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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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**THURSDAY, 07 MAY**  
**EVEN NUMBER TAXIS ALLOWED TO PLY TODAY**  
No private vehicles, except those with permits, allowed to ply.

*No new positive cases, no new hotspots in Kerala*

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 6 (PTI):** No new positive cases were reported in Kerala on Wednesday, while samples of seven people returned negative and only 30 COVID-19 patients are under treatment.

There are no new hotspots either in the state.

Six people from Kottayam, including one from Idukki and another from Pathnamthitta have been declared cured on Wednesday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said.

The total positive cases touched 502, while 30 people are under treatment for the infection and 14,670 are under observation, including 268 in hospitals, he said.

Eight of the 14 districts have zero positive cases, including Kozhikode, Malappuram, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram and there are no new hotspots in the state, the Chief Minister said.

Over 34,500 samples have been sent for testing and 34,063 have returned negative.

*A record 1,233 COVID-19 cases take Maha tally to 16,758*

**MUMBAI, MAY 6 (PTI):** Maharashtra on Wednesday reported a staggering 1,233 COVID-19 cases - a new single-day high - taking the tally to 16,758, while 34 more patients died - 25 of them in Mumbai - raising the toll to 651, said a state health department official.

This was second time in a week that the state has reported new COVID-19 cases in four digits in a single day, he said. The previous one-day high was 1,008 cases, reported on May 1.

The state, the worst-hit by the viral disease in the country, also recorded death of 34 more patients, taking the toll to 651, said the official.

Out of the 34 deaths, 25 were from Mumbai city, three each from Pune city and Akola city, one each from Jalgaon city and Solapur city, he said.

A Uttar Pradesh resident, undergoing treatment for COVID-19 in the state, has also died, the official said. As per state authorities, Mumbai city has recorded 10,714 cases and 412 deaths so far.

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## State Govt to set up Economic Revival Committee

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 06 MAY:**

Sikkim Government will form an Economic Revival Committee (ERC) soon to examine all issues related to the state's economy especially losses suffered by the tourism sector due to the COVID-19 situation, informed Chief Minister, PS Tamang responding to a query by SummitTimes in a press conference held today at Samman Bhawan.

"We will deliberate and based on the recommendations of the ERC come up with relief package or solution for the tourism industry," said the CM.

He informed that the representatives of the tourism sector have submitted a representation to the government on the losses suffered by the industry in the state.

The future of tourism depends on the situation in other states because we cannot allow tourists from other states or countries to come to Sikkim until and unless it is safe to do so, he added.



It may be mentioned that according to Travels Agents Association of Sikkim and Sikkim Hotels and Restaurants Association, the tourism industry in Sikkim has incurred losses of upto Rs 1100 crore in the last two months.

He also made it clear that at this point of time the Sikkim government has no plan

to impose any taxes on the people to mitigate problems related to the economy but will maintain austerity measures to cope with the situation.

As of now, 5,855 Sikkimese who are outside the state have registered their names, he informed.

On receiving criticism from various corners about

the students from Kota, Rajasthan who were brought back to Sikkim on Tuesday, the CM clarified that Educational institutions in consultation with their respective governments had brought the students to Siliguri and from there, the state government took charge and put them under quarantine.

He said that the Sikkim government will treat people stranded outside the state without any prejudice or ill-will, adding that all the students and other people including the patients will be brought back as per the standard operating procedure in a phased manner.

Countering allegations of

numerous government notifications confusing the public at large, the CM said, "The government has adopted corrective measures as per the situation keeping in mind the convenience of the public."

The government may take appropriate decision as and when required, he said and directed the administration to take action against those who flout norms of the Disaster Management Act willfully.

He informed that those who are entering the State through illegal means will be charged with attempt to murder under Indian Penal Code.

He informed that many outside the state have chosen to stay where they are for their own safety as well as those in Sikkim, and to such persons the state government will provide all possible support.

He appealed to Sikkimese people not to come out of their homes unless they have important work and urged them to keep calm and patient.

