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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Stop acting like money lender, give cash rather than credit: Rahul Gandhi to govt

NEW DELHI, MAY 16 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said the Centre should stop acting like a 'sahukar' (money lender) for its children, and demanded that cash assistance be given to the poor and vulnerable sections, who are in dire need of money now, than credit.

Interacting with journalists of regional media via video conferencing, Gandhi also warned of an impending economic crisis, and asked the Modi government to at least temporarily, if not permanently, implement Congress-proposed NYAY, minimum income scheme, to give money directly to the marginalised section of society.

"When a child is hurt, his parents do not give him credit, they see his wound...I urge the government, do give loans to people, but not act like a 'sahukar' to her children. Mother India should give money directly to her children as they need money now," he told reporters.

Gandhi said a 'storm' was brewing on the economic front that will cause damage and hurt many, and urged the prime minister to reconsider the economic package announced by him and give money directly to the poor and needy like migrants walking on roads, failing which the country will suffer a bigger loss economically than from the novel coronavirus.

Stating that the biggest migration since independence is underway, "triggered by policies divorced from India's ground realities and ignoring the needs of our most vulnerable" brothers and sisters, who have been left to fend for themselves, he asserted that "yet, till today, the government has not been able to tell us what it plans to do for this huge mass of people, whose livelihoods have been cut off, as a result of the nationwide lockdown".

He also said it is important to lift the lockdown intelligently without sacrificing the old and vulnerable population to the disease.

"We will have to open the lockdown and we will have to make a transition. It is very important that we open the lockdown intelligently and carefully without sacrificing the vulnerable people. We cannot sacrifice our old people," he said, adding that protecting them is the primary duty of everybody.

Asserting that India is **turn to pg 02**

Student representatives suggest dialogue with Dept to address issues

Point out problems in course completion, online classes, exams and more

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:**

Members of Students' Representative Council [SRC] of different government colleges have placed some suggestions to the Education Department to help out students in their studies during this lockdown.

Speaking to media persons here on Saturday, Namchi government college SRC president, Buddha Hang Limboo mentioned that representatives of SRC of different colleges have come together to address various issues and problems of college students.

Students of second and fourth semesters still have time to cover the syllabus but not much time is left for students of sixth semester so classes should be held for



students of sixth semester by strictly following social distancing norms, he said.

"If the lockdown ends soon then the government should cancel all government holidays and even winter and summer vacations to complete the course of students," he suggested.

Dentam Vocational College SRC president, Teknath

Sharma thanked the State government for providing support grant of Rs 5,000 to Sikkimese students stuck in different parts of the country due to the lockdown.

He suggested that the government should call a meeting of SRCs of all government colleges with the Chief Minister and Education Minister to provide a platform

for student's representatives to place issues and problem of students and required infrastructures in the college. He also suggested that the government start post-graduation courses which are not available in the State.

Likewise, Rhenock Government College SRC president, Dinesh Chettri thanked teachers for providing online classes

during this lockdown. However, he stated that many students have not been able to take full advantage of this facility following weak internet facility in their respective places.

He added that students with good internet connectivity have been able to take advantage of online classes but many have been missing out. On the same, he urged the con-

cerned department to address this and also suggested that it would be more helpful if teachers send videos of their classes to students over WhatsApp.

Mr Chettri informed that some colleges have received notification for online examination which has created panic among students of other colleges which have not received any notification for online examination. Students are worried that only students from colleges with online examination facility will get degrees, he added. On the same, he urged the department to take uniform decision to avoid creating panic among students.

The representatives also congratulated the State government for keeping Sikkim and its people safe from COVID-19. They have further thanked the frontline warriors of the State for working day and night to keep Sikkim safe from any infection.

SRC representatives from Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College, Burtuk Government College and Mangshila Government College were also present.

State Day celebrated at Chintan Bhawan



GANGTOK, 16 MAY (IPR): The 45th State Day of Sikkim was celebrated today in a brief function held at Chintan Bhawan premises here in the capital.

The function was attended by Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad as the Chief Guest and Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang as the Guest of Honour.

The function had the presence of Deputy Speaker SLA, Ministers, MLAs, MP Lok Sabha, Mayor GMC, Chief Secretary, DGP, Heads of Departments, and senior officers of the State Government.

On their arrival, the Chief Guest and Guest of Honour offered garlands

and paid rich tribute to the statue of Padma Vibhushan Late Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa, the first Chief Minister of Sikkim and the father of democracy in Sikkim.

All the dignitaries present offered khadas on the statue of Late L.D. Kazi.

Every year, on the 16th of May, the State of Sikkim celebrates State Day, as it was on this day in 1975 that Sikkim became the 22nd State of the Indian Union.

Keeping the present situation of the Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing protocol into consideration, this year, the State level function was shortened and restricted to the outdoors.

SSC vice-convenor accuses SKM Govt of nepotism

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:**

Sikkim Subject Committee vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan today said that nepotism in government employment has destroyed talent in the state.

He was referring to the appointment of Rajendra Dhakal, son of Political Advisor to the CM, TN Dhakal, as Assistant Scientific Officer on 15 May on adhoc basis on a consolidated pay of Rs 25,000 per month under Science & Technology Department for a period of two years.

Addressing a press conference here this af-



ternoon, Mr Pradhan stated that a recent cabinet meeting of the state government held on 08 May had banned appointment under regular, work-charged, muster roll, adhoc, consolidated

pay, temporary basis for six months as part of austerity measures but at same time the government has been overriding this ban.

Recruitment in the government should be

transparent since nepotism denies opportunities to talented and deserving candidates, said Mr Pradhan.

He questioned if the ban on appointment under temporary/adhoc basis was limited to the poor and general public and the Political Advisor to the CM was exempted from this ban.

Mr Pradhan appealed to SKM workers to question their leadership on such practices and to press the party to fulfill its promises made during elections. He further asserted that the young should come forward to protest such practice of the government.

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REACHES YOU.**

This Lockdown is a Kemory

YENGKHO M JILANGAMBA

It's been a few weeks since we have been under lockdown. It's been a few very difficult weeks, very surreal, almost unbelievable.

Who would have imagined that the whole world would come to a standstill, well almost! Once you realise that the door of the flat, our home, has not been open in days, no one has rung the bell, the severity of it all becomes real. But you also get to hear a lot of what is happening in the world, perhaps more than one should, and definitely more than what is happening in the neighbourhood. Online news, especially those which come via social media, do not come merely as information but as screams. Almost every piece of news is bad.

One of the first casualties of this pandemic and the concomitant lockdown, personally, has been the inability to focus, to be able to read anything except

'news', to be able to think and articulate coherently, to not be worried, to not be afraid. Fear is a strange feeling. It grips from the inside; once contaminated with fear, everything, everyone has to be looked at with suspicion. You can't trust anyone, obviously, but more than you can't trust the door knob, you can't trust the lift, you can't trust the vegetables, you can't trust the air you breathe in. Fear consumes. Irrationality is just a minor ramification. Panic is merely a heightened stage. It feels as though all the readings that one has done comes to naught. It is a strange feeling. One is forced to reassess everything. There is nothing certain anymore.

People say that one's memory of life flashes just before death. I am almost certain that this is not true. Or, at least there is no way of proving it. To compare what we are living through with a flashback before death is definitely a bit unnecessarily

dramatic. Nonetheless, in times like this a lot of memory from one's life comes back. I am also not sure why but perhaps it has got to do with confinement.

Lockdown is about containment, restriction, especially making mobility impossible. All the vocabularies that have been made popular by this virus has got to do with space, or the limitation put on it - travel ban, stay-at-home, closure, shutdown, isolation, quarantine, lockdown. Each is a different version of how to reduce access to spaces. Not to be able to have access to spaces makes one feel terrible. I feel the pain and anguish of many not to be able to do what they are habituated to doing. We have been cooped up in a flat without being able to move out in the hills, or the banks of the river Brahmaputra where we live, or just move around for daily chores. This new, unforeseen condition of having to confine ourselves is terrible, ir-

respective of whether or not one knows the rationale of its implementation. Even though I am one of those who travels very little, I feel the pain, anguish, anxiety brought on by this sudden isolation.

I teach a course on violence and I have been thinking about it for years. I have also grown up in a land marred by violence. So, I can't help but notice the violent nature with which the pandemic has been responded with. This experiential part of me would like to believe that these restrictions are not so exceptional even in normal times. After all, histories of enclosure, plantation, and our contemporary gated colonies are illustrations that not everyone has the same right of access to places. The connection between this lockdown and all of those other restrictions put on spaces is one of enforcement with actual or potential violence.

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**Summit Times
in Nepali**

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Thank You!

SKM team visits facility quarantine centres in West Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

SKM team headed by Vice President Incharge, Birendra Tamling (Press & Media) along with Nabin Dahal, Boom Tshering Yonzan and senior party workers of Tashiding visited Facility Quarantine centres at Tashiding and Yuksom to take stock of the situation and its preparedness, a press release informs.

The SKM executives met with frontline workers at the centre and interacted with them about the situation. The team also handed over face masks, hand sanitizers to the frontline workers.

The visiting team also met SDM Yuksom, TT Bhutia and BDO, SM Limboo.

CII seeks relaxation of labour laws in West Bengal

KOLKATA, MAY 16 (PTI):

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Saturday said it has submitted a white paper to the West Bengal government, seeking relaxation of labour laws and incentive packages for various sectors to revive the state's economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the need for employers to implement various changes to their work models, the industry body said in a statement.

"Relaxations and simplification of labour laws, submission of consolidated annual returns instead of multiple returns, quick facilitation of new industrial licences could be some remedial steps to keep the ball rolling," the Bengal chapter of the industry body said.

The recommendations from the CII came after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had recently said that her government would never alter the existing labour laws in the wake of the coronavirus-triggered lockdown, and criticised the BJP-ruled states that had brought about changes to labour regulation.

The white paper, "Easing of Business Environment and Suggested Stimulus Package for West Bengal", recommended several measures that are required to be taken to revive the state's economy, according to the statement.

This Lockdown...

As someone who grew up amidst the political turmoil in Manipur, when counter-insurgency was the dominant mode of governance, I feel a deep sense of déjà vu. It is as though our little world of encounter between the rebels and the state armed forces, gun fights, combing operations, arrests, protests, general strike, bandhs, curfews have not only come full circle but have also become amplified to be applicable to the whole world as a way of dealing with the pandemic.

It is as though we are living through the nightmare of my childhood, yet again. It may be having to deal with our son who is four and a half year old, whose school has been shut, who has not been able to step out, who has not been able to meet his friends, and roam around in the neighbourhood but instead be stuck. It may be the stories of children who have had to suffer enormously because of the lockdown. Whatever the trigger is, and I wouldn't want to do pop psychology to find an

explanation, that's what I keep thinking about - my childhood in Manipur as we live through this lockdown.

On the brighter side, while many other people in different parts of the world seem to be struggling because of the solution against the virus, which is the lockdown, I feel consoled that we have had many more rehearsals of this in the past. If anyone ever wants to develop survival skills on how to live with damaged lives, they should take help from the veterans of those who lived through protracted conflict. I obviously do not want to make light of the threat that the virus poses, the loss of lives, economic hardships, emotional turmoil, and other forms of suffering.

Of course, the threat from a virus that has brought the world to a standstill and armed conflict are not the same. They are not even useful comparison. The only connecting point that I can think of is fear. We are all gripped by the fear of the unknown. We go to absurd precautionary extremes to

SRMAP's Next-Tech Lab wins three Hackathons in a row

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 MAY:

The unstoppable team of Next-Tech Lab of SRM University-AP, has again brought laurels to the University by winning three hackathons in a row. During this lockdown while some devoted their time to newfound hobbies, our young researchers successfully developed a fresh multiplayer virtual reality game - 'Whack A Mole' and a cloud-based multiplayer FPS in Virtual Reality- 'Desert Shooter'. The three-member team has successfully bagged the second prize in the International / Professional Award at SKYHacks2020; Best echoAR Hack at Silicon Valley Hacks; and Best AR/VR hack at HackNow, organized by Cal Hacks, a non-profit organization at the University of Berkeley, California.

