

# THE SECULAR CITIZEN

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A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

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# Open Letter to PM by AICU

*The century-old All India Catholic Union (AICU), the largest Laity movement in Asia, has called upon the Union Government to devise a comprehensive National Social Security safety net, universal Health Insurance and Medical Infrastructure so that the calamity that befell millions of migrant labour and jobless rural and urban poor in the Covid pandemic-driven Lockdown are never repeated.*

*The following is the text of the letter to the prime minister whose contents were passed in resolutions moved at the Working Committee Meeting (WCM):.*

To the Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi

## Dear Prime Minister

We extend you greetings from the All India Catholic Union [AICU], the largest and oldest in Asia, representing the Catholic Laity of the country for a century.

And we stand in solidarity with you and the Government of India and of the States on combatting of the virulent Corona-19 which threatens life directly and in its impact on the economy, industrial and agriculture economic production. The Lockdown has impacted migrant labour, the peasantry, fishermen and Tribals. The Church and the community, as you are aware, have been in the forefront of extending relief to the people across the country, and specially in urban slums, tribal villages and the homeless poor. We assure the nation, through you, of this support as long as it needed in our love for the people. We quote our own Indian Saint, Mother Teresa, who said "Love till it hurts".

We join you in saluting the Frontline Defenders, the Doctors, Nurses, researchers, paramedics, the sanitation staff and the Police. Our own Christian brothers and sisters are present in large numbers in the Medicare fraternity. We believe Jesus is the Healer, and we pray to for healing to all our people in India and

in the world.

Dear Prime Minister, the AICU recently held its first-ever Working Committee meeting on an Internet Platform. We realise how technology can be of help in such times, and the immense potential of the Internet in connecting and empowering the nation through communication, information, and collective decision-making.

We are therefore using it to bring to your notice a very few of many issues that deeply concern us as a people, and as a minority community. These were decisions we reached at the WCM.

1. The social and economic welfare of the poor: We call upon the government to evolve a comprehensive Social Security Network for the poorest of the poor, the migrant labour, landless and unemployed youth. It was heart rending to see people on the verge of starvation, reduced to beggary, and some dying even as they trudged hundreds of kilometres home. We hope you will soon announce employment guarantees and relief for the jobless.
2. Medicare: AICU calls upon the government to build a national Health Service and Health Insurance and medical infrastructure covering every citizen. We noticed that other than hospitals run by church and similar NGOs, it was the government medical infrastructure that led the fight against Covid.
3. Education: the Christian community one of the single largest entity in the Education sector after the Government. We urge you to ensure creative collaboration with all in finalising the national Education Policy, revising it to incorporate lessons learnt in the Lockdown. We think technology will help government and us to extend education to the last child.
4. Religious Minorities, Dalits and Tribals' Welfare and Security: The AICU was distressed to note that the Lockdown situation has been

abused by some governments, and non-state groups, to demonise and defame communities, and to target clergy and others. Christians, and people of some other faiths, pray as a Congregation and community. As it is, Covid has closed churches across the world. Pope Francis himself celebrates the Holy Mass by himself, and we share in it through the internet. We pray for being able to celebrate the Eucharist Mass in our parishes as soon as circumstances permit. But meanwhile, harassment of clergy and others must end wherever it happens.

5. Critical State of Catholic Heritage Churches in Old Goa: The AICU Working Committee was alarmed to see the neglect and callousness on the part of the Archaeological Survey of India in maintaining the 424-year old Basilica of Bom Jesus, an A-Grade National Monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in which the relics of St. Francis Xavier (Goencho Saib) is preserved.

After the historic sites connected with St Thomas in Kerala and Mount Thomas, Chennai, this is one of the most important shrines for the Catholic Church, not just for Indians but in the world.

The Parish Priest has said that the Archaeological Survey of India has left the ceilings of the Bom Jesu church open to the vagaries weather, and no steps have been taken to protect the five century old monument from damage on account of impending rains on the lame excuse that there are "no funds". Very urgent action needs to be taken so that there is no threat to the Relics and the Basilica. AICU volunteers to be involved in the process of saving preserving the Basilica of Bom Jesu as an integral part of the religious and cultural heritage of India.

Thank you for your consideration

The AICU joins the community in praying for you and the government. God bless India.

**Lancy D Cunha, National President**

**Dr John Dayal, Official Spokesman**

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# COVID-19

## A Challenge Like No Other From Pestilence to Excellence, the Christian way!

**W**ith the last nail to be hit on the lid of the Corona virus coffin nowhere in sight, it follows that the last word to be written on the pandemic will be a long time in coming! And so this treatise will deal not with the statistics involved but with how overwhelmingly the disease has affected the personhood of all human beings and the Christian response thereof.

### Unusual phenomenon

Never before has anything of any size so swiftly brought the world per se to a standstill, or rather, to its knees, the way the tiny, invisible COVID-19 has done. News of fresh cases of infection keeps sweeping across the country and the world, further diminishing the possibility of the lockdown being lifted in the near future. What's worse, the pandemic has already become an integral part of human life so to say, whereby we have begun to organize ourselves, mind, body and spirit around this invisible enemy of human-kind without distinction as to personal status and, in the process, ceased to live, instead merely *existing*, our every movement inhibited by the virus, our interactions rudely frozen!

To safeguard the situation, governments of different countries across the globe have been periodically issuing combative measures—including social distancing—to be adopted in the prevention of a further spread, Italy, the **PDA** capital [Public Display of Affection] of the world, leading the way by formally shunning handshakes and discouraging kissing apart from closing down everything from airports to entertainment parlours, and churches to brothels,

other than food outlets and—hold your breath!—tobacconists, with police patrolling the streets, strictly ensuring that no individuals are out of their residences without valid reason or proper papers.

### The China angle

In India, police are frequently seen demonstrating their primitive side with the blatant use of the *lathi* on lockdown violators with impunity. Measures officially imposed by government/municipality include among other things the use of masks and gloves apart from isolation, self-quarantine, stay-at-home and the like. Yet, negligence on the part of the authorities concerned is said to lead to avoidable contamination resulting from the common use of general facilities in certain hospitals among patients of regular ailments and COVID+ patients. Unarguably, serious situations also call for a bit of humour! And so, thanks to our highly innovative PM, we've had activities such as clanging of steel plates-and-ladles [the Church chirping in with the gleeful ringing of bells!] and lighting candles in the wind as also other unofficial acts like yelling slogans ranging from 'Go virus, go' to 'Go China go', never mind that every nook and cranny of our country is inundated with 'Chinese food' eateries, making for much global mirth!



by Ladislaus L  
D'Souza

Talking of China, Cardinal Charles Bo of Myanmar, President of the FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences), has openly accused China of manufacturing and exporting COVID-19 and has urged a total boycott of all Chinese goods. Whether the world community will oblige remains to be seen, given the fact that Chinese products are low-priced, fast production

ensuring ready availability, though of course the quality of products is said to be substandard. That these products include religious articles as well makes the issue all the more tricky, one-time Christian countries having stopped manufacture and outsourcing the same to countries like Vietnam, Taiwan, China and others! Sadly, despite the clampdown on religion in general, China continues to be the most favoured hotspot for religious shopovers.

### Anomalies galore!

Gratifyingly, India has adopted a new law that imprisons assaulters of medical personnel and health-care-workers in the COVID-19 field. Anomalously however, the disease being of new origins with no curative treatment at hand, the scope for the patient or his/her family to prove mistreatment of any kind has been grossly overlooked, even as reports of isolation sans food, change of clothing, medication for general health conditions and even water after initial tests continue to stir a hornet's nest.

Most amazingly, a government plan in neighbouring Bangladesh to allow VIP treatment to affluent COVID+ patients in certain elite hospitals of the country's capital, Dhaka, has triggered a huge public backlash. How can any country's government be so callous as to discriminate between its poor and its rich citizens in such a delicate situation as this?

### Where is God...!?!

The most repressive measure adopted has perhaps been the closure of places of worship whereby even God, strangely, has been shuttered



out of the reach of His children, probably the worst affected being the world's Catholics. This is so because of all the religions in the world, the Christian faith involves a community dimension vis-à-vis the individual dimension marking practically all other religions. For a Christian, most specifically for a Catholic, the practise of the faith is rooted not in an individualistic observance of rituals but in a communal observance of Scripture and Tradition in letter and spirit as is best epitomized by the celebration of the Eucharist. Also known as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, this celebration has been aptly described by Vatican II as the "source and summit of Christian worship" (LG 11), serving as it does a meeting point between God and man, between Creator and Creation. The profundity of this amazing Sacrament is what makes people's participation in it on Sunday *de rigueur*. Never in human history since the inception of this beautiful encapsulation of the Sacred Triduum of the Passion, Death and Resurrection has such a global blanket ban on one's participation in it ever happened!

