



## Newsletter for the month of April 2020

### India

#### Extension of lockdown till 3<sup>rd</sup> May:



*Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressing the Nation in New Delhi on 14 April*

On 14 April, Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi addressed the nation for 4<sup>th</sup> time in 4 weeks in India's fight against Covid-19, and announced extension of the lockdown until 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2020. PM Modi stated that the extension of the lockdown was decided keeping in mind advice from many states, experts and the people, and he requested people to continue maintaining vigil and to adhere to social distancing during the lockdown. Moreover, PM Modi announced that areas which were of low risk of turning into hot-spots of coronavirus infection could be

allowed to open up for select necessary activities from 20<sup>th</sup> April, but underlined that the permissions would be withdrawn immediately if lockdown rules were broken, and if there was a threat of spreading of the coronavirus. PM Modi also highlighted that easing of restrictions in the low risk areas would be done keeping in mind the difficulties being faced by the poor and daily wage earners, and emphasized that the government had made every possible effort to help them through the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojna scheme. He also added that compared to other big and powerful countries across the world affected by Covid-19, India was in a very well managed situation.

**President and Vice-President attend discussions on Covid-19 response:** On 3 April, India's President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, along with the Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, held a video conference with the Governors, Lieutenant Governors and Administrators of India's States and Union Territories to discuss ways to contribute to the measures taken by the Government of India and the State

Governments in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. The President emphasized the need to ensure that no one remained hungry during the nationwide lockdown, and noted that some of the praiseworthy initiatives of various states included setting up hunger help-lines, encouraging home delivery, using stadiums for relief works and quarantine facilities, enrolling retired doctors and medical students, using the expertise of psychologists, inviting the youth to volunteer, involving universities in spreading awareness and monitoring the situation with daily review meetings.



*President Ram Nath Kovind attends Covid-19 response discussions through video conference*

### **India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package:**

On 22 April, India's Union Cabinet approved significant investments of Rs. 15,000 crore for the "India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package". The key measures of the package were development of diagnostics and Covid-19 dedicated treatment facilities, centralized procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs required for treatment of infected patients, strengthening and building resilient National and State health systems to support prevention and preparedness for future disease outbreaks, setting up laboratories and bolster surveillance activities, bio-security preparedness, pandemic research, proactively engaging

communities and conducting risk communication activities.

### **India's Armed Forces salute Covid-19 warriors:**



An Indian Navy helicopter showers flower petals on medics in Mumbai  
Photo: Gulfnews.com

On 3 May, India's Armed Forces organized several activities across the country to salute frontline workers for their services in the fight against Covid-19, including doctors, nurses, hygiene and sanitation staff, police personnel, media and several others engaged in maintenance of essential services and supplies. The activities included for example wreath-laying at memorials, hospital visits, playing of music, ship formations and illumination, fly past by fighter and transport aircraft and showering of flower petals.

### **Indian States / Festivals**

**Sikkim:** Sikkim is located in Northeast India, bound by West Bengal on the south, Nepal on the west, Tibet on the north and Bhutan on the east. The state economy of Sikkim ranks 28<sup>th</sup> among India's 36 states and union territories with a GDP of USD 3.8 billion in 2018-2019, and the state economy is fast-growing with GDP growth rate of 4.9% from 2017-18 to 2018-19. Sikkim, which is also known as "The land of peace and tranquillity" and "The

Kingdom of flowers”, is the least populous and second smallest by area among the Indian states. The economy of Sikkim is largely based on agriculture, and the state has favourable agro-climatic conditions which support agriculture, horticulture and forestry. Some of the most important agricultural products are rice, maize, millet, wheat, oil seeds, pulses, spices, cereals barley, oranges, tea and cardamom.



*Teesta-V hydropower station, Sikkim  
Photo: Hydropower.org*

Other key industries include tourism, hydroelectric power, electronics and pharmaceuticals. Also, the state has a small mining industry, extracting minerals such as copper, dolomite, talc, graphite, quartzite, coal, zinc and lead. An advantage of Sikkim in pursuing economic growth is that the state has a high literacy rate of around 81.42% along with a skilled labour force, and the quality and quantity of employable graduates in the state has steadily improved. Moreover, the state has implemented business promotion initiatives such as implementation of the North East Industrial Development Scheme 2017 to promote the Northeast as an attractive investment destination by providing concessions and incentives, launching of an internet-based agriculture information centre, development of rail and air connectivity as well as optical-fibre networks, offering of tax incentives to the pharmaceutical industry, planning of an IT

park with state-of-the-art facilities, and announcement of a technical collaboration with international floriculturists to develop the state’s potential in floriculture.



*Buddha Park of Ravangla  
Photo: Esikkimtourism.in*

In 2018, the Government of Sikkim released the Sikkim Tourism Policy 2018, with the aim of developing tourism as a key sector in Sikkim’s economy and promoting low-impact sustainable tourism. Given the state’s vast natural potential with Himalayan mountain peaks, including India’s highest mountain Kangchenjunga (8,586m), rare and exotic flora and fauna as well as the Buddhist heritage, Sikkim attracts tourists from across the globe. Promotion of village tourism, cultural tourism, trekking, ecotourism and adventure tourism has boosted tourism in the state, and Sikkim was ranked top spot in the world to visit by the renowned travel magazine “Lonely Planet” in 2014. Some of the main tourist attractions include the state capital Gangtok with the Buddhist monasteries Rumtek and Enchey, high-altitude lakes such as Tsomgo Lake and Gurudongmar Lake, the Yumthang Valley, the village of Yuksom, the Buddha Park of Ravangla and the Nathu La Pass.

**Tulip Festival:** The Tulip Festival in Srinagar, which is home to Asia’s largest tulip garden, is held annually during the

first two weeks of April, when about 80% of the flowers in the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden bloom. In addition to showcasing more than a million flowers, the festival includes daily cultural programs, Kashmiri folk songs, sale of local handicrafts, and traditional Kashmiri cuisine. The Tulip Festival was started in 2007 to promote tourism in Kashmir, and has become a major tourist attraction. In 2019, there were more than 250,000 visitors, and in 2020, there were plans of showcasing more than 1.3 million tulips of 55 different varieties. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown in India, the tulip festival was cancelled in 2020.



Tulip Festival  
Photo: Tripsavvy.com

### India-Norway:

**NEXT Biometrics receives order from Indian business partner:** On 22 April, the Norwegian fingerprint sensor technology company NEXT Biometrics announced that it had received an initial purchase order for 1000 sensors from an Indian business partner for its One Touch ID Finger Print Module. The sensors would be integrated in fingerprint enabled payment terminals (POS), which were part of a financial inclusion strategy in India aiming at adopting fingerprint identification and authentication services for secure financial services in the country.

### Indian Community:

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Tel. 24115923; e-mail. commerce@indemb.no

### Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam:



Delivery of food from Slemmestad Temple for doctors, nurses and the poor during Covid-19 in Oslo

In view of the philosophy of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ (the whole world is one family), the Indian community and organizations in Norway such as New Delhi Restaurant, Oslo; Sanatan Mandir Sabha, Slemmestad; and Gurudwara Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Oslo; have been providing Indian food for doctors, nurses and others making efforts in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in Oslo. It is a matter of great pride that the Indian community in Norway has been doing wonderful humanitarian work and making India proud.

### Online Quiz on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar:



Embassy of India conducted an Online Quiz on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar from 6th December 2019 to 14th April 2020 to celebrate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The fortnightly quiz was launched on 6th December 2019. The top three winners of each quiz being awarded with trophies and prizes.

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