When asked how the idea of making such a game crossed their minds, Epperla Karthik, a 2nd Year student of Computer science and Engineering and a member of the team, said, "My family loves attending Trade-



shows, every time we attend one my dad and I challenge each other to win a game of Whack A Mole. But, due to strict quarantine that my family is following, it's been a while now for such challenges. My teammates and I, being gaming and virtual reality enthusiasts, decided to develop a VR version of 'Whack A Mole.'"

'Whack A Mole' is a multiplayer virtual reality game that allows users to play against the computer or their families or both! One can use it on iOS or Android. It is built on Unity3D, on top of Photon PUN and GoogleVR SDK. It is also integrated with Google Firebase. "This was the very first time we were working on the development of virtual reality games and networking.



As we had to run the game on our phone to record the gameplay, the output video on YouTube is a bit blurry," explained Khushboo Sharma, another member of the team and a 2nd-year student of Computer Science and Engineering. "We completed the development of the game in only 20hrs, starting from scratch. We developed a few of our own UI elements and game assets. I feel the User-Interface of the app and the effects are pretty cool. VR development is real FUN! Moreover, there are a lot of API and SDK that unity supports," exclaimed Koushik Bhargav, a 3rd-Year student of Computer Science and Engineering and the third member of the team.

The team has plans to make this game to be



a cross-platform game. Therefore, their next plan of action is to make the web version of it. The team is also planning to release it to production so that users can have an immersive experience of modern gaming techniques.

'Desert Shooter' is another multiplayer virtual reality game developed by the team that allows users to play against the computer or their families or both. You can connect with your friends and play together. The game consists of a swarm of robot ships moving towards you and you have to protect yourself from them. "The interesting part is that all of this happens in Mixed Reality which makes the game immersive. We built it on Unity3D, on top of Photon PUN and GoogleVR

SDK, Echoar. It is also integrated with Google Firebase and the assets are stored in echoar cloud. This project won the best AR/VR hack at "Hack: Now" which is organized by the University of California Berkeley," said Epperla Karthik.

It is again proved that pure talent can never be put in quarantine. It will always find a way to express itself to the world. Our young developers have brilliantly used the ample time and opportunity to put their brains in best use and to bring recognitions from nationally and globally acclaimed competitions.



Economic package 4th tranche - Highlights

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

(PTI): Following are the highlights of the fourth tranche of the Rs 20 lakh crore comprehensive economic package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to tide over the COVID-19 crisis:

Defence: * FDI in defence manufacturing to be hiked to 74 per cent from 49 per cent under automatic route * Govt to notify a list of weapons/platforms banned for imports, such items can only be purchased from India * To promote indigenisation of imported spares, focus on lowering defence import bill * Separate budget provisioning for domestic capital procurement * Faster decision making in defence procurement * Govt to corporatise Ordnance Factory Board

Civil Aviation: * Restrictions on utilisation of the Indian air space to be eased for increasing efficiency of passenger aircraft, to cut fuel usage and time * To rake in

Rs 1,000 crore per year benefit for the aviation sector * 6 more airports to be privatised * India to become a global hub for Aircraft Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO), tax rates rationalised

Coal and mineral: * To introduce commercial mining in coal sector * Entry norms to be liberalized, nearly 50 blocks to be offered immediately * Coal Gasification / Liquefaction to be incentivised through rebate in revenue share * Rs 50,000 crore earmarked for infrastructure development in coal sector * Coal Bed Methane (CBM) extraction rights to be auctioned from Coal India's mines * To introduce seamless composite exploration-cum-mining-cum-production regime in minerals sector, 500 mining blocks to be auctioned * Introduce joint auction of bauxite and coal mineral blocks * To rationalise stamp duty payable at the time of award of min-

ing lease

Power Distribution: * To bring out reform in tariff policy, privatise Discoms in Union Territories

Social Infrastructure: * Govt's share in viability gap funding for development of social infrastructure, including hospitals, hiked to 30 per cent from 20 per cent, total outlay Rs 8,100 crore

Space: * To allow private sector companies in satellites, launches and space-based services * Private sector will be allowed to use ISRO facilities and other relevant assets to improve their capacities

Atomic Energy: * To set up a research reactor in PPP mode for the production of medical isotopes to help make available affordable treatment for cancer and other diseases * Establish facilities in PPP mode to use irradiation technology for food preservation to complement agricultural reforms and assist farmers.

SRMJEEE BTech dates announced

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 MAY:

The SRM Joint Entrance Examination Engineering SRMJEEE (BTech) 2020 will be held in 127 Indian cities and 5 abroad: Dubai, Doha, Muscat, Bahrain and Kuwait from 30 July to 04 Aug, 2020, a press release informs.

The eagerly awaited exam expected to enable an overwhelming 1.75 lakhs candidates to participate and aspire to gain entry into India's premium Top No.1 multi-stream university.

The test will be computer based of 2 hours and 30 minutes duration, with 125 MCQs and no negative marking. The questions will be drawn from Mathematics or Biology, Physics, Chemistry, English, together with an Aptitude test. With two sessions each day, candidates can select the exam date, session and choice of centre. Candidates will be able to download the hall ticket in the 3rd week of July 2020.

SRMJEEE is common entrance examination for the coveted BTech programs for entry into all the campuses of SRM Institute of Science and

Technology (earlier SRM University) located at Kattankulathur (Main Campus), Vadapalani, Ramapuram, and Delhi-NCR; SRM University, AP-Andhra Pradesh ; SRM University, Sonapat-Haryana and SRM University, Sikkim. The joint Counseling is slated to be held in the 2nd or 3rd week of August, 2020. The students will be chosen based on their SRMJEEE rank.

Due to the lockdown, the last date for applying has also been extended.

SRM will conduct the exam in a safe and secure manner, following all State regulations on social distancing, sanitation, cleanliness, etc.

This year SRMIST achieved a record 8500+ Job Offers with a top salary of Rs. 41.6 L, the highest ever by any university. Around 625+ companies, visit SRMIST every year to place its students in well-known companies. The university offers an incredible range of scholarship to the tune of Rs. 32 Crores making studying in the university affordable to all.

For more details, aspirants are requested to visit www.srmist.edu.in.

Stop acting...

in a crisis, he said it is heart breaking to see millions of our people walking on the highways with no food, no water. "I don't want to make a political statement, but, I have a serious reservation about the nature of the package that the government has given and I would like the government to reconsider. It is good that they have taken this step. It is not a bad step, but, the most important thing right now, is that we put money directly into the hands of our poor people," he said.

He also said the government should not worry about what the foreign agencies are going to say, but should have faith in our small and medium businesses and in our people, farmers, workers who are walking on the streets and immediately give them money in their pockets, without a single thought.

"If we do not support our small businesses now, our farmers and our migrants now, our economy will not start. If our economy does not start, the question of ratings does not arise. So, I would like to ask the government and, with all respect, I would like to ask the prime minister to think about putting money directly into the bank accounts of our people," he said.

Gandhi urged the prime minister to at least temporarily, if not permanently, implement an idea like the Nyuntam Aay Yojna (minimum income scheme) by giving money directly in the hands of the poor and vulnerable.

"Because if we do not, we will have a catastrophic result. What is going to come, if we do not do that, it is going to be much worse than what we have seen. It is going to overshadow the disease of COVID," he said.

He said 52 days have passed since India was put under lockdown, but while the nation is fighting COVID-19, our farmers, migrant labourers, shopkeepers, salaried classes and small and medium industries are facing an unprecedented economic crisis. Emphasizing on the need for an exhaustive economic package for all sections of society, he said though the prime minister belatedly announced a stimulus package on May 12, 2020, its details are not yet clear to the public and are rather opaque.

The Finance Minister's daily press conferences on the issue are only adding to the confusion, making India increasingly sceptical and restless, he said.

Gandhi said while farmers are suffering, the government's apathy can also be seen in how country's MSMEs that create over 11 crore jobs, are being treated. Instead of concrete financial relief, the government has offered them loans, driving them into a debt trap from which many will never exit, he said, adding that small traders, shopkeepers, salaried middle class, government employees and pensioners are waiting for concrete steps from the government to help them tide over these difficult times.

The former Congress chief said the party after a consultative process has made some recommendations for the stimulus package and it is still not too late for it to seriously consider them.

These include income support to 13 crore poorest households by transferring Rs 7,500 preferably to each household, besides doubling the days under MGNREGA from the current 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to 200 days, ensuring food security for even the 11 crore people currently outside PDS by providing them with free ration for six months and Rs 10,000 as urgent income support to each of the 8.22 crore PM Kisan Yojana accounts, he said.

KUTSE SHEGU

The kutse Shegu of Late Bhaichung Bhutia of Upper Chandmari below Enchey Monastery

TV. Tower "Vinakay Mission Hostel" who left for his heavenly abode on 2nd April 2020 falls on 20th May 2020. Due to the current COVID 19 situation and social distancing norms, the bereaved family would like to request all the family, friends and well wishers to pray for the departed soul in their own homes.



Chungden Bhutia (Wife)

6294475441

N.T Bhutia (Father-in-law)

9775821266

Tashi Tshering Bhutia (Brother)

6099850653/8918590228

Laden Bhutia (Sister in law)

9593785714/8918059921

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GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 27 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Road-side just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501, 62970-03235, 98320-48410

[The writer teaches at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati]

The Floral Connection of South Sikkim

NAMCHI, 15 MAY (IPR): For most people flowers symbolise hope, love, compassion, courage and many more but for floriculturist flowers are a source of livelihood. Presently the whole country is facing nationwide lockdown to combat COVID-19 resulting in the loss of income for these floriculturists as they mostly rely on export of flowers to various domestic and international markets for which smooth transportation is a must.

Similarly flower farmers of South District grow a variety of blooms depending on its altitude. Keeping this in mind, flowers such as Gerbera and Anthurium requires relatively warm temperature and are cultivated at Kamrang, Melli Dara-Paiyong, Turuk, Kateng-Bokrong, Sumbuk and in areas which falls under the warmer clusters. As for Alstroemeria, Cymbidium and Carnation it requires relatively cool weather hence they are raised at middle and high altitude areas like Tinzir, Sadam Gupta, Simkharka, Nagi-Karek, Kabrey and Jaubari. Liliun flower can be grown in both

lower and higher altitude but the main season of production varies which is highly determined by the kind of altitude that these flowers are raised.

Amongst many gardeners of the district is one HB Pradhan owner of Flora Nursery from Sadam. He has been a floriculturist since the early 90's. He says that in a normal year, his flowers fetches him a couple of lakhs and it reaches places like Assam, West Bengal, Bhutan and many other locations but due to this year's lockdown flower business has gone towards a downward spiral and that he has not even earned half of what he usually earns.

Likewise thirty-eight year old Naren Rai from Tinzir Namchi has been a nurseryman for a long time and in the year 2019 he ventured into orchid farming after taking loan. He tied up with Mainam Garden and various other floral business to supply his orchid produce but this year trade has been gloomy due to COVID-19.

Now, looking at the challenging scenario of flower growers and their blossoms South Horticulture Department has

been working on a fool-proof strategy as there are more than 40 flower farmers whose produce has been severely impacted by COVID-19. Firstly a team of floriculture officials inspect the flower farm after which they assessed the loss particularly of cut flowers namely Gerbera, Carnation, Anthurium, Astroemeria and Cymbidium. The department has also devised an effective marketing channel with M/S Mevedir, which runs a cold storage at Melli on contract agreement. M/S Mevedir has been procuring cut flowers from the farmers and selling it in the markets so that the flower growers do not face huge losses. These affected farmers will also be provided with financial assistance as appraised by the departmental officials. Apart from this, the officials has also utilised local shops to store the cut flower in order to sell it. These kind of sales are being practised at Melli Dara -Paiyong and Namchi area. Moreover one can also buy flowers from Sikkim State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation

Ltd. (SIMFED) outlet in Namchi and Horticulture Office in District Administrative Centre, South.