### **Civic sense v/s Sacramentality**

Being stuck with our families at home, doing everything within its four/eight walls, cleaning, washing, cooking, eating, sleeping, praying together could be quite daunting, not to mention getting on each other's nerves! Human as we are, the effects of this have reached the highest echelons of society and Church alike, what with heads of state and government testing positive, the Pope no less lamenting the insanity of celebrating Mass without a congregation; the pain of loneliness evident on his countenance as he trudged up the steps of Saint Peter's, addressed the world from his heart, prayed before the miraculous crucifix and the icon of Our Blessed Mother, his tryst with the Eucharistic Lord whom he hoisted in the night sky in an unprecedented "urbi

et orbi" blessing, is too haunting to be forgotten in a hurry even as the world's priests and bishops do their bit in terms of ministering to the faithful in the measure possible, some even risking arrest and penalization. Indeed, at the heart of the Church's charity is her primary concern, viz. solicitude for the spiritual good and eternal salvation of souls. Any wonder then, that for the first time ever in liturgical history, the observance of Holy Week 2020, one of the most significant periods of time in the Church's calendar, the faithful were coaxed to do what is otherwise considered sacramentally invalid, viz. participating in the Triduum via the internet in their respective homes! Sallubriously, what emerged as the highlight of the exercise, marking as it did the test of our faith, was a brand new understanding of the all-time truth that the Family is the First Church which, in practice, shall continue until such time as the government deems it fit to permit an assembly.

### **Church view**

Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical, "Deus Caritas Est" (*God is Love*), deftly underscored an essential distinction between the respective roles of the Church and civil authority by asserting that whereas charity is the distinctive domain of the Church, the "just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics," and that, therefore, justice "is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics." He clarified that "for her part, the Church, as the social expression of Christian faith, has a proper independence and is structured on the basis of her faith as a community which the State must recognize," the two spheres being "distinct, yet always interrelated" (DCE, 28a). Could that perhaps explain why Pope Francis, in less than 24 hours of having approved the closure of Rome's parish churches and mission stations, reversed the decision, ordering the immediate reopening of the same? Indeed, best illustrating this volte-face is a 13 March 2020 letter signed by the pope's personal secretary but widely considered to have been penned by the Pope him-

self, freely circulating among the Roman clergy, pointing out that their place is among the flock entrusted to their care and urging them to go to the "front lines" of the crisis and fulfil their God-given pastoral duty—so in keeping with his 28 March 2013 exhortation to priests to "be shepherds with the smell of sheep"!

"Think of all the souls who feel terrified and abandoned because we pastors follow the instructions of civil authorities—which is right in these circumstances to avoid contagion—while we risk putting aside divine instructions—which is a sin," the letter stated, particularly focusing on bringing the faithful the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

"We think as men think and not as God thinks," the letter further attests, adding that "we join the ranks of those who are terrified rather than joining the doctors, the nurses, the volunteers, the healthcare workers, and mothers and fathers, who are on the front lines."

Going further, Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano asserted (9 April 2020): "In these modern times of terrible tribulation, when the pandemic has deprived Catholics of Holy Mass and the Sacraments, the Evil One has gone into a frenzy and multiplied his attacks to tempt souls into sin." He called upon believers worldwide to recite an exorcism prayer on Holy Saturday, which was first published by Pope Leo XIII in 1890, "to curb the power of the devil and prevent him from doing harm."

### **Love in action**

Pertinently, the Church has always played a crucial role in times of pestilence, promptly heading care-and-cure missions. During the 1576 twin-calamities of famine-and-plague in Milan, the governor and nobility having fled, Saint Charles Borromeo, a Medici scion and archbishop, rendered hands-on service, ministering both spiritually and materially to

(Contd.. on p. 6)

(Contd.. from p. 5)

some 60-70,000 individuals daily, diligently enlisting the support of the innumerable religious communities in the diocese. Roch [14th century], the pampered son of the mayor of Montpellier, literally earned his sainthood and the patronage of those afflicted with diseases of serious nature by sheer dint of selflessly caring for the plague-stricken whilst travelling from Rome into Italy. Both saints, Roch and Charles, proved unequivocally that the formation of the Christian desirous of gaining a world far greater than the present cannot be complete unless forged with courage in the face of an epidemic of the most unlikely kind and in the most unlikely of places.

Notably, government action apart, the Catholic Church in India, though numerically small, is out there in the forefront amidst the fast-changing situation, manifesting the largeness of her heart so to say, leaving no stone unturned, willingly cooperating with all and sundry to ensure that no one but no one, whether old or young, child or middle-aged goes to bed hungry! Though beleaguered by accusations galore as to conversion by force and such innuendo, she is busy sheltering the migrants and feeding the poor whose lives have been turned into a nightmare by what is happening around ever since the outbreak of the meandering virus, in the aftermath of which the prospects of joblessness looms large.

### **Every Christian a Shepherd!**

It wouldn't be too farfetched to say that COVID.19 has offered the Church the chance of a lifetime to prove herself a body of true shepherds rather than "hirelings" (cf Jn 10:11-12). Religious across the country and the world, rising to the occasion, are, shoulder to shoulder, ministering to the afflicted in ways that defy the imagination! From parish bodies providing rations to individual families cooking and supplying meals, from nuns in convents and seminarians to simple, ordinary

salaried individuals providing clothing and bedding, each at their own expense, a classic example of simplicity and humbleness being Bishop Alex of Kannur in South India helping out as a municipal volunteer! That's Divine Mercy 2020 challenging COVID-19!

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## **Walk With MARY This May!**

When we walk, Mary walks with us; knitting our souls with prayers, and mending the wounds we have inflicted through sin and error. We live now as in Noah's ark, waiting for the storms in our lives to subside.

Mary could be likened to an 'olive leaf' in the beak of the Dove (Holy Spirit). She signals to us that the waters of the flood have receded, and that we should now be ready to go forth and build an Altar to the Lord in prayer and in thanksgiving (cf. Genesis Ch. 8).

Our Holy Father Pope Francis has invited the faithful to walk with Mary this May. He has composed a beautiful prayer to recite at the conclusion of the Rosary, in response to the pandemic of COVID-19!

"O Mary most blessed and holy// you shine continuously on our journey//as a sign of our salvation and hope//we entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick//who at the foot of the Cross//were united with Jesus' suffering.

"Protector of the Roman people// you know our needs and longings// we know that you will provide for us//so that just as in Cana Galilee// bliss and celebration may return// after this time of trial.

"Help us, O Mother of Divine Love// to conform ourselves to the will of Abba Father//and to do what Jesus tells us//for He took upon Himself our suffering//to bring us through the Cross//towards the joy of the Resurrection! Amen!"

—Dr. Hazel Colaso,  
Bandra (W), Mumbai.



## Funeral live-streaming - the new norm?

was glancing through a foreign newspaper when the headlines of a news item, caught my attention - **Funeral live-streaming services sees surge in demand.** The company which specializes in streaming events live is now inundated with requirements to cover funerals Live, in view of the restrictions in place on account of the Lockdown.

**From the cradle to the grave** - that is the story of man's life. It is common knowledge that when you are born there are just a handful of people waiting to greet and welcome you into the world. But when you die, hundreds or thousands would be present to bid you farewell at the grave. But alas, that isn't happening today on account of social distancing warranted by the coronavirus.

We are accustomed to watching Live, funerals of great personalities, of course we are not expected to be present there physically. But watching Live, a funeral ceremony of someone near & dear to you, is something one would not expect to be happening. But sadly, that is exactly what is happening today. One is forced to watch the ceremony on TV on account of restrictions. Several funerals are today taking place in this manner in our city of Mumbai as well.

Post coronavirus, one expects a lot of changes with regard to various aspects of life. Would attending funerals also be one of them? In this fast paced, modern life, where one is caught up with several commitments, etc., one wonders, would this become

the new norm for funerals in future?

—Melville X. D'Souza,  
Mumbai

## International Day of Families

World Family Day is celebrated on May 15 every year. It is also observed as the 'International Day of Families'. This day is held annually and it is a global observance. This day was founded by the United Nations General Assembly in the year, 1993.

The World Family Day celebrates the importance of families. On this day, a get together with the family brings happiness to all the members of the house.

— Jubel D'Cruz,  
Mumbai

## Help the jobless and starving too, Mr Thackeray

There are more COVID-19 cases in Mumbai than in any other part of the country and CM Uddhav Thackeray is need to do more to stop the spread. In Mumbai alone, we have hundreds of people catching the virus daily and many of them dying of it. The CM need to plan well, it is not enough just to keep changing the lockdown deadline. People have lost jobs and are sleeping hungry. You need to take control of that situation, too.

First you said that the lockdown would end on April 14. Then said it would end on April 30. Then again said it would end on May 3. Now saying it will end on May 18. What you are up to? After May 18, again it will go to May 31. Then again June 15

and it will go on and on. If we won't die of coronavirus, we will die of starvation because whenever we go to buy groceries and vegetables, the police keeps lathi-charging us.

—Jubel D'Cruz,  
Mumbai

## Trump hell-bent on punishing China

I wonder what serious investigation and action is President Donald Trump talking about when China has already made it very clear that it will not allow any American team of experts to investigate the origin of the 'corona virus' in the Wuhan laboratory of China. This rules out any possibility of proving that the virus originated in China and spread to other countries. Trump is therefore left with the only viable option of punishing China and seeking compensation by way of stringent economic sanctions for China's failure to take timely steps to contain the viral spread and inform the World Health Organisation (WHO) early, which would have saved the lives of millions in 184 countries and the destruction of their economy. While this appears to be more justifiable, it does not exonerate President Trump for his failure to contain the spread of the virus in his own country through timely measures and a strict lockdown, which could also have saved the lives of millions of Americans. Unfortunately this is not happening in America. Thousands of Americans are thronging the beaches in California despite the lockdown regulations. Social distancing has been thrown to the winds. What is Trump doing about it?. Is opening up the American economy more important than saving human lives?. The bitter irony of it all is that, America today has become the epicenter of Covid -19, with the greatest number of infections and deaths, even as Trump continues to boast of having conducted more Covid-19 tests than India and 9 other nations together.

