



India

Complete lockdown of India:



Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced complete lockdown of India

On 24 March, India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced that the entire country would go under complete lockdown, and that a total ban was being imposed on people from stepping out of their homes for a period of 21 days, beginning at midnight 24 March/25 March, in an effort to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. In his address to the nation, PM Modi stated that the decision had been taken based on experiences of health sector experts, and experiences of other countries. He emphasized that 21 days was essential to break the chain of infection, and underlined that the decision was vital

to protect the country and all of India's citizens against the corona pandemic. PM Modi highlighted that even the nations with the best medical facilities could not contain the virus, and underlined that social distancing was the only option to mitigate the virus. Regarding the economic impact of the pandemic, PM Modi stated that the nation would certainly have to pay an economic cost because of the lockdown, but that saving the life of each and every Indian was the government's top priority. He also highlighted that the central and state governments were working swiftly to ensure that citizens would not face much inconvenience in their daily life, and stated that the authorities would ensure that supplies of all essential items continued smoothly.

Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit: On 26 March, an Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit was convened at the initiative of India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to discuss the challenges posed by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and to form a global, coordinated response. The G20 Leaders agreed to take all necessary

measures to contain the pandemic and to protect people, and supported strengthening of the World Health Organization's (WHO) mandate in the fight against pandemics. Moreover, the G20 countries committed to use all available policy tools to minimize the economic and social costs of the pandemic and to restore global growth, and pledged to inject over USD 5 trillion into the global economy to counter the social and economic impact of Covid-19.



Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit

Video Conference of SAARC leaders: On 15 March, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi interacted with leaders of the SAARC countries (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, consisting of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) via video conference to form a common strategy to combat the Covid-19 pandemic in the region. PM Modi proposed the creation of a Covid-19 Emergency Fund based on voluntary contributions from all the countries, and announced that India would make an initial offering of USD 10 million for the fund. He also stated that India was assembling a Rapid Response Team of doctors and specialists which could be placed at the disposal of the countries if required. Moreover, PM Modi suggested the establishment of a common research platform within the South Asian region, and proposed further brainstorming by experts

on the long-term consequences of Covid-19. The SAARC leaders thanked PM Modi for the proposed initiatives.

Indian States / Festivals

Manipur: Manipur is located in East India, bordering Mizoram in the south, Assam on the west, Nagaland on the north, and the neighbouring country Myanmar on the east. The state economy of Manipur ranks 29th among India's 36 states and union territories with a GDP of USD 3.2 billion in 2018-2019, and it is a fast-growing state economy with GDP growth rate of approx. 12% from 2017-18 to 2018-19. The economy of Manipur is based on sectors like agriculture, handlooms, handicrafts, silk farming, food processing, bamboo processing, IT, hydropower and tourism. Manipur has the highest number of handicrafts units and highest number of crafts persons in Northeast India, and is one of India's largest bamboo-producing states and a major contributor to the country's bamboo industry.



*Unique handloom products of Manipur
Photo: Kanglaonline.com*

Moreover, Manipur has potential to generate hydropower equivalent to about 2,200 MW, and the state government has given top priority to development of the hydropower potential and has invited private investors in the hydropower generation industry. Other business

promotion initiatives implemented in the state include plans for a Bamboo Technology Park at Kadamtala, Jiribam with an estimated cost of USD 104.3 million, development of the Imphal area by using space technology like Geographic Information System (GIS), construction of a 125 km Jiribam-Imphal railway, expected to be completed by 2020, to improve connectivity in the region and establishment of infrastructure related to the National e-Governance Plan.



Loktak Lake
Photo: Neetasatam.com

Due to its breathtaking scenic beauty with gorgeous lakes and magnificent green hills and valleys, Manipur is known as “a jewel of India” and “Switzerland of the East”. The state's wealthy flora and fauna has also led to the nickname «flower on lofty heights», and the different species of hornbills and the brow-antlered deer «Sangai», known as the dancing deer of Manipur and which only exists in this state, form only a part of the rich natural heritage of Manipur. Some of the most famous tourist attractions in the state are the Loktak lake, which is the largest fresh water lake in Northeast India, Keibul Lamjao National Park, which is the only floating national park of its kind in the world with masses of soil, vegetation and organic matter known as Phumdi floating on water, the Shree Shree Govindajee Temple in the state capital Imphal, being a

historic centre of the Vaishnavites in Manipur, the Kangla Fort and the Indian National Army (INA) Memorial Complex in Moirang.

Holi Festival:



Holi Festival
Photo: CNN.com

Holi, also known as the “Festival of Colours”, was celebrated across India from 9 to 10 March. Holi is one of the most famous and immensely bright and vibrant festivals. The festival signifies the victory of good over evil and celebrates the beginning of a good spring harvest season. Holi eve is also celebrated by making a huge bonfire known as Holika Dahan, to mark the burning away of all evils. The following day, people celebrate with dry and wet colours by throwing coloured powder and water over each other, and by holding parties.

International commercial & business activities in India

Economic Times Global Business Summit 2020: From 6 to 7 March, the annual Economic Times Global Business Summit 2020, a flagship initiative by the Times of India Group, was held in New Delhi. This year’s Summit was held under the title “Collaborate to Create: Sustainable Growth in a Fractured World”. Speaking at the Summit, India’s Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi stated that India and the

world had to meet the challenge posed by the coronavirus together. He also highlighted that despite the weak global economy, India had become stronger in the last few years. PM Modi pointed out that India had improved from being the 11th largest economy in the world to currently the 5th largest, and announced that the Indian government was working at four different levels to achieve the goal of a USD 5 trillion economy. The four different levels were, (i) connect with private sector, (ii) fair competition, (iii) wealth-creation, and (iv) deletion of archaic laws.



PM Modi at Economic Times Global Business Summit 2020

India-Norway:

Visit of Norwegian International Development Minister to India: From 29 February to 2 March, Norwegian International Development Minister Dag-Inge Ulstein visited New Delhi and Mumbai. He met Dr. Harsh Vardhan, India's Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, and issues such as maternal health, the fight against infant mortality, promotion of girls' rights and countering son preference were discussed. Mr. Ulstein emphasized that Norway and India were successful partners in reducing maternal and infant mortality rates through innovative healthcare, while Dr. Vardhan highlighted the successful ongoing

Norway-India Partnership Initiative-III (NIPI-III), and stated that NIPI aimed at facilitating rapid scale-up of quality child and maternal health services. Mr. Ulstein paid a visit to the Kalawati Saran Children's Hospital in New Delhi where mortality among premature babies had been reduced by 50% in 3 years. During his stay in India, Mr. Ulstein also visited projects in slum areas in Mumbai, and took part in clean-up of plastic at the Mithi River in Mumbai, organized by Mr. Afroz Shah, UN Environment Champion of the Earth.



Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Indian Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare and Norwegian International Development Minister Dag-Inge Ulstein

Follow-up order in India for Next Biometrics: On 20 March, the Norwegian company Next Biometrics, a global leader in fingerprint sensor technology, announced that it had received a new order for delivery of finger print biometric readers in India worth USD 360,000, equivalent to approx. NOK 3.96 million. Next Biometrics had in January 2020 received an order for delivery of UIDAI and STQC certified finger print biometric readers tied to the Indian Government's Aadhaar programme, and the order announced on 20 March was an extended order to the same customer. The customer had reportedly made a total order of USD 1.1 million, equivalent to approx. NOK 12.15 million, to date during Q1 2020.