The Horticulture Department has also collaborated with Mission For Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)-Area Expansion Programme and North East Council- Turnkey which is a centrally sponsored scheme. MIDH provides a holistic and co-ordinated avenue for farmers in developing their produce. Under MIDH the department focus on cut flowers of Gerbera, Carnation, Astroemeria, Liliun, Anthurium and Cymbidium.

Both HB and Naren says that the spring and summer flowers has wilted and spoiled as there has been a decrease in demand from various areas as functions and events namely that of marriages, engagement and other social gatherings where flowers are used in a bountiful manner has ceased for the time being. They said that during these testing times, Facebook and other social media platform has been a huge boon for them as they shared photographs of the seasonal

flowers wherein many people were updated and informed about it. While many of them have requested to purchase the flowers but due to transportation problem they couldn't sent their supplies. Meanwhile, officials from South Horticulture Department have extensively help them in mitigating the transport and in vending of the cut flowers.

However, both HB and Naren are of the opinion that the department should give the flowers growers a training on the use of various social media platforms for virtual marketing of the flowers so that they can directly get in touch with the customers, exporters and many more. They are already in contact with a number of persons who are into floriculture business nevertheless; they said that this crises can only be sought through the collective and co-operative measures between the department officials, flower growers, as well as small and big scale entrepreneurs. At present HB and Naren are preparing in cultivating of blooms for the upcoming season.

Commercial mining of coal on revenue share basis: FM

New Delhi, May 16 (PTI): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday announced commercial mining of coal by the private sector, ending government monopoly in the sector.

In her fourth tranche of the economic package, she said commercial mining will be done on revenue sharing mechanism instead of the regime of fixed rupee/tonne.

The move will bring competition, transparency and private sector participation in the coal sector.

"Commercial mining of coal on a revenue-sharing basis would help more coal availability at market prices. So this will be far more efficient... Liberalised entry to allow people to participate for a range of coal blocks and those who produce well before the deadlines incentive would also be given," the finance minister said.

Earlier, only captive consumers with end-use ownership could have participated in the bidding. But now any party can bid for a coal block and sell it in the open market.

Stating that entry norms would be liberalised, the minister said that nearly 50 blocks will be offered immediately for the bidding, she said.

This is being done to reduce import of substitutable coal and increase self-reliance in coal production, the government said.

"India which has the third-largest valued coal availability in its existing and untapped mines and we still import coal. Sometimes the energy sector suffers because of non-availability of raw material so the regulations are required. Regulations are required when there is shortage. This

country has abundant coal and we are regulating it," she said.

Against the earlier provision of the auction of fully explored coal blocks, now even partially explored mines will be auctioned, a move that will allow the private sector participation in exploration.

Also, the government will invest Rs 50,000 crore for building evacuation infrastructure.

The minister said that "Rs 50,000 crore will be spent by the Government of India for creating evacuation infrastructure...Rs 50,000 crore is given to ensure that evacuation infrastructure is provided."

The move will help in evacuation of coal by Coal India which is targeting one billion tonnes of production by 2023-24 as well as fuel production from private blocks.

The sum of Rs 50,000 crore also includes "Rs 18,000 crore worth of investment in mechanised transfer of coal (conveyer belts) from mines to railway sidings," the minister said adding that the measure will also help reduce environmental impact.

Coal gasification and liquefaction will be incentivised through rebate in revenue sharing, the minister said adding coal bed methane (CBM) production would also be encouraged.

"In order to convert coal into gas we are providing incentives...Incentives so that the coal also be used and environmental commitment is honoured and we benefit from gasification of coal," the finance minister said.

Coal bed methane (CBM) extraction rights will be auctioned from Coal India Ltd mines.

Tourism organizations submit proposals and suggestions to Govt



SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:

Tourism is one of the badly hit sectors in the State due to the nationwide lockdown and tourism stakeholders of the State have estimated loss of more than Rs 650 crore to the people involved in different activities in tourism sector during the three months of April, May and June.

To address this different organisations of tourism stakeholders of Sikkim have come together to support the people in tourism sector and to revive tourism activities gradually in the State.

They have also prepared a set of standard operating procedures and draft resolutions regarding various issues and loss due to lockdown. They have submitted a proposal and suggestions to help out tourism stakeholders to the Additional Chief Secretary of Tourism Department.

Regarding the same, Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association [SHRA] president, Roshan Raj Shrestha, a representa-

tive of CII Sikkim Chapter, Sony Virdi and Travel Agents Association of Sikkim [TAAS] general secretary, Yangchen Tongden Lepcha addressed a press conference here on Friday.

"So, after research, interaction and brainstorm sessions for around 20 days, we came up with SOPs to be followed after the opening of restaurants, fast food and other tourism activities in the State. We have also submitted proposals and suggestions to support people in the tourism sector and help them recover their losses," said Mr Shrestha.

Mr Shrestha mentioned that homestays, hotels and taxi operators were more vulnerable and badly hit during this lockdown.

He mentioned that most of the people in tourism sector have taken loans so the state government must appeal to the Centre to waive off interest on loans taken from nationalised banks for this year. He added that all were collateral loans taken by mortgaging properties so they

cannot avoid repayment of the loan.

He also suggested that loan moratorium be increased for further six months to one year. For those stakeholders who have to pay monthly EMIs of their vehicles, the government can explore options so they can pay from next year onwards.

A representative of CII Sikkim Chapter, Sony Virdi stated that they have worked on immediate and current strategies and future demands to support tourism sector in the State.

"We will be the first State in the country to resume tourism activities as SOPs are ready and we will be the safest State in India and tourist do not need to worry," he said.

He also mentioned that the work to develop a mobile app for the tourists coming to the State is in process to ensure safe tourism in the State.

Likewise, TAAS general secretary, Ms Lepcha expressed hope that the state government would support tour operators in the State.

CM's State Day Message

GANGTOK, 15 MAY (IPR): Chief Minister, PS Tamang has extended his warm greetings on the occasion of State Day 2020.

In his message the CM has said, "On the auspicious occasion of State Day 2020, I extend my heartiest greetings to all the Sikkimese people.

Today is the day, the people of Sikkim, opted for democracy. From that day onwards Sikkimese people have contributed to the development, prosperity and integrated with a deep bond with the country.

Sikkim has made great strides in the last 45 years and can stand proudly on the map of the country by carrying a divine identity in the vast country of India. Likewise, I would like to express my special gratitude to all the esteemed Governors who have supported the development of Sikkim.

On this occasion, I would like to reiterate our commitment to the integration of our culture, heritage, traditional practices, ethos of oneness as well as improving the living standards of our citizens. With this goal in view, my party, having taken over the reins of the government, shall march forward to restore and rekindle the torch of true democracy. Towards this end, together we

shall resolve to overcome all obstacles to reach new heights of a transparent government with priorities for good education and health which are technology-driven.

This being a long process which requires diligence, I call upon all for support in the hope to provide timely opportunities for youth, socio-economic parity for women, the time-based education system for students, ease of doing business, technical and financial assistance to farmers, citizen-centric government, fear-free environment for press and media, respect for intellectual civil society.

The immediate challenge that is facing us and the world is the COVID-19 which has fazed many a mighty country. I salute all our frontline warriors who have managed to stave off the disease till date. The generosity of the people in this hour of need is unprecedented. Such a possibility could ensue only through wholehearted sincere cooperation amongst us and faith in each other.

Today, on the occasion of the State Day and by the grace of Providence, I declare our determination to achieve the goal of "CHANGE" that my Party has envisaged and overcome the imminent difficulties to keep Sikkim safe."

700 'super spreaders' found coronavirus positive in week

AHMEDABAD, MAY 16

(PTI): At least 700 "super spreaders" were found coronavirus positive in Ahmedabad in a massive screening of vegetable sellers and shopkeepers conducted in a week after officials had ordered closure of shops, except those selling milk and medicines, between May 7 and 14, a senior bureaucrat said on Saturday.

"Super-spreaders" are potential carriers of the viral infection who could infect a large number of people coming in their contact.

They could be vegetable vendors, grocery and

milk shop owners, petrol pump attendants or garbage collectors, who by the nature of their job carry the risk of contracting and spreading the viral infection.

"About 33,500 super spreaders were screened and 12,500 (of them) tested for coronavirus infection over the last one week. Of them, 700 tested positive and were isolated," said Additional Chief Secretary Rajiv Gupta, who has been appointed to oversee works related to COVID-19 in Ahmedabad.

Shops selling essential items reopened from May 15 on certain con-

ditions in Ahmedabad which had been under a complete lockdown since May 7.

"Even as grocery shops and vegetable vendors were allowed to resume their business from May 15, provided they carried health screening cards, at least 700 'super spreaders' were isolated after around 12,500 people were tested for coornavirusinfection in a week-long exercise," a senior official said.


Before that about 350 "super spreaders" were detected to have contracted the viral infection in a campaign launched on April 20.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #ff4500; color: white; margin: 0;">Symptoms of nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #ff4500; color: white; margin: 0;">Precautions to Prevent nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #008000; color: white; margin: 0;">Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7029372100</p> <p>WEST : 9593297809</p> <p>NORTH : 9641957468</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407691463</p> <p>New STNM</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p> </div> </div>

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Focus Will Not be Wasted on the Youth

Sikkim has a very young population – inform them better so that they care

Over fifty per cent of Sikkim's population is in the most productive age-group of 10 to 35 years. Despite more than half of Sikkim made up of the young, there does not appear to be much youthful exuberance in the State. Disenchantment, pessimism and opportunism are behavioural traits that one normally associates with those who have been around for slightly more time than the under-35 that we are speaking of here.

Agreed, 10 to 35 is a very wide spectrum for an age-group, but we take it here because this is the span during which people are learning or have begun putting their learning to use. After this, they start stagnating if the younger years have not instilled them with a passion to get excited. Take a look around, at the community level, there is very little that this age-group is doing to get noticed and make a difference. Even the rebellious streak that is so marked in these years is sorely missing. This age-group needs to get stimulated. They have to start getting involved in the workings of the State that they will inherit soon. It would not be a bad idea to force them to get involved. The elder generation is too out of sync with the needs and aspirations of the young and the connection has to be restored. What the present generation in control prioritizes is lost on the young. Sample this – 67.42% of the current population of Sikkim is what can be called the post-Merger/ Annexation generation, having been born or settled in Sikkim after 1975. While this data cannot be interpreted to mean that this segment does not care as much for the political issues of 1975 vintage as the political noise would have one believe, what it does bear out is that a huge majority of Sikkim might not know what is being discussed. Accept it, no one – no leader and surely no academics thus far – have made any genuine efforts to explain the history or socio-political developments of Sikkim to its young. What they peddle in is a colored to suit their position narrative of Sikkim's issues, and that is cannot end too well. But the young, it needs to also be recognised, are showing an interest to 'know'. It would serve Sikkim well to inform them better and let them do their own interpretations and work out their own solutions.

It also makes political sense to get a grip on the priorities that the young hold dear. The under-40 year old age-group constitutes more than 35% of the electorate. Since they constitute a substantial vote-bank, it is important that they start understanding and caring for Sikkim. It is equally important that they start getting understood first. This is an age-group, which, as much as it is interested in history and Sikkim past – both remote and recent – also wants a future. This is also an age-group that has received better education and seen more of the world and can hence be trusted to intelligently weigh options, sift the rhetoric from real commitments and hopefully grow away from caste and community divides. They can also influence their elders and infect them with their hopes and aspirations. Whichever party touches a chord with them is assured to well. And Sikkim has already seen the reasonable success of this approach in how the Opposition did better than most past elections in Sikkim in 2014 and was then rewarded with the keys to the Government in 2019.

improve, not through the applause or

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COVID-19 has blown away the myth about 'First' and 'Third' world competence

STEVEN FRIEDMAN
theconversation.com

One of the planet's – and Africa's – deepest prejudices is being demolished by the way countries handle COVID-19.