—A. F. Nazareth  
- Alto Porvorim

# Unlike Covid-19, God's Presence Is Seen Worldwide

There are many situations in which the presence of God is to be found, providing pilgrims the opportunity to confide their problems to the Lord in a place where peace and silence create a spiritual force helping the devotee to feel an inner assurance of closeness to the Lord.

One such situation could be a church, a shrine, a chapel, basilica or cathedral. It should be made clear at this point that God is everywhere. We are humans wired to respecting chosen places of holiness, or places where the presence of the Lord touches our spirit.

Moses went to the mountain and received the laws of the Lord. Jesus the Messiah was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness of Judea for prayer and solitude. John the Baptist lived and preached along the shores of the Jordan River.



BY MELVYN BROWN

There are thousands of Christian churches worldwide for pilgrims and the faithful to visit, pray, worship and discover peace and His presence. Jesus Christ said, 'be not afraid, I am always with you.' There are Marian shrines and churches built in response to specific events. These Roman Marian churches are religious buildings dedicated to the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In Venice, the Santa Maria della Salute was constructed as thanksgiving to Mother Mary for the city's deliverance from the plague. The structure has a great dome to represent her crown and the eight sides, symbolic of her star.

In Germany, Speyer Cathedral is an

imposing basilica of red sandstone. The Cathedral is one of the largest of Romanesque architecture built in the 11th century and completed in the 12th century. The basilica is known as the 'Mariendom' in Speyer.

In Paris, the Chartres Cathedral is designed in French Gothic. Reims Cathedral has a history where the Kings of France were crowned. It has a broad, and heavier Gothic Architectural elements to be found from ground level to the massive spires.

Notre-Dame de Paris has been frequently mentioned by historians for the golden era period of the faith covering the 12th and 13th centuries, because of the famous Notre-Dame school of music. In 2019 a fire almost damaged the resplendent beauty of the medieval Cathedral which was constructed in 1160 and completed by 1260. In the 19th century the Catholic Cathedral was the site for the Coronation of Napoleon 1.

The Allied liberation of Paris in 1944 was celebrated with the singing of the Magnificat inside the Cathedral.

In Belgium, there is the breathtaking Cathedral of Our Lady of Flanders in Tournai. In recognition of her cultural value, UNESCO designated the building a World Heritage site in 2000. The Cathedral is a Roman Catholic Church in the Diocese of Tournai.

In Antarctica there are seven churches. The church is a symbol of Christianity and the presence of God.

Pope Pius XII was known as "the most Marian Pope". In 1955 he rededicated the church of St. James the Great in Montreal, Canada with the title, Mary Queen of the World, Cathedral. Earlier in 1953 the Holy Father had the Salus

Popule Romane carried from Santa Maria Maggiore through Rome, to start the First Marian Year in Church history. He began a new Marian feast, 'Queenship of Mary' with the encyclical Ad Caeli Reginam.

In the territory of the City of Rome there are nine hundred churches under the jurisdiction of the Vatican, built in the 4th century.

In Mexico, the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Tepeyac hill is one of the largest churches in the world, constructed in 1974 to accommodate five million pilgrims. Our Lady of Guadalupe had been consecrated as "Lady of the Americas".

In India we have the Shrine of Our Lady of Valankanni. The Cathedral of the Most Holy Rosary, Murghihata, Calcutta. The church of Bom Jesus, Goa. The Shrine of Don Bosco's Madonna, Mumbai. Basilica of the Holy Rosary, Bandel.

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# Migrant Labourers Missed The Bus

The country was initially placed under a lockdown on March 24 in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that was extended till May 3. With all forms of public transport including railways suspended and State borders sealed, lakhs of migrant workers in urban areas started walking hundreds of kilometres to reach their homes. On March 28, MHA issued guidelines and asked States to organize relief camps for migrants and arrange food and other amenities for them.



The plight of migrant labourers across the different states of the country during the period of extension of the lockdown is miserable with several of them taking recourse to hitchhiking or even walking tediously for days, even on an empty stomach to reach their native place. The extension of the lockdown should have been decided after adopting measures to alleviate the untold hardship that the host of them have suffered. The respective states where such migrant labourers are working to earn their daily bread should unhesitatingly arrange for their quick return home. Abrupt lockdown in order to check the spread of corona virus, which rendered millions of migrant labourers jobless and homeless.

The centre has finally woken up to their intense desperation to go home. However, in doing so, it has placed the entire responsibility, including the financial, of this gigantic exercise on the respective states. It has not even offered to run point-to-point

trains which could facilitate the mass transit in a better way. Now, both the host and home states have to agree on every modality before one embarks on this exercise. Where the states are far off each other, it will be a daunting task for them to organise thousands of buses and insist on keeping social distancing all through the journey. Then, a home state has to ensure proper arrangements for quarantining each migrant for a full 14 days. With most of them assumed to be originating from the virus-infected places, the returnees will also face hostility from locals. It remains to be seen how the states will accomplish this uphill task.



**C.K. Subramaniam**

While physical distancing is indispensable in preventing the spread of the novel Corona virus, self-quarantine and early detection are of immense importance. It is important for people to be checked especially after inter-State travel. Many are skipping this out of fear of isolation or sheer irresponsibility. Migrants from affected

States such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh may be carriers of the virus and still asymptomatic. This could lead to massive local transmission.

Public health officials tell us to minimize physical contact in order to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. While the public, thankfully, is hearing the message, there is a hidden danger: As we retreat into our homes, we can lose sight of our essential connections to one another and forget about the plight of those most vulnerable

to the fraying of social bonds.

There is no necessity for migration of workers to shift from place of occupation to the place of their residence and rush back to their villages. Their daily needs are being taken care of wherever they are working and the daily needs of their family members were being taken care of at their respective villages. It is submitted that migrant workers travelling barefoot or otherwise in large numbers inevitably and unknowingly defy the social distancing norms which is one of the globally accepted norm for preventing COVID and put their lives and others lives in danger.

The position is becoming bad to worse as we are going to touch 40th day of lockdown soon. The desperation in the face of migrant workers is increasing and they feel insecure in their present place of stay. It is time to bring remedial measures, which will see light at the end of the tunnel for these stranded migrant workers.

# WHETHER THE SUDDEN LOCKDOWN WITH JUST FOUR HOURS NOTICE HAS DONE MORE ECONOMIC DAMAGE AND PUT DISPROPORTIONATE HARDSHIP ON THE POOR OF THE COUNTRY?

by Eric D'Sa

**T**he novel coronavirus infection is extremely contagious and spreads fast through respiratory droplets through air and contaminated surfaces. Although a very high proportion of infected individuals (around 85%) have mild symptoms, the sheer number of people infected means, that large numbers specially those above 60 years, become seriously ill. Social distancing and frequent handwashing were advised to slow the spread. Countries with well-established social security systems used lockdowns as a desperate measure.

In India, the total lockdown was sudden with just four hours notice and not accompanied by effective social security measures. Migrant workers, in their millions, crowded into any available means of transport to return to their village homes. No social distancing was possible. Many lakhs of poor workers walked long distances to return home with little food and water. The morbidity and mortality that this has caused can only be guessed. At that stage it was unlikely that the virus would have been carried to the hinterland which was largely protected. This was because the virus was brought into India by air travellers, mainly into the big cities and had not spread to the community.

We did not enforce strict lockdown of these relatively rich passengers that flew in from the countries that had already cases of Covid 19. Knowing this and as such there was a need to have at least a total lockdown in the cities, the government should have acted a lot earlier before the disease spread, to provide sufficient notice to the poor workers in the cities to return to their villages, if they wished to do so by buses and trains.

The pathogen in the present epidemic was identified very quickly. Only sup-

portive treatment is available for the seriously ill. A vaccine will be hopefully ready for the masses only after the present economic crisis is over. India does not have the capacity to manage a large number of very sick patients simultaneously and cannot ramp up resources significantly to do so in the short time available. Besides infrastructure, critical-care medicine requires a large number of highly skilled health-care workers. We simply do not have the numbers. The extent of testing required for better estimates may never be done consider-

**YOU THE CITIZENS  
DECIDE:**

ing the resources required.

India's poor are vulnerable. Imposing a lockdown as a means of enforcing social distancing ignores the reality that the poor have no option but to live in densely packed tenements in slums. Personal hygiene in the form of frequent handwashing is impossible in their present circumstances. The World Bank estimates that there are over 650 million poor people in India (living on less than \$3.20). The current policy of geographical containment may protect the rich and the middle-class, but it ensures rapid spread of the infection among the poor because they have no chance of maintaining the recommended six feet distance.

South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Japan have been successful in containing the disease. South Korea relied on active, free and massive screening, closing schools and recommending remote working. Nearly 20,000 tests are done every day. There is widespread use of masks and sanitisers in all the above countries. In Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan, surveillance systems identified potential cases and their contacts.

Diagnostic tests were developed early, and laboratory testing capacity was increased. In all these countries, costs are covered by the government.

Countries which imposed total lockdowns have very strong social security systems. In India, the lockdown has caused severe suffering among the poor, especially migrant workers, and has been unsuccessful in the primary objective of enforcing social distancing. The reports that over an estimated two lakh migrants returned to Uttar Pradesh after the lockdown is only the most extreme facet of the problem. Without massive support from the government, chiefly in providing adequate shelter and food to all those who need it, social distancing is impossible in cities.