## 80 stranded Sikkimese return on Day-02 of evacuation

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 06 MAY:**

A total of 80 Sikkimese stranded in the neighbouring areas of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Siliguri returned to the State in six SNT buses pressed into service for their evacuation, PCE and General Manager, SNT, Karma Namgyal Bhutia, informed today.

In a video broadcast on the Govt of Sikkim Facebook page late this evening, Mr Bhutia, who

is also a member of the State Evacuation Cell [COVID-19], informed that while three buses entered from Melli, three, with returning Sikkimese from North and East districts, entered the State at Rangpo.

While seven buses came in from Siliguri, one bus was despatched to Kalimpong from where it picked up 13 stranded Sikkimese.

Mr Bhutia informs that while 190 people

[in the areas covered today] had confirmed their desire to return, only 80 eventually did, with the rest deciding to stay back.

Meanwhile, SNT also decided to make pickups only in the mornings since the afternoon pickups were proving too tedious and time-consuming. For instance, by the time returning Sikkimese reached the quarantine facility at Mangan yesterday, it was already past

11 in the night.

As for registrations by Sikkimese stranded outside, Mr Bhutia informs that as of Wednesday evening, a total of 5,855 had registered. Of these, 1,505 are stranded in the neighbouring areas of Siliguri, Darjeeling and Kalimpong.

Of the 33 Sikkimese who returned via Melli, 32 hail from South Sikkim and one is from West, an IPR press release informs.

## COVID-19 death toll touches 1,694; cases rise to 49,391

**NEW DELHI, MAY 6 (PTI):**

The death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 1,694 and the number of cases climbed to 49,391 in the country on Wednesday, registering an increase of 126 deaths and 2,958 cases in the last 24 hours, the Union Health Ministry said.

The Health Ministry on Tuesday evening said that the nationwide case status will be updated on its website only once a day in the morning, instead of twice a day as was being done previously.

"In the last 24 hours, 1,457 patients recovered, taking the total of recovered people to 14,183. This takes the total recovery rate to 28.72 per cent," a senior health ministry official said.

The number of active COVID-19 cases is 33,514 and one patient has migrated, it said.

The total number of cases include 111 foreign nationals.

A total of 111 deaths were reported since Tuesday evening, of which 49 fatalities were reported from Gujarat,



34 from Maharashtra, 12 from Rajasthan, seven from West Bengal, three from Uttar Pradesh, two each from Punjab and Tamil Nadu and one each from Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, the ministry said.

Of the 1,694 fatalities, Maharashtra tops the tally with 617 fatalities. Gujarat comes second with 368 deaths, followed by Madhya Pradesh at 176, West Bengal at 140, Rajasthan at 89, Delhi at 64, Uttar Pradesh at 56 and Andhra Pradesh at 36.

The death toll reached 33 in Tamil Nadu, 29 in Telangana, while Karnataka has reported 29 fatalities.

Punjab has registered 25 COVID-19 deaths, Jammu and Kashmir eight, Haryana six and Kerala and Bihar four deaths each.

Jharkhand has recorded three COVID-19 fatalities.

Meghalaya, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Assam and Uttarakhand have reported one fatality each, accord-

ing to the ministry data.

According to the health ministry data updated in the morning, the highest number of confirmed cases in the country are from Maharashtra at 15,525, followed by Gujarat at 6,245, Delhi at 5,104, Tamil Nadu at 4,058, Rajasthan at 3,158, Madhya Pradesh at 3,049 and Uttar Pradesh at 2,880.

The number of COVID-19 cases has gone up to 1,717 in Andhra Pradesh and 1,451 in Punjab.

It has risen to 1,344 in West Bengal, 1,096 in Telangana, 741 in Jammu and Kashmir, 671 in Karnataka, 548 in Haryana and 536 in Bihar.

Kerala has reported 502 coronavirus cases so far, while Odisha has 175 cases. A total of 125 people have been infected with the virus in Jharkhand and 111 in Chandigarh.