For as long as any of us remember, everyone "knew" that "First World" countries – in effect, Western Europe and North America – were much better at providing their citizens with a good life than the poor and incapable states of the "Third World". "First World" has become shorthand for competence, sophistication and the highest political and economic standards.

So deep-rooted is this that even critics of the "First World" usually accept it. They might argue that it became that way by exploiting the rest of the world or that it is not morally or culturally superior. But they never question that it knows how to offer (some) people a better material life. Africans and others in the "Third World" often aspire to become like the "First World" – and to live in it, because that means living better.

So we should have expected the state-of-the-art health systems of the "First World", spurred on by their aware and empowered citizens, to handle COVID-19 with relative ease, leaving the rest of the planet to endure the horror of buckling health systems and mass graves.

We have seen precisely the opposite.
FATAL ERRORS

"First World" is often code for countries run by Europeans or people of European descent; some of the worst health performers on the globe in recent weeks have been "First World". For Anglophone Africans, it is doubly interesting that two of the greatest failures in handling COVID-19 are the former coloniser, Britain, and the English-speaking superpower, the United States of America.

Both countries' national governments have made just about every possible mistake in tackling COVID-19.

They ignored the threat. When they were forced to act, they sent mixed signals to citizens which encouraged many to act in ways which spread the infection. Neither did anything like the testing needed to control the virus. Both failed to equip their hospitals and health workers with the equipment they needed, triggering many avoidable deaths.

The failure was political. The US is the only rich country with no national health system. An

attempt by former president Barack Obama to extend affordable care was watered down by right-wing resistance, then further gutted by the current president and his party. Britain's much-loved National Health Service has been weakened by spending cuts. Both governments failed to fight the virus in time because they had other priorities.

And yet, in Britain, the government's popularity ratings are sky high and it is expected to win the next election comfortably. The US president is behind in the polls but the contest is close enough to make his re-election a real possibility. Can there be anything more typically "Third World" than citizens supporting a government whose actions cost thousands of lives?

Western European countries such as Spain, Italy and Africa's other wholesale coloniser, France, also battled to contain the virus. Some European countries have coped reasonably well, as have some run by the descendants of Europeans such as New Zealand and Australia. But the star performers are not in the historical "First World".

EFFECTIVE RESPONSES

The most effective response was probably South Korea's, followed by other East Asian states and territories. This is partly because they are used to dealing with coronavirus outbreaks. But it is also because they learned from experience: South Korea's success is due to very effective testing and tracing of infected people. Whatever the reason, it is East Asia, not "the West", which has done what the "First World" is expected to do.

Some would reply that East Asia is now "First World". So, it is still superior; it has simply changed its address. This is debatable. But, even if it is accepted, some places have contained the virus in distinctly "Third World" conditions.

Kerala was the first Indian state to encounter the virus but has kept deaths down to three. It had largely curbed COVID-19 but is now dealing with nearly 200 cases, all people arriving from other parts of India. Judging by its record so far, it will contain this outbreak too.

Kerala, too, has learnt from handling previous epidemics. It also has a strong health system. But one of its key tools is citizen participation: it has worked with neighbourhood watches and citizen volunteers to track the contacts of infected people. Students were recruited to build kiosks at which citizens were tested. Kerala also had the capacity to ensure that all children entitled to school meals

received them after schools were closed: non-governmental organisations were mostly responsible, emphasising the partnership between the government and citizens.

Kerala's performance is not a fluke: it has, for years, produced better health outcomes and literacy rates than the rest of India.

Nor has Africa's response to the virus confirmed prejudices. When COVID-19 began spreading, it became almost routine for reports, commentaries – and Melinda Gates, who, with her husband Bill, heads the couple's development foundation – to predict that Africa would be engulfed in death as the virus ripped through its weak health systems. This is, after all, what is meant to happen in the "Third World" and particularly in Africa, which is always considered the least capable continent on the planet.

So far, it has not happened. It still might but, even if it does, some countries are coping better than the dire predictions claimed (and, perhaps, better than the "First World"). One stand-out is Senegal, which has devised a cheap test for the virus and has used 3-D printing to produce ventilators at a fraction of the going price. Africa, too, has experienced recent outbreaks, notably of Ebola, and seems to have learned valuable lessons from them.

INSPIRING

The "First World" is still far richer than the rest of the planet and may well remain so. So its politicians, academics and journalists will probably still believe they are better than the rest.

But the COVID-19 experience may just trigger new thinking in the "Third World". The most basic function of a government is to protect the safety of its citizens. Ensuring that people remain healthy is at least as important a guarantee of safety as protecting them from violence.

Reasonable people would surely much rather be living in Kerala or Senegal (or East Asia) right now than in Europe and North America, raising obvious questions about who really does offer a better life.

That should inspire Africans and others in the "Third World" to ask themselves whether it makes sense to want to be America, Britain or France. COVID-19 has made a strong argument for wanting to be East Asia – or, given Africa's circumstances, Kerala.

[the writer is Professor of Political Studies, University of Johannesburg]

Gay Korea: homophobia sparked by Seoul coronavirus cluster driven by Protestant right

SINI-PETRIINA KLASTO
& ALLAN C SIMPSON
theconversation.com

The Korean LGBTQ+ community knew to prepare for an anti-gay onslaught after it emerged that a person with an asymptomatic COVID-19 infection had been partying in Itaewon, a gay nightlife district in the South Korean capital, Seoul. The community is used to being shamed for just living their lives or blamed for spreading disease.

While Seoul's Jongno district caters particularly for gay men in the form of restaurants and bars, Itaewon offers a convenient concentration of gay clubs and dancehalls. The story of COVID-19 infections in Itaewon originated from King Club, which posted on social media on May 7 that a customer had been diagnosed with COVID-19 and that the venue had been disinfected.

News of at least 100 other infections linked to the nightclub then sparked a homophobic backlash against the LGBTQ+ community, feeding into a long history of stigma driven by the country's Protestant right.

QUEER SEOUL

Being a sexual minority in Korea is not illegal, and transgender people are able to transition. But there is

no recognition of same-sex partnerships (marriage or otherwise) and the absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation means that the rights of sexual minorities are largely unprotected.

Both gay men and trans-people continue to experience discrimination in the military, and anal sex between military personnel can be prosecuted and lead up to two years in prison. This is a big problem in a country with mandatory conscription.

Still, in many respects LGBTQ+ people are able to live with relative freedom. Locations and events all over Seoul cater for the community. There are queer theatre groups and bookstores, queer sex-toy shops, restaurants and cafes – some of them officially gay, others unofficially so.

Seoul holds an annual Queer Pride parade and two queer-themed film festivals. All of this is possible thanks to the numerous activist groups and organisations, the oldest of which date back to the late 1980s.

There are dating apps, websites and online "cafes" that are extremely popular and not as censored or dangerous to use as in some other parts of the world. As a result, while some LGBTQ+ individuals choose not to "come out" to their families, others do. Simultaneously there is a senti-

ment among the community that a western practice of coming out might be unnecessary, that queerness and family can be negotiated differently.

Outside of the Korean LGBTQ+ bubble, there is a widespread belief, embedded into the understanding of the heterosexual general public that homosexuality does not exist in Korea. Or if it does, not in large numbers. LGBTQ+ activists work relentlessly to change this view and fight for their rights. However, achieving tangible results is slow. Mainly because they are fighting against a formidable force of conservative Christians.

ROLE OF THE PROTESTANT RIGHT

Korea's LGBTQ+ community is still actively being accused of spreading AIDS and endangering the Korean nation. This toxic narrative is propagated by the Korean Protestant right, a subset of Protestant Christianity that combines conservative evangelical theology with social and political conservatism.

An estimation of the Protestant right's size can be seen in the Christian Council of Korea, the largest Protestant Christian alliance with reportedly more than 12 million members. Since 2015, it has organised large anti-gay rallies all over the country and succeeded in blocking proposals

for anti-discrimination legislation in 2007, 2011 and 2013.

BLAMED FOR CORONAVIRUS

In this context, it's not surprising that the Protestant right would replace HIV with COVID-19, when presented with the opportunity.

When the King Club announced on social media that one of its customers had been diagnosed with COVID-19, the news was picked up by Kukmin Daily, a local paper with links to Protestant churches. Soon after its publication, Kukmin Daily's article was distributed by other media, sparking a homophobic backlash online against the queer community.

As it stands, for gay men in particular, getting tested for COVID-19 in Seoul risks being outed. To be outed risks losing jobs, friends, even family.

Despite South Korea's conservative values, under normal circumstances sexual minorities would be able to access healthcare like any other citizen. Now, due to the media frenzy, they face a choice between risking their health versus everything else.

[Sini-Petriina Klasto is PhD Candidate, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield; Allan C Simpson is PhD Candidate, Department of East Asian Languages & Culture, SOAS, University of London]

2 more test COVID-19 positive in Assam; cases rise to 91

GUWAHATI, MAY 16 (PTI):

Two more persons tested positive for COVID-19 in Guwahati on Saturday, taking the total number of cases to 91 in Assam, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

A barber and a cart-puller, who tested positive on Saturday, are contacts of the migrant worker who worked in a potato godown and had tested positive on Monday.

Out of the 91 positive cases, 46 are active cases, two persons have died, two migrated and 41 have been discharged from hospitals.

"2 more persons, related to Aloo Godam case, test #COVID19+ in Guwahati," the minister tweeted.

The duo were asymptomatic and have been admitted to Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital.

"To oversee the evacuation of two new #COVID19 positive cases, I went to Kumarpura along with officials. They have been transferred to CH. Both the patients were asymptomatic, and were found through contact tracing. There is no need



to fear," the minister said in another tweet.

Three persons had tested COVID-19 positive on Friday night with one from Sarusajai quarantine facility, another a person in Guwahati Medical College Hospital and the third patient migrated to West Bengal.

Guwahati reported 29 cases since Monday while six cases were reported last week, including a 16-year old girl who was detected to be COVID-19 positive after she passed away.

The highest of 15 cases, all contacts of the migrant worker, were reported on a single day on Wednesday and 340 persons were traced as contacts of these 15 persons. Their sample results are awaited. Seven persons, including three cancer patients, three of their attendants and a 13-year old girl, who underwent a heart surgery recently, tested positive on Thursday. They had returned recently from Mumbai by bus.

The Kamrup (Metro) district administration

has declared several areas, including a bank branch visited by some of the 15 positive persons, in and around the city's commercial hub Fancy Bazaar as containment zone.

Meanwhile, Guwahati Medical College and Hospital, which was closed for new patients after a post-graduate medical student tested positive last week, reopened on Saturday.

The minister said, it resumed operations after 2,200 samples of

doctors, nurses, staff and people in surrounding areas were tested and all except three have tested negative.

Restrictions around two hostels of the GMCH areas which were declared as containment zone have also been lifted, an official said.

In Assam, 28,178 samples have been tested in seven laboratories so far and out of these, 91 are positive, 25,429 were found to be negative and the remaining results are awaited.

Provide PPE to doctors, health workers at quarantine centres: Manipur speaker to govt

IMPHAL, MAY 16 (PTI): Manipur assembly speaker Yumnam Khemchand Singh has urged the state government to provide Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to doctors and health workers deputed at the quarantine centres after a person tested positive for COVID-19 at such a facility.