At present, the burdens of quarantine, lockdown and social distancing have been left to individuals. Worse still, in many rural areas and towns, governments have shut down small private clinics. All government health staff are now concentrated on dealing with COVID-19. Important primary health-care services including maternal and child health, immunisations, deliveries and tuberculosis care are on hold. It amounts to abandoning the poor to their fates.

The lockdown has imposed tremendous economic hardship on the poor, without any important benefit as they cannot practise social distancing or proper personal hygiene. If the Central government is serious about the containment strategy proposed by the Ministry of Health and saving lives irrespective of social class, it must provide economic and social resources on a massive scale. It has revealed no such plan. States and poor individuals cannot handle this crisis on their own. Exhortations to help oneself sound cruel, when people have no means to do so. This is where the well to do citizens must step in.

## The Other side of Corona Virus

The virus that has caused havoc across nations has positive fallout for some though the huge majority suffers. Perhaps the biggest incidental beneficiaries of this situation could be those incarcerated in prisons worldwide. One is reminded of the Hymn – “God’s Spirit is in my Heart” which has a message for those in captivity - “They are prisoners no more”. Is this becoming a reality, at least partially? The Apex court ruled in favour of addressing the overcrowding of jails in India. In response, thousands of prisoners are set free in India already. Globally, this phenomenon is on the rise. Iran freed some 70,000. Other countries are doing it selectively. Where the captives are restive like in Italy, there have been 23 uprisings with a dozen dead. Even South American countries like Peru and Chile have seen riots demanding release and/or better facilities to face the pandemic. Hopefully, those in their advanced age, sick and others with petty crimes must have been granted freedom on a preferential basis.

Are the ones released only on parole? Are they set free unconditionally with no necessity of being rearrested once the situation improves? If hardened criminals are also released, it could be a dangerous situation for the society. Hopefully not! Either way, those released could not have asked for a better deal. Who knows some of them may take this opportunity to reform and lead a better life. In India, we know that thousands are lamenting in jails even after their terms are over but nobody bothers to set them free or they have nowhere to go. Some are not able to get someone to stand surety so bail could be granted. Such cases must be considered favourably and either set them free or grant them bail for the duration of the pandemic. NGOs must take up the matter forward.

This pandemic has benefitted other segments of society as well. The house helps will be getting their wages without having to work. This also applies to white and blue colour workers. But the government must ask employers to reward those who come to work with grave risk to their lives. While the government has asked landlords and lenders not to insist on immediate payments, those who can afford to pay will also take advantage. We may have more Mallayas,

## VIEWS on NEWS

Chopras and Modis in the process.

Socially, with distancing and masks, crime against women could decline. With police force on roads in full measure, dacoits, robbers are lying low. With no crowds, pick pockets are out of business. With no pollution and no traffic, things have improved. Days of handshakes and embraces are over. Narendra Modi will miss his famous signature hugs when he meets foreign dignitaries. He will have to control himself and offer Namaste instead. Someone in the social media said only this virus could stop this man from non-stop overseas travel. At this point, nobody wants anybody. So stay indoors for now.

Migrant workers are stuck in different states not by choice but by compulsion. With no means of transport and inter-state borders being sealed they are left at the mercy of the states which look after them. Now trains are being arranged but it could take months to clear. With just one government order all borders including district borders are sealed. Remember whenever certain political groups demanded that influx into cities like Mumbai be regulated, the constitutional rights of free movement were quoted by government. In present situation, the fundamental rights have not been suspended or abrogated; yet movement is controlled allowing people to cross over with special passes issued by the empowered authority. Will the demand to control influx revive by those militant leaders now especially by those losing relevance? Finally, ‘Stay home’ is a dignified term which actually means – ‘You are under house arrest’. Mehbooba Mufti in Srinagar must be mighty happy thinking that by staying indoors, the whole country is in solidarity with her over her long and uncalled for detention.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Godmen lynched

The recent incident in adhivasi dominated area in Palghar in which two Hindu sadhus were mercilessly beaten and finally lynched has sent shock waves across the country. There is wide spread anger at the way they were killed for no apparent reason. Whatever the reason for this heinous crime, no one should try and downplay the incident and give reasons which are neither cogent nor sensible. The role of the police officials



by Marshall Sequeira

is shameful. They actually handed over the victims to the attackers instead of protecting them. Police force which came for effusive praise for their handling of the pandemic related duties, have been shamed. Their role is suspect and needs to be investigated. However one BJP MP propounded the conspiracy theory by Missionaries. RSS Boss Mohan Bhagwat, who has been silent on the Corona virus, also hinted at some sinister plan demanding high level probe. UP CM also spoke to Uddhav Thackeray. Almost immediately two Hindu Seers were brutally murdered in Bulandshahr [UP] giving the Maha CM an opportunity to settle scores. The Police have arrested a Hindu youth in this connection. All those talking about conspiracy in Palghar case have suddenly lost their voice. Their demand to look into the communal angle has lost steam except one TV channel which is very close to the BJP. The TV boss has another axe to grind with some political leaders. But why is the RSS boss not demanding probe in UP?

In the case of Palghar, pre-planned murder theory is making rounds to add a communal colour to the incident. As per the reports the two sadhus were not supposed to be visiting that area in any case. They were heading for a funeral in the neighbouring state of Gujarat. With no authorization or pass to cross over, they were denied entry. If they had the pass their vehicle would have safely entered Gujarat. It is only due to circumstances which were not foreseen by anybody that the two deceased returned and took the inner route for whatever reasons. If it was pre-planned, they would have been killed first and not allowed to reach the border. So this theory needs to be bunked. By the way, if the BJP had to bring an anti-lynching law when the likes of Pehlu Khan were lynched by militant Hindu mobs, that stringent law could have come handy in this case as well as the Bulandshahr incident.

# This Pandemic Is Bringing Another

by Don Aguiar

**A**nother pandemic is looming on the heels of the coronavirus: a pandemic of starvation, illiteracy and poverty as well as a lockdown that may prove a most dangerous experiment in our democracy.

We are not only facing a global pandemic but also a humanitarian catastrophe. We could be looking at fam-

For doctors and nurses in poor countries, the challenge is not just lack of face masks: More than one-third of health centres in impoverished countries don't have hand washing facilities.

Yet there are also countervailing factors. The virus is particularly likely to kill older people, especially those suffering from pre-existing medical conditions and that's where developing

dren lives and prevents blindness. School feed programs have often been shut down along with schools.

Schools are closed in many countries, and some students especially girls will probably never return to their studies. When families are desperately short of money and food they are less likely to pay school fees, particularly for girls. They also cope by marrying off their daughters, even young ones, so that another



ine in about three dozen countries. The world faces its most serious humanitarian crises since World War II.

Development countries have enormous vulnerabilities, such as overcrowded slums and health systems in which doctors are scarce and ventilators almost non-existent.

We instruct people to protect themselves from the coronavirus by washing their hands with soap and water, but more people worldwide have a cell phone than have the ability to wash their hands at home. Many people do not have hand washing options at home.

countries have a huge advantage.

Being overweight or obese is a significant risk factor for the coronavirus. This is a far greater share of the population.

Put that all together and how badly will Covid-19 strike all countries worldwide? We just don't know. We can only have hypotheses, and the hypotheses are vaguely helpful. It is greatly feared that the indirect impact will be devastating.

Polio eradication campaigns are being suspended. The same is true of vitamin A distribution, which saves chil-

household has the responsibility of feeding them.

The presence of disease kills, and so does the absence of livelihood. People in developing and poor countries have seen their livelihood shattered by lockdowns, by collapse of tourism and by an end to remittances coming from abroad.

There are no questions asked as to what gave which government the authority to clamp the lockdown. No discussion on whether the disaster management act should be covering



(Contd.. from p. 12)

epidemic situations. Nobody seems worried that we in India do not have a democratically legislated epidemic diseases act and rely on a colonial era act. Political parties are oblivious to these issues. Public discussions bypass these procedural matters. We have installed a hierarchy of principles: Results count, procedures don't matter. It has been somewhat mildly described by one scholar as an "executive emergency".

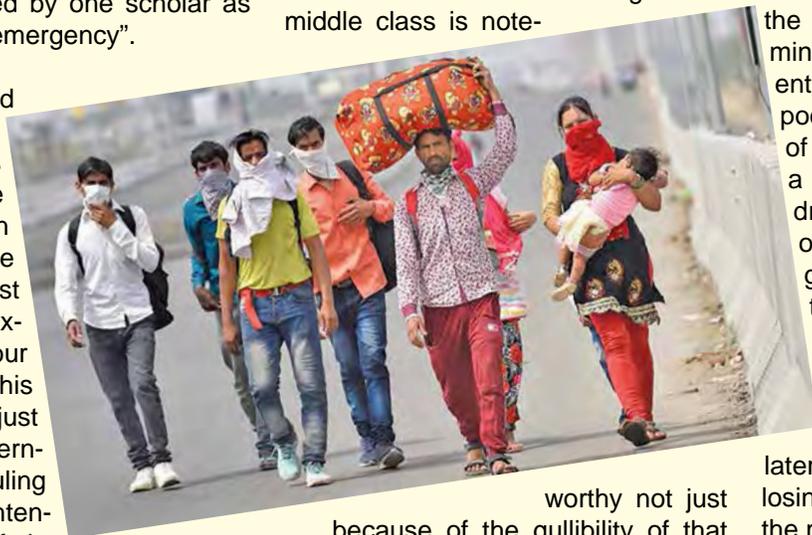
Not many would realise today, much less agree, that the lockdown in India will prove to be a most dangerous experiment in our democracy. This is not about just the central government, or the ruling party. The frightening success of the

lockdown is the willingness of the entire ruling class and the articulate public in the gigantic suspension of democracy. The swift ability with which the civil and police bureaucracy could be mobilised in the efforts to push the entire population into home lock-up should be a model lesson for any future autocrat. It would be a tough task for India to come out of the mental-intellectual lockdown that it has willingly accepted. Not surprisingly, a petition in the Supreme Court has asked for an order to deploy the military to implement the lockdown.