Uttarakhand has reported 61 cases, Chhattisgarh 59 cases, Assam 43, Himachal Pradesh 42 and Ladakh 41.

turn to pg 02

## CM's Relief Fund has got Rs 12.26 crore so far: CM

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 06 MAY:**

Chief Minister, PS Tamang today informed that so far the Chief Minister's Relief Fund has received Rs 12.26 crore and Rs 4.85 crore has been used for helping Sikkimese patients, students and upgradation of border check posts to laying concertina wire in border areas.

He informed that the medical expenses of those who have contracted the COVID-19 virus and are undergoing treatment in New Delhi will be borne by the Sikkim government. For this purpose, the state government has released Rs 10 lakh, he added.

He assured that the Sikkim Government will not leave a single stone unturned to treat them and will bring

them back once they recover and are certified by the medical team as COVID free.

The CM also informed that the Sikkim Government has adopted the slogan of "Each One, Help One" to combat COVID-19. He urged well-wishers entrepreneurs, and NGOs to support the 'Each One, Help One' cause.

He expressed special gratitude to president Iskcon Sikkim, Mahesh Chettri, KB Gurung of Sree Badam, West Sikkim and Bhaichung Bhutia of Tashiding for their support by providing free meals to people under quarantine for 14 days (East and West districts respectively). He also thanked every Sikkimese who has donated to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

## Newborn tests positive for COVID-19 in Navi Mumbai



**THANE, MAY 6 (PTI):** A newborn has tested positive for COVID-19 in neighbouring Navi Mumbai, which currently has 395 cases, a health official said on Wednesday.

At least 47 new cases were reported in Navi Mumbai on Tuesday, taking the count in the region to 395, the official said.

A pregnant woman, who was being treated at a COVID-19 hospital, delivered a baby girl, whose reports have also come out positive, he said.

The positive cases include several workers and vendors from the

APMC market in Vashi, he added.

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation on Wednesday decided to provide accommodation to its employees, who travel to work from other areas.

Civic personnel travelling from their homes in Mumbai, Thane, Kalyan, Ambernath, Badlapur, among other places will be provided accommodation in Navi Mumbai itself, an official said.

In a related development, nine persons, including four policemen, tested positive for COVID-19 in Kalyan on

Wednesday, public relations officer of the Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation Madhuri Phopale said.

The region has so far reported 233 cases, including three deaths, she said.

Meanwhile, the Thane city unit of the BJP has set up COVID-19 testing booths at three main junctions called 'Kamal Kavach'.

Tests will be conducted at a subsidised rate of Rs 3,000 as against Rs 4,500 being charged in other parts of the city, Thane unit president and MLC Niranjan Davkhare said.



## TWO MORE TEST POSITIVE AT DKK BHAWAN

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 06 MAY:**

As per Health Secretary, Dr PT Bhutia, two more persons from Sikkim at DKK Bhawan in New Delhi tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday. With this the number of people staying at DKK Bhawan testing positive for COVID-19 has gone up to 6.

While 2 are patients undergoing treatment in Delhi, the remaining four were visitors. All of them are asymptomatic at present. The two who were already undergoing treatment in Delhi have been hospitalized while the four visitors have

been kept in a quarantine facility.

There were 101 people at DKK Bhawan, all of whom have been tested and 6 have tested positive. Dr Bhutia also informed that the patient who passed away a few days back had tested negative for COVID-19 and succumbed to a preexisting illness.

Meanwhile, the state Government has also arranged for all the patients at DKK Bhawan to be admitted at hospitals in Delhi to ensure proper supervision and care.

All the returning Sikkimese will be tested for COVID-19 over the coming days, said Dr Bhutia.

## Shyadar Pidar greetings from CM

**GANGTOK, 06 MAY (IPR):** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] has extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim, especially the Sunuwar community, on the auspicious occasion of Shyadar Pidar.

Shyadar Pidar, also known as 'Ubhauli Puja' is one of the most important festivals of the Sunuwar community. It is celebrated to offer gratitude to nature and seek her blessings for healthy agriculture and general well-being in the year ahead.

In his message, the

Chief Minister has appealed to all to maintain harmony and brotherhood which has been a hallmark of our state.