Speaking to reporters during the opening of a quarantine facility at the Manipur College premises in his Singjamei constituency on Friday, Singh appealed to the people to come forward to help the frontline warriors in this

hour of crisis. Doctors and health workers at quarantine facilities have alleged that they are yet to receive PPE from the government.

"It was like asking the army to fight against an enemy without providing him arms and ammunition," a doctor who did not want to be identified said.

A person, whose mother died due to COVID-19 in Mumbai, tested positive on Thursday while being in isolation at a quarantine centre in Imphal East district after arriving here on May 5, the doctor said.

2 brothers shot dead over land by cop in Bengal

BARRACKPORE (WB), MAY 16 (PTI): Two brothers were shot dead by a police constable, following an altercation over a plot of land in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, officials said on Saturday. The incident happened in Tetulia in the Amdanga police station area on Friday night, they said.

The deceased have been identified as Arup Mondal (30) and Sumanta Mondal (28), police said.

The constable, who

went missing after the incident, was posted as the bodyguard of a senior officer of the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate, they said.

A person was also injured in the firing and he has been admitted to the Barasat State General Hospital, police said.

The two bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination and further investigation is underway, they said, adding that all efforts are being made to nab the accused.

Bihar's COVID-19 tally reaches 1,079 with 46 fresh cases



PATNA, MAY 16 (PTI): Forty-six more people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Bihar, taking the total number of cases in the state to 1,079, a senior health department official said here on Saturday.

Principal Secretary (Health) Sanjay Kumar said these 46 samples tested positive for the virus on Friday.

Among the fresh cases, five have been reported from Patna district where the tally has gone up to 105. While one is a 14-year-old girl from the rural Bakhtiyarpur area, the remaining four are male personnel of the Bihar Military Police's 14th battalion, he said.

The number of BMP-14 personnel, stationed at Khajpura locality in the city, who have been found infected till date has now reached 25.

The chain of infection in the area began with a 32-year-old woman from Bijli Gali by-lane testing positive last month upon being admitted to AIIMS, Patna with breathing trouble.

Within a few days, nearly 20 residents of the by-lane fell prey to the contagion which also spread to nearby localities like Raja Bazar and a slum located close to

the Bihar Public Service Commission office on Bailey Road.

At least five barracks of BMP-14, besides Bijli Gali, the slum close to BPSC and Machhli Gali by-lane in Raja Bazar have been declared as containment zones, Patna District Magistrate Kumar Ravi said, adding that the lockdown is being enforced in the strictest form in these localities.

Seven more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Jamui district, which reported its first case on May 12 and now has altogether 10 patients, the principal secretary said.

Eighteen more cases were reported from Banka district while 10 people tested positive for COVID-19 in Sheikhpura, three in Katihar and two in Aurangabad.

A two-year-old boy tested positive for COVID-19 in Munger district which accounts for the maximum number of 123 confirmed cases.

All the 38 districts in the state have been affected by the pandemic and those with a high incidence also include Rohas (77), Kaimur (66) and Buxar (59).

The number of cases in Bihar has risen sharply

since the beginning of the month, mainly because of migrants returning to their native places in large numbers by special trains in addition to other modes of transport.

According to the state health department, 427 migrants arriving since May 4 have tested positive for COVID-9. Most of them had come from Delhi (112), Gujarat (106) and Maharashtra (97).

Close to three lakh migrants have returned to the state from other parts of the country in 'Shramik Special' trains while the total number, including those coming by buses, trucks, bicycles and on foot, is estimated to be in excess of a million.

Till date, 44,398 samples have been tested in the state and efforts were on to enhance the testing capacity drastically to contain the infection. At present, testing of samples is held at four places in Patna and one each in Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Bhagalpur.

The rate of testing was adversely affected because the testing facility at Bhagalpur ran short of cartridges on Friday, though the principal secretary said replenishment will be ensured at the earliest.

Centre's 'botched up lockdown' responsible for deaths of migrant workers: TMC

KOLKATA, MAY 16 (PTI): The Trinamool Congress on Saturday slammed the Centre over the death of 24 migrant workers in an accident in Uttar Pradesh and blamed its "botched up lockdown" and "arrogant" approach for the suffering of lakhs of them across the country.

The migrant workers were killed and 36 injured when a trailer rammed into a stationary truck, both carrying passengers, on a highway near Uttar Pradesh's Auraiya district early this morning, police said.

The impact of the collision, the latest in a series of road tragedies involving migrant workers returning to their villages, was so huge that both vehicles overturned and fell into a ditch.

The Centre should have ensured that the migrant workers return home safely but instead, it is busy blaming the state governments, TMC MP Sougata Roy said.

The Centre's sudden decision to announce the lockdown has led to such a mess and every day there are reports of migrants getting killed in accidents or committing suicide, Roy said. The TMC-led West Bengal dispensation, which has been under fire from the Centre for not doing enough to bring back its migrant workers, blamed the central government's "lack of farsightedness" for the migrant crisis in the country.

Senior party leader and MP Abhishek Banerjee said in a tweet, "The

painful loss of lives of #MigrantWorkers forced to take desperate measures to return to their native places is a result of a botched up lockdown led by an arrogant and insensitive Govt that fails even to take cognisance of the existence & suffering of millions."

Rendered jobless due to the coronavirus-induced nationwide lockdown, which began on March 25, and desperate to get home, migrant workers across the country are undertaking long and arduous journeys to their native places on foot, on bicycles or packed into trucks.

Over the past few days, many have been killed in accidents in different parts of the country.

Distribute free ration to 8 cr migrants within 15 days: Centre to States

NEW DELHI, MAY 16 (PTI): As hundreds of migrants continue to travel a long distance in this COVID-19 crisis, Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Saturday appealed to state governments to immediately lift food grains and pulses from the godowns and distribute them for free within a fortnight to 8 crore migrants who neither have centre nor state ration card.

According to the Food Ministry, about 142 lakh migrants will benefit in Uttar Pradesh and in Bihar (86.45 lakh), Maharashtra (70 lakh), West Bengal (60.1 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (54.64 lakh), Rajasthan (44.66 lakh), Karnataka (40.19 lakh), Gujarat (38.25 lakh), Tamil Nadu (35.73 lakh), Jharkhand (26.37 lakh), Andhra Pradesh (26.82 lakh) and Assam (25.15 lakh).

In the national capital, about 7.27 lakh migrants will get free 5 kg food grains per person and 1 kg chana per family for May and June.

"If the number of migrants exceeds the current estimation of 8 crore, the Centre is ready to provide additional grains for free supply but the identified person should be genuine which state governments have to validate," Paswan told the media via video conference here.

The allocation has been made considering 10 per cent of the existing 81 crore beneficiaries under the NFSA (National Food Security Act).

The free food distribution to 8 crore migrants for two months was announced by the Centre on May 14 as part of an economic package to help those who bore the brunt of the clampdown to fight the COVID-19 crisis. The centre will bear the cost of this intervention, estimated at Rs 3,500 crore.

"This decision is in the interest of migrants. Congress may say give more quantity of foodgrains for free. The NFSA, under which 5 kg per person subsidised grain is given to 81 crore through PDS, was framed during the UPA time. But, the Modi government is doing maximum. This is not the end of all. The Prime Minister is sensitive and aware of the situation," Paswan noted.

Paswan, an NDA ally, further said his ministry has made all arrangements for distribution of free ration to migrants, but the state governments which have to implement at the ground level, have to be proactive and lift the ration from godowns and begin distribution immediately.

An allocation of 7.99 lakh tonne of foodgrains has been made for distribution for two months for free. Of which, the maximum would be rice 6.95 lakh tonne which would be easy for migrants to consume, while the rest 1.04 lakh tonne is wheat, he said.

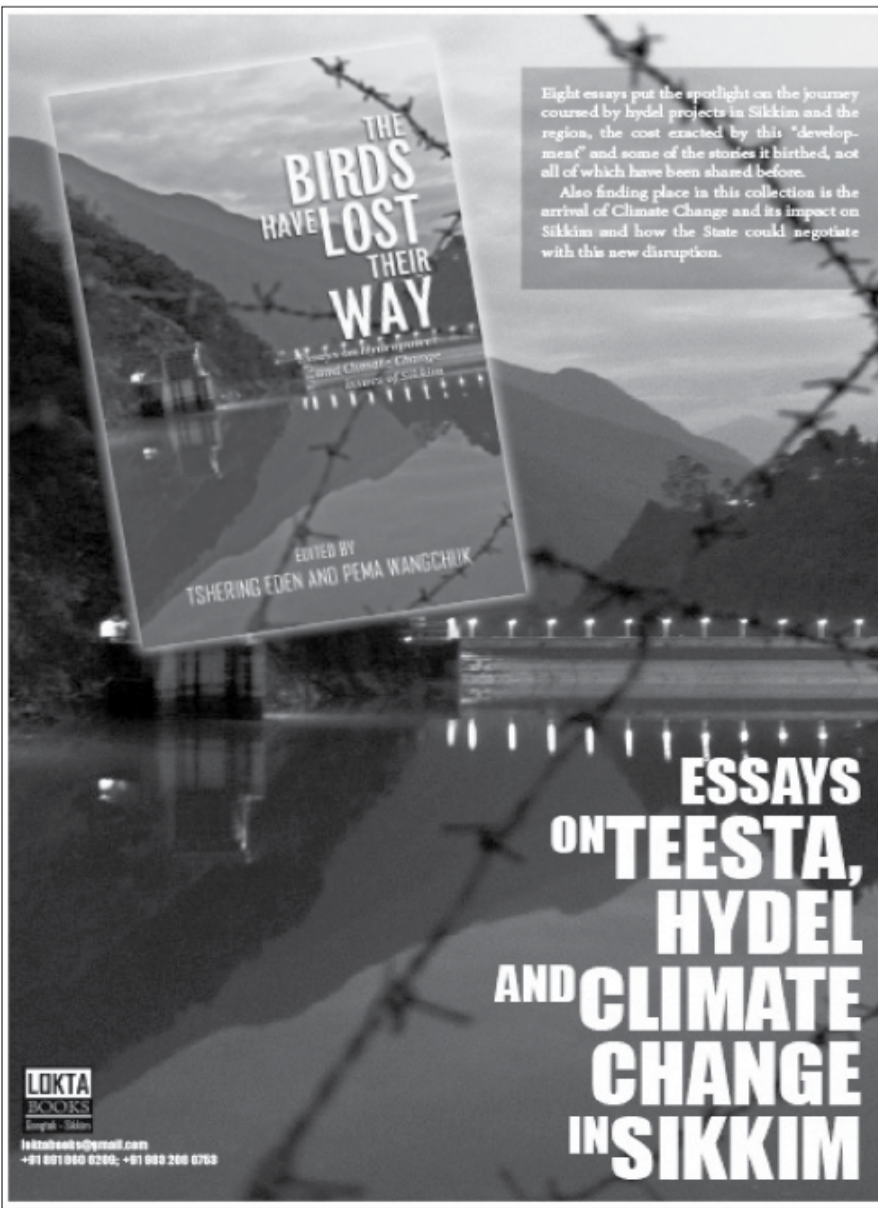
"Now also, many migrants are returning home by walking. It is a difficult situation. Some have died on the way. They are covering long distances on foot. It hurts looking at their plight" he added.

The priority now is to ensure migrants do not go hungry. Therefore, the Centre is not insisting states give details of migrant beneficiaries for availing free ration. They can provide after two months but they have to keep the data for accountability sake, he added.

According to the Food Ministry, both rice and wheat have been allocated to Delhi and Gujarat, only wheat to Rajasthan, Punjab and Chandigarh, while rice to rest of the states and union territories.

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Messi says pandemic stoppage can benefit Barcelona

BARCELONA, MAY 16 (AP): Lionel Messi believes the long break caused by the coronavirus pandemic will be a boon for Barcelona.

Maybe this stoppage will end up benefiting us, but we will have to see if we are restarting the competitions and then we will know the truth, Messi told Spanish sports daily Sport on Friday.