This is not to argue that the COVID threat should not have invoked a firm policy of physical distancing; the argument is about the fallout. We now have a template for undermining democracy: Talk about a public cause, about public well-being and obtain approval for abandoning core principles of democracy. Today, it might appear to be a justifiable move — indeed, both the media and Opposition have said so and the public

has acquiesced. What guarantee do we have that our future democracy will not be governed by this narrative of nationally necessary democratic curtailment?

Equally disturbingly, the lockdown has ensured that the Indian class-chasm would become more real, more sharp and yet politically intractable. The overwhelming support the lockdown has received among India's middle class is note-



worthy not just because of the gullibility of that class but also because of its complete lack of social connections to anything beyond itself.

Over the last four weeks, many stories from India of dislocation, destitution and starvation have emerged; information about stranded labourers is flowing in. But middle class conscience has not found it necessary to take this into account. They stop at personal acts of kindness, celebration of philanthropy and a quick lapse into amnesia. Politics of and for the poor has become inadmissible. Politics does not demand that any measure against COVID must, as its first priority, include a decent policy space to address the difficulties of the vulnerable sections. This is not to say that Indian politics was ever really sensitive about the poor; but now, even the cynical possibility of electoral gains does not push parties to fight for the rights of the poor.

Covid-19 is potentially catastrophic for millions who are already hanging by a

thread. It is a hammer blow for millions more who can only eat if they earn a wage.

The pandemic could almost double the number of people suffering from acute hunger. We know that when infants and toddlers are malnourished, their brains don't grow well, and they may suffer lifelong cognitive deficit s.

This double social distancing — of the majority community from the minority and of the vocal and influential classes from the mass of the poor — sits well with the narrative of cutting democracy to size. In a majoritarian and middle-class driven social universe, the place of democracy is bound to be marginal, if not nominal. We began this "war" with the convenient platitude of "jaan hai to jahaan hai" (we can think of wellbeing only if we live). In turning this platitude into "jaan aur jahaan"

later, we admitted that we might be losing both lives and livelihoods. In the midst of that very real possibility, we are on the verge of being haunted by the three narratives: Minimise democracy, maximise interfaith distance and maintain aloofness from the poor. Will that be the shape of life after lockdown?

While the Indian Government has resorted to various tactics to prevent independent media from reporting about the pandemic. Independent journalism is an essential partner in protecting public health. The Indian government should ensure that all journalists are able to do their jobs of informing the public at this critical time.

At a time of great pain and economic stress in the rich world, this will be difficult. Yet aid is essential, in the form of debit relief as well as direct assistance. Food is already scarce, many have lost their jobs and survive by hand to mouth. There is no safety net or system. Yesterday a childhood friend told me, 'I'd rather die from Covid than from hunger.'

# Preparing for Doomsday?

In August 2018, Greta Thunberg a teenager in Sweden created a world wide sensation when she started skipping school every Friday and staging a demonstration against the increasing climatic disturbances taking place. Single handedly, this little girl tried to draw the attention of those willing to listen. Later, she was joined by thousands of school and university students in several countries, in organising such demonstrations.

**What was Greta Thunberg trying to tell the world? Here was a little girl concerned about the deteriorating condition of the environment and decided to do something about it.**

Greta Thunberg even spoke at the United Nations about climate change, accusing world leaders of not taking the situation seriously. And what is the response of the world leaders? *At the World Economic Forum 2020 held at Davos, Switzerland, several months ago, the U.S. President Donald Trump, in his keynote address derided this girl and slammed all environmental activists for their outbursts.*

It would be interesting to know the reactions of certain other personalities around the world to Trump's speech. Economist Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Laureate, said **"it was *astounding* and made *as if what we are seeing with our eyes are not there*".**

Robert Habeck, a leader of Germany's Green Party, remarked. **"only self-praise, ignorance, disregard for everyone, no perception of global problems. It was the worst speech I've ever heard in my life."**

So, there is no Global Warming after all? Are there are no climatic changes? Is the Earth fine? Is that what one can imply? The glaciers may melt, wild fires may rage, there may intense heat waves across the world; tornadoes, hurricanes may sweep across the world, there may be excessive cold or heat conditions, large number of animals may die, the seas may get heavily polluted, but we shall not be moved.

Recent reports suggest that the situation is indeed getting out of hand. It's time for us to think. What is our own response? From time to time we hear them..... **Wake up, save the environment, save the planet....**

How do we look at them? What is the reality? What is it that Greta Thunberg and the environmental activists are selling to the world? Are they simply putting the fear of a catastrophe in our minds? What is it they keep telling the whole world that the Earth is in danger? Are

they going around as merchants, selling the idea that the condition of the earth is indeed getting critical and we are heading for doomsday? Can we call them Merchants of Doom?

In the meanwhile, who can forget the coronavirus which has brought the whole world down to its knees? The rich nations, poor nations, developed, backward whatever, the virus spared none. Almost the whole world was under 'Lockdown'. **The impact is there for all to see. Did we not see the difference in the air quality during that period of Lockdown, with practically no dark emissions from polluting vehicles? Did we not notice that we were able to breathe so easily standing at our balconies? Did we not notice that the seas &**

**the oceans were happily roaring, without industrial effluents polluting them? Did we not notice the birds chirping away happily in the mornings? Did we not notice the butterflies fluttering around the plants? Did we not find that the whole atmosphere was so nice, the environment so good? Think of it, did it have to take a virus to make us see the reality? Did it take a virus to help was see the reality that the Earth is in a critical condition?**

**So here they are, the 'merchants of Doom'. Listen to them. They also bring to you a message of hope. The Earth can continue to be Heaven on Earth if only we could see the reality and desist from our destructive activities. Keep listening, the "doom" might be closer than we think.**

## Rumors Lead to Panic

With the spread of Covid-19, a number of rumors and myths have found way into our inboxes, which is as dangerous as the contagion itself because it can potentially lead to panic and hysteria among the people. One such unfounded rumor links the disease to newspapers, claiming that newspapers can act as carriers of coronavirus.

Health experts have said that there is no known risk of the spread of novel coronavirus through newspapers, busting rumours that have triggered a scare amongst one and many. The World Health Organization (WHO) has categorically confirmed that newspapers are safe and don't pose any kind of danger owing to coronavirus.

— Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai



# REQUIEM LOCKDOWN

## A Short Story

The rising sun tainted the eastern sky with a flash of crimson as it slowly rose in a flaming ball of red providing the fulfillment of the absolute law of God, regardless of the often changeable human rules man makes and breaks.

Akbar took his bucket, mug and bathing soap to have his routine bath in front of main entrance. Simi had got up an hour earlier and as a loving wife she was preparing his meal for the long train journey to Calcutta where he worked as a migrant daily paid in a small leather shop.



BY MELVYN BROWN

Promptly, by 07:15 am Akbar took his tiffin neatly packed by his wife, the monthly train pass, and after giving Simi a brave smile he asked her, "Have you kept our savings in a safe place?"

Simi nodded. She always kept six hundred rupees on her person. Akbar earned two hundred a day – and they tried saving a few rupees in the week. It was hard for Simi to curtail, buy only essentials and to live alone all day without friend or a family. Simi was an orphan. Akbar had once visited the Muslim Orphanage with leather school bag for the children. For him it was love at first sight.

In the small Durgapur colony Simi lived a quiet life, kept to herself and seldom mixed with other women. Her young life was now centered around Akbar. Her husband was the apple of the eye. Simi kept her mobile close to her breast for the short break he was given for tiffin. It was such a reward for her to hear his voice, the words he used to express his love.

The other migrants workers employed in other places in the city, they all came from Durgapur. Akbar joined them every evening at the railway station and they would all return safely to the colony. It was a daily routine affair. They were a friendly group of men who discussed the affairs at their work places, laugh, joked and shared what they bought on the way to the station. Akbar was happy to be in their jovial company.

"Halt! Halt! The trains have been stopped," shouted a police officer accompanied by six constables. "There is a bus to take all of you to an isolation center for your safety. Come on, move!"

The isolation center was almost two miles into the bleak wasteland of steel furnaces and staff bungalows scattered along paved paths. Akbar and the other migrant workers were trying to get through to their families in Calcutta. A few got connected but many like Akbar were not able to: tower problems, not enough balance, not fully charged. With Akbar it was otherwise, the mobile at the Calcutta end was ringing and not being picked up. Where was Simi, he wondered.

The migrant workers were allotted places in a large mess-hall with bedding rolls and food packets. Akbar kept dialing over and over to no avail. Akbar was shaken emotionally. What might have happened to his wife? He finally decided to slip away from the center.

