached to this [being infected], which is very natural but that doesn't mean that one should turn it into something negative," she says. Emphasising on the importance of non-discrimination against patients and healthcare staff, she says, "An important part of our society's growth is to deal with Covid-19." Haasan adds that education and acceptance are the best ways of dealing with the panic.



## Janhvi Kapoor reacts after house help tests positive for coronavirus



Top entertainment news: Salman Khan made a quick visit to Mumbai on Tuesday to check in on his parents after a gap of 60 days. Janhvi Kapoor shared a message after their house help tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday.

(News Agencies) Actor Salman Khan reportedly made a visit to his house in Mumbai on Tuesday to check in on his parents, who have been staying at the family's Galaxy apartments home in Bandra while Salman had been stuck in his Panvel farmhouse for the last 60 days due to the nationwide coronavirus lockdown. Salman took the necessary precautions. Actor Janhvi Kapoor on Wednesday posted a detailed message from her father, filmmaker Boney Kapoor, after their house help tested positive for Covid-19. She also spoke about how they would deal with the situation. One of the producers of TV show Hamari Bahu Silk has released a statement after many cast and crew members had alleged that they hadn't been paid for their work because of the lockdown. Several of them also claimed they're having suicidal thoughts. On Wednesday, Mumbai-based belly dancer Sanjana Muthreja shared a throwback picture with Suhana Khan from last year and another that displayed how their sessions are progressing now. Suhana has been staying home with her family amid lockdown.

## Nawazuddin Siddiqui's wife Aaliya claims his brother hit her



(News Agencies) Nawazuddin Siddiqui's wife Aaliya aka Anjana Kishor Pandey has alleged that she was subjected to domestic violence. She claimed that though her husband never raised his hand on her, his brother Shamas Siddiqui hit her. The actor has not replied to the allegations. Aaliya claimed in an interview with BollywoodLife that Nawazuddin's family has a history of mistreating their women. "He (Nawaz) had never raised his hands on me, but the shouting and

arguments had become unbearable. You could say though that only that was left. Yes, but his family has mentally and physically tortured me a lot. His brother had even hit me. His mother and brothers and sisters-in-law used to stay with us only in Mumbai. So, I've been bearing a lot for too many years. His first wife had also left him for this reason alone," she said. "It's a pattern. There are already seven cases registered by the wives of their house against them, and four divorces have taken place. This is the fifth one. It's a pattern in his family. You conceal a lot to avoid embarrassment before others, but how much can you take in love," she added. Aaliya, who filed for divorce from Nawazuddin earlier this month and sought maintenance as well as sole custody of their children, said that she was 'doing everything alone' and received no support from him. "Actually, my self respect was gradually being destroyed. The way you are raised in the house you come from, how your mother and brother take care of you, and then you are suddenly forced to change your religion... anyway, that was necessary to get married, so I did it for him when he had asked me to.

## No one had imagined that the world will come to a standstill: Kiara Advani

The actor, who calls herself a 'home person', says she doesn't feel 'stuck at home' but admits that she misses 'going on the sets'

(News Agencies) She was shooting for Bhool Bhulaiyya 2 till days before lockdown 1.0 was announced. Before that, Kiara Advani was working back-to-back on her slate of films [Good Newwz, Laxmmi Bomb, Indoo Ki Jawani, Shershaah and Guilty]. But then, everything came to a screeching halt due to the Covid-19 pandemic. And the actor admits that sometimes, she finds it all "a bit unbelievable." "Honestly, no one – including me – imagined the world coming to a standstill," says Kiara, adding that she has "anyway always been a 'home person'." "So, there's not a feeling that 'arrey, main atak gayi

hoon (oh, I am stuck).' But having said that, I do miss going on the sets," she says. Interestingly, the Kabir Singh actor has been making great use of "all the free time." "I'm using this period to expand my knowledge vis-à-vis things that I had been mulling over. For example, I am trying to polish my Urdu diction, and there are so many institutions/universities that offer free courses. So, the idea is to keep myself engaged in a productive manner," she says. Not just that, Kiara is also kicked that she is "back in touch" with so many people. "I always wanted to reach out to them. Now, I have reconnected with so many of my friends