Barcelona and Spain's soccer leagues have not played since March 12, when La Liga halted action as the country's COVID-19 virus outbreak picked up speed. More than 27,000 Spaniards are known to have died from the disease.

Messi did not cite his reason for thinking the stoppage would be good for Barcelona, but the return of strike partner Luis Suarez from injury is surely one, and resetting another.

Another boost could be more rest. Barcelona has suffered big losses in key matches in the Champions League in the last three seasons, including last season's 4-0 debacle at Liverpool in the semifinals. In those matches it appeared that Barcelona was worn down by a long season.

When played was stopped in March, Barcelona was leading the Liga by two points over Real Madrid. It was also in the round-of-16 of the Champions League.

It has, however, been a rocky season for Barcelona. Besides public spats between club officials and players over their inconsistent play, the club also made a rare in-season coaching change when it fired Ernesto Valverde and replaced him with Quique Seti n.

Barcelona struggled to adapt to Seti n's playing style, whose emphasis on ball possession and attacking was different from Valverde's more balanced approach. The time off could help the squad and staff work out their differences.

Playing like we did in the matches before play was stopped, we would never win the Champions League, Messi said.

I have no doubts about my teammates and that we can win it all, but not in the way we had been playing.

Teams have recently returned to practice at club facilities, but they are training individually and undergoing tests to make sure there is no spread of the virus.

The Spanish league says it wants to return to playing matches on June 12, but that will depend on the public health situation. As of now, Spain is allowing small gatherings of only up to 10 people in some regions.

Mike Tyson's crazy comeback talk is the perfect lockdown story

BARNEY RONAY LONDON, 16 MAY [THE-GUARDIAN]: Mike Tyson wants to make a comeback. And who can blame him? So do I. So do you. So does the retail industry, going to school, having fun, being a grandparent, having a job and going to the corner shop without standing outside in a face mask looking like a socially awkward moped thief.

In Tyson's case it seems unlikely the comeback talk amounts to a serious plan, at least not one that will extend beyond some kind of hair-spray-and-steroids boxer-tainment. Tyson is 53 years old. No matter how good he looks hitting the pads – and of course he does: this is a man with a kind of magic in his hands – the prospect of anyone that age absorbing heavy-weight punches is pretty grim.

But the Tyson-comeback baloney is also in its own way a perfect lockdown story, an ideal confection of nostalgia and viral oddity – with an eerie synchronicity for anyone who, like me, has spent their confinement watching every single one of Tyson's professional fights in series like a mid-80s soap opera.

Or at least, I've tried to watch the whole thing and failed. Albeit in a way that seems to speak to that fantasy comeback talk. In the event I haven't been able to get past the cold white heat of early Mike: those 21 months that took him from dowdy halls in upstate New York to the Las Vegas Hilton, the total destruction of Trevor Berbick and enthronement as the youngest heavyweight champion of all time.

Has there ever been a run



like this in sport? From March 1985 to November 1986 Tyson fought 28 unbeaten fights, winning 26 by knockout, boxing only 52 completed rounds, and producing a sequence of such clarity, such gathering greatness, it is still startling to watch. When you've touched this ... well, of course some part of you always wants to go back.

What is also striking now is the quiet nobility of his opponents, that run of pressed men and passing ships, wreathed in a fraternal quality of sweat and ring-ritual and squeaky-floored backwoods gyms. Larry Sims in Poughkeepsie, Sammy Scaff at Felt Forum, Steve Zouski at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum – guys with toughness and skill, but also with sagging chests and

floppy guts, a time before abs, before muscle definition – getting in the ring with this force of destiny.

This is the first thing about young Tyson: his physical beauty. He looks, from the start, almost like an embarrassment of human splendour, not only slabbed and ripped, with a back like a sand-smoothed granite cliff face, but toned and balanced and gleaming with potential energy.

The first fight, patient zero, is Hector Mercedes at the Plaza Convention Center in Albany, New York. The two men face up. Tyson throws 16 punches in 10 seconds. Mercedes falls like a Victorian chimney stack. Tyson rushes over and apologises. Next up is Trent Singleton in the same ring, same kit,

same gloomy lighting. Tyson throws two punches. We see that famous left hook for the first time, which is more than Singleton did.

At which point it is worth saying something about The Run. Tyson wasn't fighting cardboard cutouts. The guys were older and more experienced, standard obstacles for a teenage prospect. They just happened to have stepped in front of a talent that is literally impossible to resist, fall guys in one of sport's most brutal and apparently unforeseen sequence of mismatches.

There are still some wonderful highlights. Tyson is thrown in the deep end with Michael Jack Johnson at the Atlantis hotel, a man with a ragged scowl and a run of knockouts. Tyson walks through him like he's a bead

curtain. Next comes a bigger step up against Donny Long, AKA "the master of disaster". Long is cool and good-looking. "I can punch better than Tyson," he schmoozes. "This is a big win to let everyone know Donny Long is back." But Donny Long is not back. He is instead battered through the ropes twice in 30 seconds.

The Guys fight back. James "Quick" Tillis takes Tyson 10 rounds in Glens Falls, New York. But three months and four fights later Tyson has a title shot eliminator with Marvis Frazier, son of Joe. Marvis has an entourage. Marvis looks mean. Marvis is cut down like a dying dandelion. Tyson is in full peak-era black trunks and boots by now. Afterwards, he talks about how he's decided to incorporate

the jab into his style. Lol.

And so to the Vegas Hilton, November 1986. Berbick is the WBC world champion. He's an ordained minister who calls himself the Soldier of the Cross. Later he will be convicted of raping his child's babysitter and end up being brutally murdered outside a church by his nephew. He makes the mistake of going toe to toe with the 20-year-old Tyson. He hits the canvas, leaps up like a madman, but ends up skittering across the ring on elastic legs, the most knocked-out man in the history of being knocked out.

And that was it for The Run. There was still time to beat Michael Spinks in 91 seconds, a career high. But things began to fall apart. There were troubles, excess, bad behaviour. The Buster Douglas defeat came three years later. Six years after Hector Mercedes, Tyson was arrested for rape, convicted, and gone.

There isn't much left to say about this. Tyson has always been a deeply flawed human, and there will always be pain in that, mainly for those on the other end. Watch The Run and there is another kind of sadness in the glory of Young Tyson, who was, or should have been a role model, a hard-working kid from a tough background, a student of his art under Cus D'Amato, funny, smart and courteous, obsessed only with angles and skills and ring craft.

Think of that Tyson now and there is even a doomed kind of glory in that crazy talk of a comeback; in the sight of this aged fighter still hitting a bag, still wanting more, wanting even now to go back.

Djokovic: 'I can beat Slam titles and world number one record'

PARIS, MAY 16 (AFP): Novak Djokovic said he is confident he will end his career as the greatest Grand Slam title winner of all time and break the record for weeks in the world number one spot.

The Serb has 17 majors, three back from the record of Roger Federer's 20 and two behind the 19 of Rafael Nadal.

Before the coronavirus brought the 2020 season to a halt, Djokovic had captured an eighth Australian Open and was on an 18-0 winning streak for the year.

"I think that I still have things to do in this

sport. I believe that I can win the most Slams and break the record for most weeks at No. 1. Those are definitely my clear goals," Djokovic told the 'In Depth with Graham Bensinger' TV show.

Djokovic has been on top of the rankings for a combined total of 282 weeks. Federer leads the way on 310 with the long-retired Pete Sampras on 286.

However, time is comfortably on the side of Djokovic who will celebrate his 33rd birthday on May 22.

Federer will be 39 in August while Nadal turns

34 in June.

Djokovic even sees himself still playing at 40. "I don't believe in limits. I definitely want to go for a long time," he said.

"But I'm aware that the amount of tournaments I'm playing is going to decrease very soon.

"I will not be able to play at this intensity, with this many tournaments and this much travelling, for a long time.

"I might be playing at 40, but then there will probably be a focus on the biggest tournaments and the tournaments that mean the most to me.

65 persons test positive for COVID-19 in Odisha; infection tally rises to 737

BHUBANESWAR, MAY 16 (PTI): Sixty-five people tested positive for COVID-19 in Odisha, taking the total number of such cases in the state to 737, officials said on Saturday.

Jaipur reported 31 fresh cases, Ganjam 13 and Cuttack six. While Kendrapara and Puri reported four cases each, three cases were detected in Khurda and two each in Mayurbhanj and Nayagarh.

Of the new cases, 62 were detected among those in quarantine centres, they said.

Three persons who were in home quarantine also tested positive. One of them had a travel his-

tory to a state worst hit by coronavirus, and the other two came in contact with him.

Sources in the health and family welfare department of the state said a total of 86,140 samples have been tested so far, of which 4,221 were tested on Friday.

Of the 30 districts in Odisha, 21 have so far reported COVID-19 cases.

With the 65 new cases, the total number of COVID-19 cases in the state rose to 737, officials said.

At present, the state has 568 active cases and 166 people have recovered, while three died.

Ganjam in south

Odisha has reported the highest number of cases at 277, followed by Jaipur at 121, Balasore at 102, Khurda (56), Bhadrak (46), Sundergarh and Kendrapara (26 each), Puri (18) and Angul (15), they said.

Eleven cases have been reported from Mayurbhanj, Cuttack (10), Nayagarh (six), Jagatsinghpur (five), and four each in Keonjhar and Boudh districts.

Two cases each have been detected in Bolangir, Deogarh, Kalahandi and Jharsuguda districts, and one each in Koraput and Dhenkanal districts, the officials added.

NFL teams can reopen facilities Tuesday with provisos

Washington, May 16 (AP): NFL teams can begin reopening their facilities on Tuesday if state and local governments will allow it.

In a memo sent to the 32 teams Friday by Commissioner Roger Goodell and obtained by The Associated Press, he stressed that the clubs must be in compliance with any additional public health requirements in their jurisdiction, and have implemented the protocols that were developed by (league medical officer) Dr. (Allen) Sills and distributed to all clubs on May 6.

Facilities have been closed since late March due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Each team was required to submit a plan to the league for reopening its training/practice facility this week.

Clubs unable to meet these criteria on May 19 may reopen their facilities on the earliest date thereafter on which they are able to meet the criteria, Goodell added.

Sills will conduct a training program for club infection control officers (ICO) on Monday night that is required.

Already established in the openings were these protocols: --Until further notice from the NFL, teams may have no more than 50% of their staff in the facility, not to exceed 75 people. If a club wants to deploy staff to more than one location, all locations must implement the same health and safety protocols, and the combined number of employees at all locations can't exceed 75.

--No members of the coaching staff can return to the facility un-

der the first phase of reopening. This is important to ensure equity among all 32 clubs, Goodell wrote. --No players may be in the facility other than those undergoing medical treatment or rehab. Strength and conditioning coaches participating in player rehab may continue that work in the facility. Otherwise, they are barred until the rest of the coaching staff is allowed to return.

--Members of the personnel, football operations/football administration staff, equipment staff, medical staff, and nutritionists can attend.

Naturally, any incidence of Covid-19 in the facility must be reported immediately to Sills and the team's ICO. Clubs also must promptly report any change in government regulations to the league.

After we implement this first phase, Goodell told the teams, and as more states and localities enact policies that allow more club facilities to reopen, I expect that additional staff, likely including coaching staff, will be allowed to return

to club facilities in a relatively short time.

In the meantime, we are continuing to work with the NFLPA and our medical teams on developing protocols that could permit a certain number of players to return to club facilities as early as next month.

NFL teams normally would be holding organized team activities (OTAs) during May, followed by June minicamps. Due to the pandemic, such activities have been done remotely.

Coaching and training staffs have worked with the players by conducting classroom instruction and on-field activities through digital applications instead of at team facilities. Those virtual meetings can occur for four hours per day, four days per week.