He had covered a good half mile on foot when a police patrol car caught up to him and took him back to the center. All that night Akbar could not rest or get sleep. He turned to a friend who lived a few blocks away from his home in Calcutta. "Please help me Ahmed to leave this place. Two days

have already passed."

It was too early to sneak out, especially when they had kept an eye on his movements after the first attempt to leave. On the fourth day Akbar and his friend made a plan for his escape. "I prefer to remain" said Ahmed, "till the trains start running. You can secretly leave by keeping to the side of the highway. No one will suspect the route I have chalked out for you."

Half way down the open path of the highway, Akbar, realized he had forgotten to take his mobile. The plan was to hitch-hike his way to the city of Calcutta. A small car came up to him from behind and halted. "Can I be of help?"

Akbar turned around. "Please, Sir, may I use your phone? I want to call my wife and tell her I'm coming home."

"Certainly, here it is". The phone rang at the other end. He could hear it ringing loud and clear.

"Halo," a stern voice snapped, adding, "Who are you?"

"I'm Akbar, Simi's husband!"

There was a pause – a long pause. "I'm police officer Ghosh from the Park Street police station. Your wife was infected with the Covid-19 virus on the day the lockdown was announced. I'm sorry to inform you she has passed away and the people from the Orphanage took care of everything."

A sudden shock exploded on his face. Calmly he returned the phone to the driver of the car, turned around and made his way back to the isolation center. A tiny teardrop rolled down the side of his right cheek.

## Five wonders of the world

- 1) Two girls sitting quite.
- 2) Wife not asking for money.
- 3) Girlfriend going out without make-up.
- 4) Girlfriend paying the bill.
- 5) Boys saying I love only one girl.

\*\*\*\*\*

Teacher : How many letters are there in the English language?

Johnny : Without GST 23 With GST 26. Student rocks  
Teacher shocked

\*\*\*\*\*

Rahul to Richard : I asked my girlfriend what sort of books she's interested in.  
She said : Cheque books.

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: Is Google male or female?

A: Female, because it doesn't let you finish a sentence before making a suggestion.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Funny puns to make your day**

- My best mates and I played a game of hide and seek. It went on for hours, Well, good friends are hard to find.
- I broke my finger last week. On the other hand, I'm okay.
- Someone stole my Microsoft Office and they're gonna pay.
- eBay is so useless. I tried to look up lighters and all they had was 13,749 matches.
- What is the best thing about living in Switzerland? Well, the flag is a big plus.
- How did I escape Iraq? Iran.
- My math teacher called me average. How mean!

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Lunchtime humour**

Advertisement of a new restaurant, named "Topless Beauty"!  
1,000 men visited on the very first day. They were shocked to see that the restaurant had no roof!  
Men will be men!  
Marketing is all about presentation!

\*\*\*\*\*



### **Marriage tip**

Every time you talk to your wife, your mind should remember that, "This conversation will be recorded for training and quality purposes."

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Woman's shopping logic**

I went to buy a dress. But I saw a beautiful pair of shoes. So I bought this handbag home.

\*\*\*\*\*

Woman : At least invite me out to dinner.

Man : I don't go out with married women, sorry.

Woman : But I'm your wife.

Man : I make no exceptions.

\*\*\*\*\*

I'm known as a stickler for good spelling. So when an associate e-mailed technical documents and asked me to 'decipher' them, I had to set him straight.

"Decipher is spelled with a ph, not an f," I wrote. "In case you've forgotten, spell checker comes free with your Microsoft program." A minute later came his reply: "Must be defective."

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Mom, the babysitter**

My mom once told me, "I hope your children turn out twice as bad as you." She didn't realise one day she would be baby sitting them.

\*\*\*\*\*

A man goes to a job interview and the interviewer begins with the question, "What do you think is your biggest weakness?" The man thinks for a moment, then says, "I think my biggest weakness is my brutal honesty." The interviewer says, "I don't think that's

a weakness." The man then says, "I don't give a #%^& what you think!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Papa sees my gift given by my girlfriend

Papa : *Beta tumhe ye sab cheeze Shobha deti hai?*

Me: *Nahi papa Priya deti hai*

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: What do you call it when two rock guitars accidentally crash into each other?

A : A Fender bender.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Diamonds for the birthday girl**

It's my wife's birthday tomorrow. Last week, I asked her what she wanted as a present.

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "Just give me something with diamonds." That's why I'm giving her a pack of playing cards.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mr and Mrs Wong have a baby boy. The nurse brings out a white baby boy. The confused father says Two Wongs don't make a white and they named him 'Sumting Wong'.

\*\*\*\*\*

I dreamed I was rocking a baby to sleep. In the morning, my husband who is bald, told me I patted his head for 30 minutes while repeating, "Go to sleep, baby."

\*\*\*\*\*

Dating someone for 4 years and then break up. Congrats, now you have a degree in relationship management and analysis.

\*\*\*\*\*

**"Laughing at your own mistake can 'Lengthen' your life"**

-Shakespeare

**"Laughing at your WIFE'S mistake can 'Shorten' your life"**

-Shakespeare's wife

## “Prudence and Obedience” to Beat Gossip!

— Pope

Pope Francis in his homily on 28 April 2020, reflected on the martyrdom of St. Stephen (Acts 7:51-8:1 – First Reading):

“At this time when indications have been given to exit out of quarantine, we pray the Lord will grant to his people, the grace of ‘prudence and obedience’, so that the pandemic does not return.”

“Like Jesus, Stephen was falsely accused of blasphemy as a pretext for execution. There is a pattern seen in the Bible and down to our present age, which begins with false testimony, in order to arrive at doing justice – The Shoab, the Hebrew term for the Holocaust, is an instance.”

“It is easy to recognize this is wrong. But we overlook the ‘small daily lynching’ that takes place when we ‘gossip’! Let’s think about our tongues. Many times with our comments we start such lynching. May the Lord help us to be righteous in our judgments; and not to follow the mass condemnations that provoke gossip.”

Allow me to add four quotes on the dangers of gossip from the Book of Proverbs: “A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit. // Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool. // A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret. // Perverse talk stirs up conflict, and gossip separates close friends. (Prov. 15:4; 10:8; 11:3; 16:28).

—Dr. Trevor Colaso,  
Bandra (W), Mumbai.

## Hindi Film Industry Lost Seasoned Stars

### Irrfan we miss you most and Rishi Kapoor revive our old memories

Irrfan was an alternate hero. One wondered if Bollywood would be able to accommodate the Jaipur boy’s unusual persona. It did. He was an actor first, who later went on to acquire the charm of a mainstream star without losing his rootedness. An actor with unconventional professional ambitions that were not restricted to Indian cinema alone. An actor who could transcend nationalities and boundaries and appeal to a global audience. An actor who could do anything, become anyone. Most importantly, one who would always be there for young filmmakers to narrate new stories in newer forms despite having been courted by international giants like Ang Lee, Michael Winterbottom and



Danny Boyle. RIP the great soul in Indian Cinema and man on the small screen advertisements. Irrfan in Hindi cinema hit big screen with Lunch Box, Pansingh Tomar, Talvar, Maqbool, Hindi Medium, Piku and Salaam Mumbai to name few.

Prithvi Raj Kapoor's legacy was taken forward by his three sons. Though the contributions of Shammi Kapoor and Shashi Kapoor were no less but lead remained with Raj Kapoor. In next generation, the lead remained with Rishi Kapoor. Rishi Kapoor not only forwarded the Raj Kapoor's legacy but followed age profile too. Comparing to family and contemporary actors Raj Kapoor left us at the early age of 64. Rishi Kapoor followed the suit by leaving us at the age of 67. Rishi Kapoor was an Indian actor, director and producer known for his work in Hindi cinema. He received the National Film Award for Best Child Artist for his debut role in his father Raj Kapoor's 1970 film Mera Naam Joker. Rishi Kapoor is remembered in Amar, Akbar, Anthony, Bobby, Nagina, Prem Rog, Kapoor and sons, Chandini, Henna and Mera Naam Joker and other films.

In history of cinema you will always be remembered. Out of the Kapoor family but not of film fraternity Irrfan who left us even at earlier age of 53. Irrfan contribution may be lesser in quantity but quality wise that also is unforgettable. Both the legends rest in peace.

C.K. SUBRAMANIAM

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# Noble doctor, Bethany Nun

## A Tribute

*- Ivan Saldanha-Shet,  
supported by Bethany. M'lore.*

*"Honour physicians for their services,*

*for the Lord created them;*

*for their gift of healing comes from  
the Most High,*

*and they are rewarded by the King."  
-Book of Sirach....*

These days the medical profession is being lauded in the highest terms all over the world, the news of the death of a noble doctor and nun of the 'Congregation of Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany, Mangalore', Rev Sr. Dr. Lelian Sequeira, BS who passed away on Saturday, April 25 late evening, came as a thunder bolt to thousands of admirers. Sr Dr Lelian, member of Maryvale Convent, Kinnigoli. a model, sincere, kind hearted, soft spoken and totally committed to the healing ministry through medicine and care, a nun of rare humane courage in the shadow of her LORD. Her compassionate love touched the hearts of thousands of people where her foot steps are found. Admired for her zeal and contribution to the human community before self. Sr Lelian served with a smiling face even when she was suffering from multiple illnesses. In 2018 she had a fall and fractured her hip bone. Gradually her health deteriorated. On 24th April her health condition was critical and sisters kept watch beside her supporting her with their prayers. On 25th April at 9 pm she surrendered her life to the Lord uttering the name of Jesus several times, while sisters of the commu-



nity and a few relatives were praying and bidding a tearful farewell to her. Thus she completed her mission on earth as a true handmaid of the Lord. Her funeral rites were held at Immaculate Conception Church Cemetery, Kinnigoli on Sunday 26th April 2020 at 10.00 am, amid the lockdown in force. Yet cries and condolences poured in from all corners.