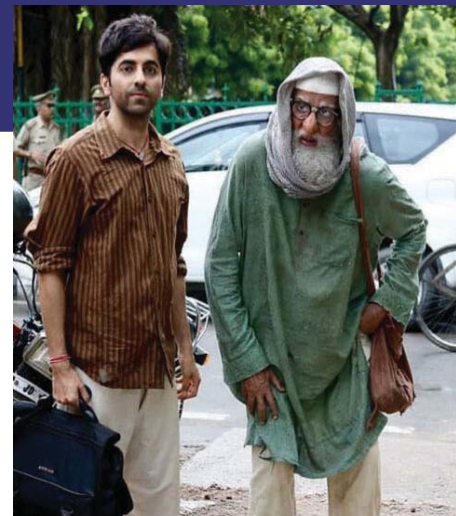
# India's finest for the world

## Amazon Prime Video to globally premiere Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushmann Khurrana starrer Gulabo Sitabo

(News Agencies) Amazon Prime Video today announced the global premiere of the highly anticipated Hindi film Gulabo Sitabo exclusively on the streaming service. Directed by Shoojit Sircar, the film stars Amitabh Bachchan (Black, Piku) and Ayushmann Khurrana (Shubh Mangal Zyaada Saavdhan, Andhadhun) in the lead. The movie will premiere exclusively on the 12th of June, 2020 on Amazon Prime Video and will be available in 200 countries and territories worldwide. "At Amazon we're listening to our customers, and working backwards from there," said Vijay Subramaniam, Director and Head, Content, Amazon Prime Video, India. "Gulabo Sitabo is one of the most anticipated films of the year. We are happy to exclusively premiere Gulabo Sitabo on Prime Video. It is the first step in our endeavour to bring superior cinematic experiences to our customer's doorstep." "This is the dawn of a new era for Indian entertainment," said

director, Shoojit Sircar. "I am happy that a global audience will be able to watch our gritty dramedy, and enjoy what the film has in store for them. Gulabo Sitabo is a quirky, light-hearted movie that the audience can enjoy with their families. It has been a wonderful experience working with Mr. Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushmann Khurrana on the film." "Indian audiences have been eagerly awaiting the release of Gulabo Sitabo and we are delighted that Amazon Prime Video will now be premiering the movie for our customers. The global release of Gulabo Sitabo on Prime Video, in over 200 countries and territories, will ensure maximum reach and visibility for the film not just in India but around the world. We are excited about the new offering and are happy to, once again, bring to our customers the best of entertainment through this release," said Gaurav Gandhi, Director and Country General Manager, Amazon Prime Video India. "Gulabo Sitabo is a slice of life, dramedy

that is a must watch for families at home," said actor Amitabh Bachchan, "I was excited about my role since the first time Shoojit showed me the character's look. It took me almost 3 hours each day to get into character with its different look. I had a wonderful time working with my very talented co-star Ayushmann Khurrana. Even though we are constantly bantering in the film, it has been a pleasure working with him for the first time. This family entertainer has the power to cut across geographic boundaries and we are pleased to bring Gulabo Sitabo to audiences across the globe." Actor Ayushmann Kurrana said, "Gulabo Sitabo is a special film for me. It made me reunite with my mentor Shoojit da after Vicky Donor. Whatever I'm today is because of him and I'm happy that he made me a part of his vision again. Gulabo Sitabo also sees me share the screen space with Mr. Amitabh Bachchan for the first time and it's a huge moment, it's a dream come true



for me. I have secretly wished to work with him for many, many years and Shoojit da made this happen and I will be indebted to him forever. It has truly been an honour for me to work with a legend and I feel enriched as an actor after the experience. What I love about the film is its sheer simplicity - the fleeting moments of simple humour in the banter between a landlord and tenant makes this film really special. I hope audiences love the film and our chemistry when it premieres."

## STRAIGHT TO DIGITAL

### AMAZON PRIME VIDEO TO GLOBALLY PREMIERE SEVEN HIGHLY ANTICIPATED INDIAN MOVIES

(News Agencies) Following the announcement of the upcoming premiere of Shoojit Sircar's Amitabh Bachchan (Black, Piku) and Ayushmann Khurrana (Shubh Mangal Zyaada Saavdhan, Andhadhun) starrer Gulabo Sitabo, Amazon Prime Video today announced an additional six, highly-anticipated Indian films to premiere directly on the streaming service. Spanning five Indian languages, the Direct-to-Service line-up features additional releases such as Anu Menon's Shakuntala Devi with Vidya Balan (Dirty Picture, Kahaani) in lead, legal drama Ponmagal Vandhal starring Jyothika (Chandramukhi) in addition to Keerthy Suresh (Mahanathie) starrer Penguin (Tamil and Telugu), Sufiyum Sujatayum (Malayalam), Law (Kannada) and French Biryani (Kannada). The movies will premiere exclusively on Prime Video over the next three months and will be available in 200 countries and territories worldwide. "At Prime Video we believe in listening to what our consumers want and working backwards from there. This belief is the genesis of our latest offering," said Vijay Subramaniam, Director