The NFL has held the scouting combine, free agency and the draft in the last two months. It released the regular-season schedule and has said it expects to play it as planned, beginning Sept. 10 with Houston at Super Bowl champion Kansas City.

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Athletics chief says sport could rebel against pandemic rules

World athletics chief Sebastian Coe has warned that sports leaders may rebel against pandemic restrictions as they struggle to get major events back on track.

Coe expressed the frustrations felt by many sports chiefs when he said it was crucial to get top events started again even as the coronavirus takes a mounting toll around the world.

"We have to be guided by what governments, the WHO and local authorities are telling us, but we also have to make our own decisions and make sensible compromises," Coe, 63, told Indian television channel WION. "There may be a moment when a sport decides that it is ready to stage events even if it is not always with the approval of those authorities."

"We will be respectful, but we have to make decisions in the best interest of our sport and our athletes," the British former track legend insisted.

Athletics like other key sports has seen its calendar and finances



badly hit by the postponement of this year's Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The world athletics championships planned for 2021 have had to be pushed back by a year to allow for a provisional plan to stage the Tokyo Games next year instead.

Coe said no one could give a cast-iron assurance that the Olympics will be held. "Speculating about something that is over a year away is unhelpful," said the former chief of the 2012 London Olympics. "We are trying

to give the athletes some clarity about the calendar and speculation from scientists and medical experts does not help.

"I hope that the pandemic will be contained so that we don't have to cancel the Games."

Athletics' Diamond League may only start in August and finish in October. Coe said competitions will look very different with athletes battling each other in empty stadiums.

"Meeting directors will have to take their

own decisions about how to get athletes to competition in a safe and secure manner that doesn't risk infection," he said.

"Each event will have to decide on a format for competition with these safety considerations two months in advance."

"Everybody is waiting to return to competition and organisers will have to be as creative and ingenious as possible in the current circumstances."

In a separate interview with Indian media, Coe said there would be

greater use of technology to make events "more exciting" for television viewers and to adapt to the coronavirus threat.

"If you think of relay, the baton exchange could be another source of infection, but we are finding ways to organise it," the World Athletics chief said.

"As a runner I can feel the emotions of the athletes if there is only training and no competition. Therefore we want to provide them with an opportunity to compete and perform."

Costa Rica seeks unity for COVID fight as WHO assembly looms

Geneva, May 16 (AP): Costa Rica's president said Friday that COVID-19 can only be defeated if countries shun nationalism and aren't selfish, urging access to diagnostics and treatment tools for everyone as a major meeting of the World Health Organization's membership looms next week.

Carlos Alvarado joined WHO officials for an online news conference to outline a worldwide technology repository for vaccines, medicines and diagnostics, seeking to boost solidarity before the World Health Assembly on Monday and Tuesday at which rivals China and the United States will share a stage on the coronavirus fight.

It's an opportunity for humanity to show the best of what we are made of, Alvarado said, speaking from Costa Rica Friday, referring to the repository set to be formally launched May 29.

Only together, only with multilateralism, only with that kind of leadership, we can defeat coronavirus not closing in nationalisms, not being selfish. Such calls for

solidarity are likely to be tested next week.

Usually the WHO's biggest annual event, the assembly will be conducted online and is billed as a de minimis version focusing only on the outbreak. A handful of world leaders, plus many health ministers, are expected to take part.

The WHO hopes conditions will improve so an assembly with a far broader agenda can be held before year-end.

European Union member states and several other countries have prepared a resolution that aims to boost solidarity, ensure equitable access to treatment tools, and reaffirm commitments to protect human rights that may be strained at a time of broad restrictions on travel, trade and movement among other things.

One unknown was how much the Trump administration, which has criticized the WHO for being too cozy with China during the outbreak, and others will press to have Taiwan granted observer status over the objections of China.

China considers Tai-

wan part of its territory and points to the widely accepted One China policy.

The two-minute speech of U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar is likely to get attention.

The U.S. mission in Geneva this week said the United States believes that Taiwan's successful actions in response to COVID-19 would be of significant benefit to the rest of the world, and merit its inclusion for the online event as an observer.

Allowing for some sort of meaningful participation would seem to be the minimum that the WHO could do, U.S. Ambassador Andrew Bremberg said of Taiwan on Friday.

In Beijing on Friday, Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said some countries who were insisting on Taiwan-related proposals were doing so only to politicize health issues.

They pursue their own political interests at the cost of 'kidnapping' the World Health Assembly and damaging global anti-epidemic cooperation, Zhao said.

US to donate ventilators to India to fight coronavirus: Trump

BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, MAY 16 (PTI): President Donald Trump has announced that the US will donate a lot of ventilators to India to help it fight the "invisible enemy", moments after he underlined the close partnership between the two countries and called Prime Minister Narendra Modi his "good friend".

Trump also said the US and India were cooperating to develop a vaccine for the deadly coronavirus that has claimed 307,666 lives and infected more than 4.5 million people globally since it emerged in China in December last year.

India's tally of confirmed COVID-19 cases crossed 85,000 on Friday, surpassing China's count of 82,933 infections.

"I am proud to announce that the United States will donate ventilators to our friends in India," Trump said in a tweet.

However, the White House did not say how many breathing devices would be sent.

"We are sending a lot of ventilators to India. I spoke to Prime Minister Modi. We are sending quite a few ventilators to India. We have tremendous supply of ventilators," Trump told reporters before boarding Marine One on his way to Camp David on Friday.

"Together we will beat the invisible enemy! We stand with India and Prime Minister Modi during this pandemic," Trump told reporters in the Rose Gar-

den of the White House.

The president is scheduled to spend his weekend at Camp David for a number of meetings.

At Trump's request, India had last month allowed the export of 50 million hydroxychloroquine tablets to treat COVID-19 patients in America, the country worst-hit by the pandemic, with 87,530 deaths and over 1.4 million infections reported so far, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

Earlier in the day, Trump praised India and Prime Minister Modi.

"India has been so great and as you know your prime minister has been a very good friend of mine. I just got back a short while ago from India and we are very much together," the president said, referring to his visit to New Delhi, Ahmedabad and Agra in February.

Trump said Indian-Americans were "great" scientists and researchers, who were contributing to the development of the coronavirus vaccine.

He said a COVID-19 vaccine would likely be available by the end of the year. Trump has appointed the former head of vaccines at GlaxoSmithKline to spearhead the vaccine development effort.

"The president just extolled our great relationship with India. India has been a great partner to us for quite some time. I am encouraged to hear ventilators to India," White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said during a press briefing.

Trump's emergency powers worry some senators, legal experts

WASHINGTON, MAY 16 (AP): The day he declared the COVID-19 pandemic a national emergency, President Donald Trump made a cryptic offhand remark.

I have the right to do a lot of things that people don't even know about," he said at the White House.

Trump wasn't just crowing. Dozens of statutory authorities become available to any president when national emergencies are declared.

They are rarely used, but Trump last month stunned legal experts and others when he claimed mistakenly that he has total authority over governors in easing COVID-19 guidelines.

That prompted 10 senators to look into how sweeping Trump believes his emergency powers are.

They have asked to see this administration's Presidential Emergency Action Documents, or PEADs. The little-known, classified documents are essentially planning papers..

The documents don't give a president authority beyond what's in the Constitution.

But they outline what powers a president believes that the Constitution gives him to deal with national emergencies.

The senators think the documents would provide them a window into how this White House interprets presidential emergency powers. Somebody needs to look at these things, Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, said in a telephone interview.

This is a case where the president can declare an emergency and then say 'Because there's an emergency, I can do this, this and this.'

King, seven Democrats and one Republican sent a letter late last month to acting national intelligence director Richard Grenell asking to be briefed on any existing PEADs. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., wrote a similar letter to Attorney General William Barr and White House counsel Pat Cipollone.

The concern is that there could be actions taken that would violate individual rights under the Constitution," such



as limiting due process, unreasonable search and seizure and holding individuals without cause, King said.

I'm merely speculating. It may be that we get these documents and there's nothing untoward in their checks and balances and everything is above board and reasonable.'

Joshua Geltzer, visiting professor of law at Georgetown University, said there is a push to take a look at these documents because there is rising distrust for the Trump administration's legal interpretations in a way he hasn't seen in his lifetime.

The most publicised example was Trump's decision last year to declare the security situation along the US-Mexico border a national emergency.

That decision allowed him to take up to USD 3.6 billion from military construction projects to finance wall construction beyond the miles that lawmakers had been willing to fund.

Trump's move skirted the authority of Congress, which by law has the power to spend money in the nation's wallet.

I worry about other things he might call an emergency, Geltzer said.

I think around the election itself in November that's where there seems to be a lot of potential for mischief with this president. The lawmakers made their request just days after Trump made his startling claim on April

13 that he had the authority to force states to reopen for business amid the pandemic.

When somebody's the president of the United States, the authority is total, Trump said, causing a backlash from some governors and legal experts.

Trump later tweeted that while some people say it's the governors, not the president's decision, "Let it be fully understood that this is incorrect."

Trump later backtracked on his claim of total authority and agreed that states have the upper hand in deciding when to end their lockdowns.

But it was just the latest from a president who has been stretching existing statutory authorities to, if not beyond, their breaking point," said Stephen Vladeck, a law professor at the University of Texas. Questions about Trump's PEADs went unanswered by the Justice Department, National Security Counsel and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

Elizabeth Goitein, co-director of a national security program at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, said PEADs have not been subject to congressional oversight for decades.

She estimates that there are 50 to 60 of these documents, which include draft proclamations, executive orders and proposed legislation that could be swiftly introduced to assert

broad presidential authority in national emergencies.

She said the Eisenhower administration had PEADs outlining how it might respond to a possible Soviet nuclear attack.

According to the Brennan Center, PEADs issued up through the 1970s included detention of U.S. citizens suspected of being subversives, warrantless searches and seizures and the imposition of martial law.

A Department of Justice memorandum from the Lyndon B Johnson administration discusses a presidential emergency action document that would impose censorship on news sent abroad, Goitein wrote in an op-ed with lawyer Andrew Boyle published last month in The New York Times. "The memo notes that while no 'express statutory authority' exists for such a measure, 'it can be argued that these actions would be legal in the aftermath of a devastating nuclear attack based on the president's constitutional powers to preserve the national security.'"

Goitein said she especially worries about any orders having to do with military deployment, including martial law.

You can imagine a situation where he (Trump) engineers a crisis that leads to domestic violence, which then becomes a pretext for martial law, said Goitein, who insists she's simply playing out worst-case scenarios.

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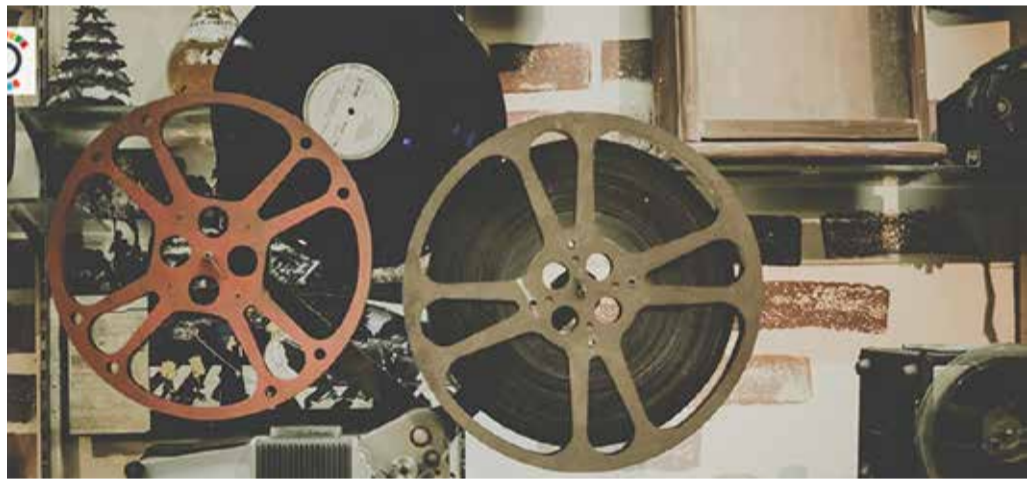
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QUARANTINE COFFEE! Actor, Lucy Hale enjoyed a beverage as she walked her dog in Los Angeles.