**Early life :** Sr Lelian, nee Concepta Sequeira hails from Balkunje, Mangalore Diocese; the daughter of late Sebastian Sequeira and Magdalene Rodrigues. She was born on 15th March 1943, the third child of seven siblings - four brothers and three sisters among whom two are Bethany sisters, Sr Virginia and Sr Hilarian. Her Priest brother Rev Fr William Sequeira serves in the Society of Jesus. Her primary education was at St Paul's Primary School at Bolkunje. Her high school studies at Little Flower High School, Kinnigoli treading to and fro 12 miles daily set out her worth. She was very hard working right from her childhood and would join other workers to pound paddy and do all kinds of work. She loved transplant the corn seedlings,

reaping the crop and collecting the grain in great joy. Her hard work and active mind made her excel in studies, a voracious reader of books which she devoured and digested for good of others. She had a sure calling and chose to enter the indigenous Bethany Congregation, Bendur, in spite of opposition from her family in May 1960. Her bright ways took her to St Agnes College for her Intermediate studies as a candidate. She made her First Profession on 5th May 1962. Her achievement in studies rightly compelled the superiors to select her for medical studies at Karnataka Medical College, Hubli, a rarity among nuns in those times. During her studies she fell ill but, did not fall back. After she completed her MBBS, she was sent for specialized studies in Obstetrics and Gynaecology and obtained her Masters in Medicine, making her a specialist Doctor.

She was sent to the newly opened St Thomas Hospital in Vadakangulam, Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu not far from Kanyakumari, an underdeveloped area then. She had to work under trying conditions without proper accommodation and hospital. Everything was in one old block. In addition to her service at the above hospital, she also served at the newly started Lourdes Hospital at Idinthakarai in the same district. In this hospital she had to treat patients who were illiterate and primitive most of them fisher folk. It is recalled how her compassionate heart handled them with a smile and triumphed over their hearts all the time, indeed it is proof of her spiritual gifts and graces.

After serving in Vadakangulam for nearly 12 years she was transferred



(Contd.. from p. 18)

to Concetta Hospital, Kinnigoly, at the behest of Fr Aloysius D'Souza, the then Parish Priest of Immaculate Conception Church, Kinnigoly and the Director of the Hospital. She put her heart and soul in the development of the hospital visiting the villages in a van that served as a mobile hospital and treating needy patients. Slowly but steadily the hospital

tal. Her service in this Mangalore diocesan hospital for more than three decades, has brought solace to the people of Kinnigoli as well as all the neighbouring areas. . If not for her tireless efforts, the hospital would not have been what it is today. Even after her retirement and in spite of her ill health she continued to serve the people till she was incapacitated. She is the first medical doctor of the Man-

near and dear ones, colleagues and a huge list of admiring people all over the world mourn and pray that a blessed person is not in their midst and is an irreparable loss. Resting in the thought that Compassionate Rev Sr.Dr Lelian intercedes for all and smiles her warm protection in these trying times in this tearful earth - Blessings will result.



earned a good name and developed, patients increased rapidly. She had a healing touch, people said it was "Deva Sparsha" (God's touch) and a very compassionate heart especially towards the poor and it attracted all. During those years the hospital was famous for healing people of snake bites many cases appeared as the hospital was in rural agricultural area. She developed this hospital to great service in the 34 years she headed it, and is seen as a legend of Kinnigoli.

Lived for the LORD : Dr Sr Lelian was a gifted , efficient, committed and renowned doctor and an able administrator of Concetta Hospi-

galore Bethany Congregation and her medical services were of great value as Obstetrician and Gynecologist .

Her spiritual life was very edifying and humble. As and when possible, she would go to the convent chapel from the hospital spend time before the Lord in order to gain strength for her mission, she was serious in her religious duties. Very orderly and systematic in her work and consistently would teach others to grow. She never turned away any one who came to her and when anyone came from distant places she would insure their comfort and relief before self and all else.

On her sad passing away her religious family of 60 plus years association,

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- R – Reason for insurance
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- S – Sustain with love

- Dr. Trevor Colaso,  
Bandra (W), Mumbai.

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**7141. MUMBAI :** Affluent business family Protestant Spinster, (Born in November 1995), Ht. 5', Wt. 55 kgs., Fair complexion, good looking, Edn., M. Pharma, Student. Contact email : saloni.1995naik@gmail.com

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**7124. CANADA :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in October 1993), Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 60 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.M.S., M.B.A. Operation, working as a Coordinator in Shipping Company. Contact email : carrel.dsouza@gmail.com

**7147 MUMBAI :** Goan Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in July 1992), Ht. 5'4", Wt. 65 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. MBA Finance, working as a Fund Accountant. Contact email :

stefsasha09@gmail.com

**7111. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in November 1993), Ht. 5', Wt. 47 kgs, Fair Complexion, Edn. BMS., working with an MNC. Contact email :

owena.dsouza@gmail.com

**7139. MUMBAI :** Maharashtrian Protestant Spinster, (Born in May 1993), Ht. 5' 3", Wt. 47 kgs, Fair Complexion, good looking, Edn. B.Com., working as a Sr. Advisor in MNC. Contact email : shirley.jadhav@gmail.com

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**7137. MUMBAI :** Karnataka Protestant Spinster, (Born in January 1996), Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 54 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., working as an Accountant. Contact email : sujatareddy209@gmail.com

**7086. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in March 1991), Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 62 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. 12th + Hotel Management Graduateion. working as a Developer Manager in Insurance Company. Contact email :

samanireena05@gmail.com

**7093. MUMBAI :** Gujarati Roman Catholic Spinster, (Born in July 1982), Ht. 5' 2", Wt. 50 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. B.Com., working for Private Bank. Contact email :

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# Chuni Goswami Achieved his Goal

by C.K. SUBRAMANIAM

**Chuni (Subimal) Goswami**, a great footballer captained the Indian team in 1952 Asian Games and brought laurel for India. That was golden era of Indian football. Apart from football he was an avid player of cricket and hockey. He was the captain of Bengal cricket team from 1962-73. As a recognition of his contribution in the field of sports he was awarded Arjun and Padma Shree by the government of India. In January 2020, a commemorative stamp by Indian Postal Department was issued in his honour. A retired Banker of SBI he endeared to one and all.

Chuni Goswami was an artist par excellence and was capable of swapping the flanks with remarkable ease. An Indian football team without him between 1958 and '65 was almost unthinkable because he was such a genius. Goswami, who had been admitted to a Kolkata on Thursday, died at around 5pm after suffering cardiac arrest. He was 82.

The footballer extraordinaire was 82 when he breathed his last in a city nursing home, where he was admitted on Thursday morning after complaining of uneasiness. Considered one of the finest footballers to have ever played for the country, Goswami's name became synonymous with celebrated club Mohun Bagan, where he played throughout his football career without changing allegiance. He played a prime role in seeing India do well in prominent international events like Asian Cup and Merdeka Cup. Goswami was a complete sportsman and excelled in cricket as well.

As a cricketer, he represented Bengal in 46 first-class games



between 1962 and 1973. Goswami's will to fight the issue out was infectious and as a footballer and India's captain as well, we learnt much about fitness attitude from him. He had a great sense of humour which he used timely to release the tension in the dressing room. India is poorer without such



icons. Bengal reached the Ranji final against Bombay then (1968-69), and played at the Brabourne stadium.

A footballer being bowled round his legs in cricket. That is exactly what happened to Chuni Goswami against Bombay in the final of the Ranji Trophy in 1969. Batting on 84 in the second innings, he was 'spun' round his legs by Milind Rege. As Goswami — who had scored 96 in the first innings — missed out on yet another century, Bengal's hopes ended. The match ended in a draw, but Bombay won the affair by virtue of first-innings lead. West Indies tour match against a combined East-Central zone brought the best in Chuni Goswami.

Being disgruntled, the West Indians started playing their shots and the ball was seaming a lot. We got them out for 136. Chuni played a vital innings down the order and we scored around 280. The combined XI got a sizeable lead. When West Indies started batting in the second innings, they tried coming hard at the Hanumant Singh led side, but the home eventually won the match. On the last day, Chuni caught the last man at mid-off. It was a poetic finale. He was a gutsy cricketer despite limited abilities. He sprinted and took a catch amid the roar of the crowd from behind. He ran and ran and the ball stuck in his hand. He started running from the square leg and ended at fine leg. Goswami took 5/47 in that game with Rohan Kanhai being his first wicket. Goswami's first-class career spanned 46 matches, during which he scored 1592 runs including one hundred and seven fifties. A footballer turned cricketer achieved all his goals on and off the field before sighing goodbye to the sporting field. May his soul rest in peace.

# Importance of May Day from labourers perspective

In India, the rich is becoming richer and the poor remains poor all the time. We in India try to overcome capitalism through peaceful movements and May day occupies the prime importance in the mission to identify the hard work put in by labour

class.

Capitalism is the greatest evil on humanity. Its the poor who suffer in capitalism waiting for the hand outs or poor or unpaid work. The rich pave the way for exploitation. These are the very crooks who kill labour movements- who uphold labour and labourers, and in India May day bring all the labour class together. May day reveal the exact aim of labour class in overcoming such an one sided option enforced all these years.

