



Newsletter for the month of May 2020

India

Extension of lockdown:



*India Gate during lockdown
Photo: India Today.in*

On 1 May, the Indian government announced that it had decided to extend the lockdown of the country due to the Covid-19 pandemic by two weeks, with effect from 4 May. The government had split districts across India into red zones, orange zones and green zones, and the new guidelines permitted considerable relaxation of coronavirus infection control measures in the green and orange zones. On 17 May, the lockdown was further extended until 31 May, and under new guidelines, States and Union Territories (UTs) would delineate red, green and

orange zones based on the parameters shared by India's Health Ministry. A limited number of activities also remained prohibited throughout the country, irrespective of zones. These included travel by air and metro, running of schools, colleges and other educational and training/coaching institutions, hospitality services including hotels and restaurants, places of large public gatherings such as cinema halls, shopping malls, gymnasiums, entertainment parks etc., social, political, cultural and similar gatherings, and religious places and places of worship for public.

Economic package of Rs. 20 lakh crore (approx. USD 262.5 billion): In his Address to the Nation on 12 May, India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced an economic package of Rs. 20 lakh crore (approx. USD 262.5 billion) to mitigate the economic consequences in India of the Covid-19 pandemic. He noted that the package, taken together with earlier announcements by the government during the Covid-19 crisis and decisions taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), was to the tune of Rs. 20 lakh crore which

was equivalent to almost 10% of India's GDP. PM Modi highlighted that the package, which included measures such as facilitation of loans for small businesses and incentives for domestic manufacturing, would provide a much needed boost towards achieving "Atmanirbhar Bharat", a self-reliant India.

Online summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group: On 4 May, India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated at the online Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group, which was held under the theme "United against Covid-19" and gathered more than 30 heads of state and government and other leaders. Issues such as response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic crisis were discussed, and the purpose of the summit was to promote international solidarity in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, and to mobilize efforts of states and international organizations to address the pandemic. At the Summit, PM Modi highlighted India's long-standing commitment to the principles and values of NAM, and emphasized the importance of a coordinated, inclusive and equitable response by the world to the crisis.



PM Modi at online Summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group

United We Fight: On 12 May, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), an

autonomous organization under the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, released a musical creation titled "United We Fight". In the making of the song, the ICCR brought together composers, musicians and singers from across India, contributing recordings from their homes. "United We Fight" is a rendition weaving English lyrics into the notes and beats of Indian classical music, and spreads the essence of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", meaning that the world is one family. The song carries with it the message of hope, joy, resilience, fighting spirit and never say die attitude in the collective fight against Covid-19. Moreover, the song is an expression of deep appreciation and gratitude to all brave Covid-19 warriors across the world. The song may be accessed through this link: <https://youtu.be/xPzHPsJ5YJc>.



Indian artists performing "United We Fight"

Indian States / Festivals

Chandigarh: Chandigarh is located in Northern India, and became a Union Territory (UT) on 1st November, 1966. Chandigarh is both a city, district and UT, and serves as the capital of both the neighbouring states Punjab and Haryana, without being part of either of the two states. The economy of Chandigarh ranks 27th among India's 36 states and union

territories with a GDP of USD 4.5 billion in 2016-2017, and the state economy is fast-growing with GDP growth rate of 8.6% from 2015-16 to 2016-17. Moreover, Chandigarh is one of the wealthiest and most prosperous cities of India and regarding GDP per capita, the UT ranks 4th among India's states and union territories, with GDP per capita of USD 4,800 in 2018-2019. Chandigarh, which is also known as "The City of Beauty" and "The face of modern India" was developed as a planned city and completed in 1960. It was the first planned city in the country with a high standard of civic amenities, and is home to considerable business and commercial activity.



Industrial Area Phase 1, Chandigarh
Photo: Macigbricks.com

Key industries include food and vegetable processing, transport equipment, machinery, repair services, basic metal and alloys industry, furniture, electronics, pharmaceuticals, biotech and IT services. The industrial area of the UT has been set aside for non-polluting, light industry, and the growth of industry has been limited in Chandigarh due to the limited space envisaged for industrial development when the city was originally planned. The Chandigarh Administration has, in its promotion of Chandigarh as an attractive investment destination, focused on infrastructure development. Chandigarh

has one of the best electricity distribution systems in India, and still remains as a model for many other Indian cities in terms of civic amenities. In its Industrial Policy 2015, the Chandigarh Administration also identified the IT industry and biotech, which are non-polluting and require lesser space, as the key driver of growth in the UT.



Palace of Assembly, Chandigarh
Photo: Dezeen.com

Chandigarh is world-renowned for its architecture and landscaping, characterized by the co-existence of urban infrastructure and preservation of nature, and the UT attracted nearly 1.5 million tourists in 2019. Chandigarh has been described as the manifestation of a dream envisaged by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to symbolize India's freedom unfettered by past traditions, and executed by the architect Le Corbusier. Most of the city's buildings are in pure, cubical form, and in 2016, the architectural work of Le Corbusier in Chandigarh was designated an UNESCO World Heritage Site. Tourist attractions include the Rock Garden of Chandigarh, the Zakir Hussain Rose Garden, Sukhna Lake, Pinjore Garden, the Government Museum and Art Gallery, City Museum, the Tower of Shadows, the Geometric Hill Museum, the International Dolls Museum and Nepli Forests.

Ramadan followed by Eid-ul-Fitr:



Ramadan

Photo: Tripsavvy.com

The holy month of Ramadan was celebrated by Muslims across India from 24 April to 23 May. Considered one of the most auspicious festivals of the Muslim community, Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated all across the globe with much fanfare. Muslims observe Ramadan by fasting from dawn to dusk. Ramadan was followed by Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival of breaking the fast. Eid-ul-Fitr is usually celebrated with mass prayer at mosques, official receptions and private visits where friends greet each other and exchange gifts. However, this year, people were requested to celebrate at their homes due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Buddha Purnima Festival: On 7 May, Buddha Purnima, which is the most sacred Buddhist festival and also known as Buddha Jayanti, was celebrated across India to commemorate the birth, enlightenment and death of Lord Buddha. The celebrations usually take place at various Buddhist sites. These include Bodhi Gaya, Bihar, where Lord Buddha became enlightened during intense meditation under a Bodhi tree, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, where Buddha is said to have delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment, and the Buddha Jayanti Park in Delhi. However, this year, people celebrated the

festival in their home due to the coronavirus outbreak. Activities related to the festival include prayers, sermons and religious discourses, recitation of Buddhist scriptures, meditation, processions and worshipping of Buddha statues.



Buddha Purnima Festival

Photo: Tripsavvy.com

India-Norway:

Norwegian Business Association of India (NBAI) webinar: On 28 May, the Norwegian Business Association of India (NBAI) hosted a webinar with two guest speakers from Invest India; Vice President Vivek Sony Abraham and Senior Manager Himani Goel. Issues such as new Indian government reforms, lifting of the lockdown phase-wise, government policies for sectors, a self-reliant India and opportunities for business between Europe and India were discussed.

Norway India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI) member meeting: On 14 May, the Norway India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI) organized an online meeting on business in India during the lockdown. Keynote speakers included Norwegian Ambassador to India Mr. Hans Jacob Frydenlund, Chair of the Norwegian Business Association of India (NBAI) Ms. Kristine A. Leach and CEO of Compact India, Mr. Morten Hansen.