and Head, Content, Amazon Prime Video, India. "Over the last two years, Prime Video has become the destination of choice for our customers to watch new releases, across languages, within weeks of their theatrical release. Now we're taking this one step further, with seven of India's most-anticipated films premiering exclusively on Prime Video, bringing the cinematic experience to their doorstep." "Indian audiences have been eagerly awaiting the release of these seven highly anticipated films and we are delighted that Amazon Prime Video

will now be premiering these movies for our customers - who can enjoy watching these from the safety and comfort of their homes and on a screen of their choice. Prime Video with its deep penetration in India, with viewership across over 4000 Towns and Cities, and its world-wide reach in more than 200 countries and territories, will give a large global release footprint to these films. We feel truly excited about this initiative and are confident of delighting our Prime Members with this offering" said Gaurav Gandhi, Director and Country General Manager, Amazon Prime Video India.

## Manisha Koirala shows support for Nepal's controversial new map, earns flak from Indians on Twitter



(News Agencies) Actor Manisha Koirala has earned flak for showing support towards the controversial new Nepalese map. The new map released by Nepal shows areas such as Lipulekh and Kalapani under its territory. "Thank you for keeping the dignity of our small nation..we all are looking forward for a peaceful and respectful dialogue between all three great nations now," Manisha wrote in her tweet. It was in reply to Pradeep Gyawali, Nepal's foreign affairs minister, who had tweeted about the area getting included in the Nepalese map. Manisha's tweet did not sit well with Indians on Twitter. The tweet got her over 2,700 replies. "Pls go and earn in nepali film industry," read a tweet. "You are supporting the illegal map of Nepal to support India instead of you on such an issue which makes your identity from India. The Indian film industry gave you a lot of fame and money and that how you repay us #bycott\_mkairala," read another. "Get the fu\*\* out of India now," wrote another Twitter user. "Ungrateful to the nation that gave you everything. Nice," read a tweet.

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# The battle for a Green Card intensifies in the US



(Story on Page 2)

**Old ways have to give way to new**  
**Set up permanent community kitchens**



(SA Insider Bureau) These days our country faces the twin challenge of feeding lakhs and lakhs of poor people driven out of work in urban areas due to the coronavirus pandemic and ensuring the safe return of these labourers and keep them in quarantine centres for 14 days as per the protocol laid down by Health Authorities before they are allowed to reach their homes in rural areas. (Contd. on page29)

## Hydroxychloroquine, Trump and Covid-19: what you need to know



(SA Insider Bureau) Donald Trump has reignited a controversy over the antimalarial drugs chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine after telling reporters he was taking the latter to protect himself against coronavirus. What do we know about these drugs?  
 (Contd on page 29)

## Health Minister Harsh Vardhan Takes Charge As Chairman Of WHO Executive Board

(SA Insider Bureau) Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday took charge as the chairman of WHO Executive Board, Officials said. Talking to media after his election, Vardhan said he understood the critical moment at which he is taking up this position. "I am aware I am entering this office at a time of global crisis on account of this pandemic. At a time, when we all understand that there will be many health challenges in the next 2 decades. All these challenges demand a shared response," he said. Discussing India's response to the coronavirus, he said, "India faced COVID19 in a proactive and pre-emptive way, with unmatched scale and determination. Today we have a mortality of 3% only. In a country of 1.35 billion, there are only 0.1 million cases of COVID-19." Speaking about the high recovery rate in India, he said, "The recovery rate is above 40% and doubling rate is 13 days." The number of active COVID-19 cases in India stood at 66,330, while 48,533 people have recovered and one patient has migrated. On Friday, India recorded the biggest single-day spike of 6,088 COVID-19 cases, while the death toll due to the virus has climbed to 3,583.



## 45 Dead As Pakistan Plane With 99 On Board Crashes



(SA Insider Bureau) At least 45 people were killed when a Pakistan International Airlines plane with 99 people on board crashed into a densely populated residential area near the Jinnah International Airport here on Friday, officials said, days after the COVID-19-induced travel restrictions were lifted.

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