Needless to say that, it is due to the continued efforts and hard work by the famous Union Leaders Mr. George Fernandes, Dr. Datta Samant and quite a few others, that the workforce in India today, millions in number, either in the Government Sector or in Private, enjoy better pay, multitude of benefits and conducive working conditions, and it is quite fair to acknowledge the good work of the Unions.

Union movements paid rich dividends and helped to bridge the gap between employees and employers in this competitive world. However, in

some instances, the Unions went too far, with their unrealistic demands and resorting to strikes etc., disregarding the problems faced by the Managements and also interest of the nation at large, for



which, they paid huge price. Working class suffered in the bargain due to vested interests. We still advocate a fair, strong and active Unionism at the work place and it will be ideal if the Union leaders resort to moderate and sensible ways of negotiating the pay and working conditions for their members.

Every year, the first day of the month of May is being celebrated as the May Day. Since the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century this day came to be observed as the Labour Day or International Workers' Day to highlight the struggle of the workers



Jayanthi Subramaniam

and manifest their solidarity throughout the world. Even women and children were forced to work for 12 to 15 hours a day. There was neither government legislation nor popular movement to improve the condition of the working class.

Truly, history has a lot to teach us about

the roots of our radicalism. When we remember that people were shot so we could have the 8-hour day; if we acknowledge that homes with families in them were burned to the ground so we could have Saturday as part of the weekend; when we recall 8-year old victims of industrial accidents who marched in the streets protesting working conditions and child labor only to be beat down by the police and company thugs, we understand that our current condition cannot be taken

for granted - people fought for the rights and dignities we enjoy today, and there is still a lot more to fight for. The sacrifices of so many people can not be forgotten or we'll end up fighting for those same gains all over again. This is why we celebrate May Day. Corona virus brought the world to standstill and the labour class suffer the most all over. May day will see the light at the end of the day for the migrant labourers.

It is the responsibility of the government of the to see that its working class fellow-men are not exploited through various legislation where the maximum working hours, minimum salary, Health-care package and compulsory terminal benefits is ensured specially in the unorganised sector. And also give the right to form a Union to all working class be it professionals or unskilled workers to safeguard its interest and to call for strike be the last resort with reasonable notice. There lies the success of union movement and the ultimate aim in celebrating May day.

# Whither Freedom of Press in India?

'World Press Freedom Day' (3 May) in India is a day of reckoning: a time for stock-taking and for soul-searching; to realise the abysmal depths to which the 'press' has fallen in the country and the way several journalists have stooped for petty gains, for political patronage and for their own TRPs. It is a day on which the Indian press needs be challenged on whether it has completely abdicated its role and responsibility as the fourth pillar of democracy or if there is any possibility left for it to redeem itself? Certainly a dilemma – because most will not have the courage to answer it!



In December 1993, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 'World Press Freedom Day', following a recommendation of UNESCO's General Conference. Since then, 3 May, the anniversary of the Declaration of Windhoek is celebrated worldwide as World Press Freedom Day.

The day acts as a reminder to governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom. It is also a day of reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics. It is therefore an opportunity:

- to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom;
- to assess the state of press freedom throughout the world;
- to defend the media from attacks on their independence;
- to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

The theme for this year's World Press Freedom Day is '**Journalism Without Fear or Favour.**' It calls for awareness on specific issues about the safety of journalists, their independence from political or commercial

influence, and gender equality in all aspects of the media.

An apt theme for the press in India, who in recent years can easily be defined as 'journalism only with fear and favour'. One does not need to be a



BY FR. CEDRIC PRAKASH SJ

rocket scientist today to realise that, by and large, the Indian press is corporatised by the big moneybags of the country; is coopted by a fascist regime which brooks no dissent; is communalised to the core, catering to a group that cares two hoots for the Constitution of India and has become highly commercialised in its desperation to garner revenue through advertisements either from the Government or the private sector.

Most (particularly many journalists) seem oblivious to the fact that in India, the right of freedom of speech and expression is a fundamental right in our legal system and guaranteed in our Constitution. The right to free press does not exist independently and is incorporated in the right of freedom of speech and expression; and therefore the right to free press is regarded as a fundamental right.

A few days ago, 'Reporters without Borders (RSF)' released their '2020 World Press Freedom Index'. Their report shows that the coming decade will be decisive for the future of journalism, with the Covid-19 pandemic highlighting and amplifying the many crises that threaten the right to freely reported, independent, diverse and reliable information

This 2020 edition of the Index, which evaluates the situation for journalists each year in 180 countries and territories, suggests that the next ten years will be pivotal for press freedom because of converging crises affecting the future of journalism: a geopolitical crisis (due to the aggressiveness of authoritarian regimes); a technological crisis (due to a lack of democratic guarantees); a democratic crisis (due to polarisation and repressive policies); a crisis of trust (due to suspicion and even hatred of the media); and an economic crisis (impoverishing quality journalism).

On expected lines, India is placed 142 out of the 180 countries evaluated; this is two notches below the 140 position of 2019 and worst ever



(Contd.. from p. 24)

placement for the country. Analysing the ground reality in India the Report says, *"With no murders of journalists in India in 2019, as against six in 2018, the security situation for the country's media might seem, on the face of it, to have improved. However, there have been constant press freedom violations, including police violence against journalists, ambushes by political activists, and reprisals instigated by criminal groups or corrupt local officials. Ever since the general elections in the spring of 2019, won overwhelmingly by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, pressure on the media to toe the Hindu nationalist government's line has increased.*

*Those who espouse Hindutva, the ideology that gave rise to Hindu nationalism, are trying to purge all manifestations of "anti-national" thought from the national debate. The coordinated hate campaigns waged on social networks against journalists who dare to speak or write about subjects that annoy Hindutva followers are alarming and include calls for the journalists concerned to be murdered. The campaigns are particularly virulent when the targets are women. Criminal prosecutions are meanwhile often used to gag journalists critical of the authorities, with some prosecutors invoking Section 124a of the penal code, under which "sedition" is punishable by life imprisonment*

*India's score in this year's World Press Freedom Index is heavily affected by the situation in Kashmir where, after rescinding the state's autonomy, the federal government shut down fixed line and mobile Internet connections completely for several months, making it virtually impossible for journalists to cover what was happening in what has become a vast open prison". Certainly, no credit to a country that prides itself of being the world's largest democracy.*

It is no easy job being a journalist in India today. If one has to stand up for truth and justice one will have to pay the price. We have seen recently, when honest journalists just reported facts they are simply hauled up by a prejudiced system based on some frivolous FIR. On the other hand those who spew hate and venom, can literally get away with murder, provided they are in the camp of the ruling regime (as we have seen in the case of a garbage journalist not long ago). That fear is evident in several cases; a few days ago, there were allegations, after a response to an RTI that the Centre "waived" Rs 68,607 crore in loans to 50 willful defaulters( most close friends of the Government) identified by the RBI. Whatever, the merits of the case, few of the print media had the guts to take the story on their front-page. Thankfully some of the electronic media did cover the story and there was plenty of it on social media too.

There was also the issue of COVID-19 and reporting on it especially on the realities of migrants and the daily wage earners. The Centre, filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court, praying that *"no media outlet print, publish or telecast anything on coronavirus without first ascertaining facts from the mechanism provided by the government"*. Fortunately, the apex court did not fall into the trap of the Government's desire to gag the media. In an order dated 31 March, the Supreme Court said, *"We do not intend to interfere with the free discussion about the pandemic, but direct the media refer to and publish the official version about the developments;"* adding, *"in particular, we expect the Media (print, electronic or social) to maintain a strong sense of responsibility and ensure that unverified news capable of causing panic is not disseminated."*

In a video message for World Press Freedom Day, UN Secretary General António Guterres underscored the crucial role media has in helping people make informed decisions. *"As the pandemic spreads, it has also*

*given rise to a second pandemic of misinformation, from harmful health advice to wild conspiracy theories. The press provides the antidote: verified, scientific, fact-based news and analysis."* Mr. Guterres urged governments to protect journalists and others who work in media, and to uphold press freedom. The UN chief thanked the media *"for providing facts and analysis; for holding leaders – in every sector – accountable; and for speaking truth to power"*.

The famed American newspaper editor and publisher Joseph Pulitzer once said, *"Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. An able, disinterested, public-spirited press, with trained intelligence to know right and courage to do it, can preserve that public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery."* Words that surely ring a bell on the reality of freedom of the press in India today. Not long ago our own Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said,

*"The press should do what it can to minimise the abuse of power (self-scrutiny can help and so can competition), but we should also try to understand with clarity why and how press freedom can enrich human lives, enhance public justice, and even help to promote economic and social development."* The point is whether the press in India will pay attention and act on these words of wisdom.

On another World Press Freedom Day the moot question which the Indian press must ask itself is 'Whither Freedom of Press in India'? Only then, will it be able to delve on 'Journalism without Fear or Favour!' This calls for tremendous courage to stand up for justice and truth!

*\*(Fr Cedric Prakash SJ is a human rights and peace activist/writer.  
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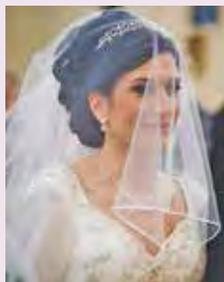
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