IPRS announces additional relief fund to 3500 members



Mumbai, May 16 (PTI): The Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS) has announced the release of an additional tranche of emergency relief fund for its members facing financial crisis during the nationwide lockdown amid coronavirus pandemic.

The fund will support around 3500 writers and composers in the music fraternity, across the country, whose livelihoods have been deeply impacted by COVID-19, a press release issued by IPRS said.

Soon after the lockdown was announced to combat COVID-19 situation in the country on March 24, IPRS, a copyright society mandated by the government of India, as a custodian of its creator members, had declared an emergency relief package.

"When the lock down was announced IPRS (Indian performing rights society) had funded more than 3000 members who are not in a comfortable position by putting money directly in their accounts since the lock

down has continued IPRS is again funding those 30000 composers/ writers," veteran lyricist-writer and chairman of IPRS, Javed Akhtar wrote on Twitter.

In a statement, Akhtar said IPRS was established with the objective of helping the creative music fraternity grow and flourish and now the community is in dire need because of these unprecedented times.

"Our initial financial assistance package in April 2020 brought much needed relief to the community and we hope the additional money that is being released now will help again to provide necessary respite at this moment," he added.

Akhtar urged everyone to come forward and help others in this time of distress.

Renowned lyricist and director of IPRS, Sameer Anjaan said he is glad that the organisation has taken this initiative to support the members and help those who have been deeply impacted.

Why is Taiwan excluded from the WHO?

The coronavirus pandemic has shone a spotlight on Taiwan's exclusion from the World Health Organization and ignited a diplomatic row between China and some Western powers.

Led by the United States, a growing number of countries are calling for Taiwan to either be allowed into the WHO, or be given observer status.

The spat is likely to worsen at next week's World Health Assembly -- the WHO's annual policy making meeting -- which is gathering virtually because of the virus outbreak.

Why is Taiwan shut out?

Taiwan -- officially the Republic of China -- was a founding member of the WHO when the global health body was created in 1948.

But it was expelled in 1972 a year after losing the "China" seat at the United Nations to the People's Republic of China.

The two sides have been ruled separately since 1949 after the Nationalists lost a civil war to the Communists and fled to Taiwan to set up a rival government.

Beijing views Taiwan as its own territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

It balks at any international recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign nation and in recent years has ramped up economic, diplomatic and military pressure on the island.

Keeping it shut out of international bodies like the WHO is part of that campaign.

Was it always this way?

No. Between 2009 and 2016 Beijing allowed Taiwan to attend the WHA as an observer under the name "Chinese Taipei".

At the time, relations between Taipei and Beijing were warmer.

Things turned frosty with the election of current president Tsai Ing-wen in 2016.

She hails from a party that views Taiwan as a de facto independent nation and doesn't subscribe to Beijing's idea that it belongs to a "one China".

Taipei found little diplomatic support for its calls to be included but the coronavirus pandemic has dramatically changed that.

China has found itself scrutinised for its initial response to the outbreak and

allegations its authoritarian government made the global spread worse.

In contrast, democratic Taiwan has been praised as a model for how to handle the outbreak -- with only seven deaths and 433 infections.

Why does Taiwan's exclusion matter?

Taiwan and its supporters argue it is

has been too deferential to Beijing under his tenure.

WHO officials say they are in regular contact with Taiwan and that Taiwanese officials are often included in technical meetings.

Taiwan has countered that it was previously invited to attend the WHA "at the discretion" of the then director gen-



unfair to exclude 23 million Taiwanese from the world's health body, especially during such a huge health crisis.

They also say global leaders and doctors could learn from the island's expertise in combatting the virus.

"No one should be treated as an orphan in the health network that the WHA should look after," Taiwan Vice President Chen Chien-jen, a US-trained epidemiologist, told reporters on Thursday.

"The WHO attaches too much importance to politics and forgets about its professionalism and neutrality," he added.

Taiwan's exclusion has also raised questions about Beijing's influence over the WHO.

This week the Trump administration accused the WHO of opting to "choose politics over public health" by being overly deferential to China.

What does the WHO say?

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said Taiwan's participation can only be decided by member states with the consent of "the relevant government" -- a reference to Beijing.

He rejects the notion that the body

eral. It says Tedros has a public health obligation to stand up to Beijing's black-listing of the island.

The WHO later said an invite can be given by Tedros if a consensus existed between member states, which it does not.

Will Taiwan have its way?

It's highly unlikely.

Only 15 nations still recognise Taiwan over China, most of them economic minnows in Latin America and the Pacific.

Few of the 194 countries within the WHO will want to stoke Beijing's anger -- a 2007 bid by Taiwan to seek membership was comprehensively defeated.

But any recognition of Taiwan's de facto sovereign nation status is seen as a win for Taipei and a blow for Beijing.

And it is here that Taiwan has seen significant success during the coronavirus pandemic.

In the last few weeks Australia, Canada, Japan and New Zealand have joined the US in publicly calling for Taiwan to be given observer status at the WHA.

That has infuriated Beijing. It has accused Western governments of using Taiwan as a wedge issue to distract from their own shortcomings in fighting the outbreak.

Danny Boyle to direct Michael B. Jordan-starrer Methuselah

LOS ANGELES, MAY 16 (PTI): Oscar-winning filmmaker Danny Boyle is set to direct Michael B. Jordan in Warner Bros project Methuselah.

According to Variety, Simon Beaufoy, who worked with Boyle on Slumdog Millionaire and 127 Hours, is in talks to rewrite the script.

Tony Gilroy wrote the previous draft off James Watkins' treatment.

The script is based on the

biblical story of a man who lived to be close to 970 years old.

Jordan is producing the project through his Outlier Society label, along with Heyday's David Heyman and Jeffrey Clifford.

Warner Bros is also considering to start a franchise with Methuselah.

Boyle's last directorial venture was Beatles movie Yesterday.

American Idol renewed for season four by ABC

LOS ANGELES, MAY 16 (PTI): Broadcasting company ABC has renewed singing reality show American Idol for a fourth season. The news comes ahead of the current season's live finale on Sunday.

The top seven going into the finale are Arthur Gunn, Dillon James, Francisco Martin, Jonny West, Julia Gargano, Just Sam, and Louis Knight. According to Variety, the network did not reveal

if the judges -- Katy Perry, Luke Bryan and Lionel Richie -- along with host Ryan Seacrest, would return for the new season.

The renewal brings the total number of seasons for the long-running show to 19 in the US, having previously aired on Fox between 2002-2016.

American Idol is produced by Fremantle and Industrial Media's 19 Entertainment.

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ARIES:

What's your motivation behind the given action? Do you want to take the fast road to fame without actually putting in the work? The cards are reminding you that shortcuts will only take you this far. Spend some time meditating on your true path. Reflect upon what you want to create in this life. It is through inner alignment that you will be able to pave the way forward.

Tip: Realign with your true path.

TAURUS:

Loneliness gets the better of the best of us. Breathe into what's coming up without attaching a story to it or trying to forge a connection with people who are not good for your mental health. What you want to do instead is lean on your soul crew for support: the people who love you unconditionally through life's many storms. A virtual pyjama party could be the answer to getting out of your funk. Not in the mood to interact with others? Consider the mantra 'headphones in, world out'.

Tip: Reach out to your soul crew for support.

GEMINI:

We can either marinate in our miseries or move the stagnant energy and bring about a shift. The power to turn the wheel has always been within you. You just have to be willing to tap into it. The cards are also warning you against excesses of all kinds. What does the word 'addiction' bring to mind? Do you find yourself turning to unhealthy food or substances when inner turmoil gets the better of you? Remember, consuming is not just about sculpting your body and acquiring enviable abs. It is directly responsible for your mental and emotional state of being.

Tip: Be mindful of what you are putting onto your plate and into

your body.

CANCER:

Sometimes you just need to brew yourself a cup of perspective, step away from the drama of your physical reality and journey inwards. It is in this sacred space that you will find the answers you are seeking. You are where you need to be. So, breathe. There are few that need to be realigned behind the scenes in order to propel your plans forward. The grand plan will soon be revealed.

Tip: Brew yourself a cup of perspective.

LEO:

It's a privilege to be loved by you, Leo. But in trying to keep everything together, you may have let your romantic side suffer. Friday, also known as the day of Goddess Venus, is urging you to get in touch with that wild, untamed energy within you. Quarantined away from your partner? Write them a heartfelt note about how they make your heart flutter or make them a playlist of songs that will remind them of times spent together. Under house arrest with the beloved?

Tip: Love like nobody's watching.

VIRGO:

Today, you're being asked to examine your relationship with pleasure. How do you feel about letting somebody into your space? Does the thought of receiving what makes you feel good induce panic or make you feel safe? With the light of awareness, you will be able to work through the intimacy blocks. On the other hand, if you are in this relationship merely for the 'benefits', the allure will start to wear off soon. Virgo, it's time to make space for a relationship that fulfills you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Tip: Examine your relationship with pleasure.

LIBRA:

Things are getting lonely around the Libra HQ. As a sociable air sign, you miss putting on your favourite lipstick and painting the town red with your best crew. Instead of focusing on what you can't do, redirect your energy towards what you can. A FaceTime date with the bestie who lives a thousand miles is a good way to get out of that funk. In the mood to connect with the whole crew?

Tip: Connect with your soul crew virtually.

SCORPIO:

The French don't say I miss you. That's just too mainstream, you know? They whisper 'tu me manques' which translates to 'you are missing from me'—a mood that accurately describes that dream-like state in which you are existing today. What's keeping you going: the hope this nightmare will soon be over and that you and your amour will wake up in each other's arms. Scorpios who are in the early stages of a relationship are being encouraged to let their guard down. There is no time like the present to say the three magic words.

Tip: Here's to hope that keeps us all alive!

SAGITTARIUS:

The world is undergoing a massive shift right now. The rules that applied to us once are slowly loosening their grip on us, making way for a new reality. A new earth. Where are you vibrating at, Sagittarius? Are you welcoming the energy of change or are you unwilling to let go of the old ways? Slow down. Reassess every aspect of your life. This will help you value and appreciate more of what you have instead of chasing the things that are not adding any value to your life.

Tip: Reassess every aspect of your life.

CAPRICORN:

Often, we dismiss our opinions or shy away from standing in our truth for the sake of making peace. But this false sense of calm rests on a shaky foundation, one that will give way eventually. The collateral damage of this catastrophe? Immeasurable. What the cards are urging you to do is pause, breathe, and muster up the courage you need to share your side of the story.

Tip: Find the courage you need to stand in your truth.

AQUARIUS:

Dreams, visions, signs, and symbols. Welcome to the new normal, Aquarius! You are never alone. Spirit is always talking to you in mysterious ways, urging you to rediscover your true origins. A newbie in the world of spirituality? The transmissions of a guru or mentor could help you look beyond the veil when your logical mind gets the better of you.

As Baba Ram Dass puts it, "Start from where you are—not where you wish you were. The work you're doing becomes your path."

Tip: You're in the mood to transcend your physical reality and activate your third eye.

PISCES:

Sometimes we put on a garb of being cool and composed so as to prevent others from seeing how vulnerable we truly feel. Could this be you, Pisces, and what is it that you are protecting yourself from? Start by acknowledging that you have needs—needs that are not being met. This will give you the courage to speak your mind. Their willingness (or unwillingness) to meet you halfway will give you the answer you're looking for.

Tip: Acknowledge that you have needs that are not being met.