He has also prayed for Sikkim and her people whom he hoped will continue to prosper and flourish by the grace of God.

The Chief Minister has also requested the community to celebrate it responsibly, keeping in mind the current scenario of COVID-19 where physical distancing is one of the most important forms of defense against the virus.

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### A record...

With this, Mumbai city, the worst affected by the disease in Maharashtra, also crossed the 10,000-case mark.

The Thane division, defined by the state health department as also comprising Mumbai city, has reported a total of 12,716 cases and 441 deaths so far.

Except reports of the BMC, the data cleaning process of all districts and municipal corporations in Maharashtra has been completed as per the Union government's instructions.

"There has been an increase in the cumulative figures because laboratory reports are being scrutinised and state figures are subjected to change, the official said.

There are 2,351 COVID-19 cases in the Pune division with 132 deaths so far. Of these, Pune city alone has reported 1,861 cases and 115 deaths.

The Kolhapur division, that covers Western Maharashtra and Konkan, has 71 cases and four deaths followed by the Nashik division, 632 cases and 31 deaths, the official said.

The Aurangabad division in central Maharashtra has 441 cases of COVID-19 patients along with 12 deaths, while the Latur division has seen 54 cases and three deaths so far.

There are 273 cases in the Akola division and 20 deaths; 188 cases and two deaths in the Nagpur division.

The number of COVID-19 patients from other states who are receiving treatment here stood at 32, while six such people have succumbed to the coronavirus infection, the official said.

The state has so far carried out COVID-19 tests of 1,90,879 people, of which 1,73,838 tested negative and 16,758 positive, he said.

There are 1,048 active containment zones in the state.

As many as 11,692 health squads have so far completed surveillance of 51.14 lakh population, he said.

The state has so far discharged 3,094 patients after recovery.

There are 2,11,112 people in home quarantine and another 13,107 in institutional quarantine, he said.

Maharashtra COVID-19 figures are as follows: Positive cases 16,758, new cases 1,233, deaths 651, discharged 3,094, active cases 13,013, people tested so far 1,90,879.

### COVID-19 death...

Thirty-three COVID-19 cases have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Tripura has registered 43 cases, Meghalaya has reported 12 and Puducherry nine, while Goa has seven COVID-19 cases.

Manipur has two cases. Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Dadar and Nagar Haveli have reported a case each.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website.

State-wise distribution is subject to further verification and reconciliation, it said.

# Modi's fine fight with COVID-19

**PRAKASH JAVADEKAR**

PM, Narendra Modi is credited for the fact that, probably, he was the first political leader who understood the importance of social media and leveraged it to the benefit of BJP in 2014 elections and even thereafter he used this tool to get to motivate and to put straight facts before the society in real-time. He also used radio with great effect to connect with the people through his most popular "Mann Ki Baat" programme.

I can vouch that it was Prime Minister, Narendra Modi who could sense the danger of the coming Corona Pandemic in December itself when China was infected. That time there was no patient in India. First Indian patient was tested positive on 30 Jan, 2020, but he used to tell us after every Cabinet meeting that this Corona virus and infection would not stop in China. It will spread all over. It is serious and all are totally unprepared. Therefore, India needs to prepare itself. India started with screening the incoming international passengers and then made it universal and after few days itself as the danger grew, air and rail travel was suspended. The doubtful travelers were kept in a facility of Ministry of Home Affairs at Manesar. At that time, we realized how grave the situation would be. From that day onwards he started implementing his plans to prepare India to fight COVID-19.

There was no concept of dedicated COVID hospitals. Today, we have nearly 700 dedicated COVID hospitals with 2 lakh plus isolation beds and 15,000 ICU beds.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) is aimed to save the doctors and staff who treat COVID patients. India had no facility. So, first big orders were given for imports. Now, in India, we have 39 factories manufacturing and stitching PPEs. Over 22 Lakh PPE kits have already been distributed.

We were not manufacturing any mask, leave alone N95. Already 6 million masks have been distributed and

in India also many new factories have started working on N95 masks as well as many small units have started preparing and stitching homemade masks for use of common people.

We had only one lab to test. That was in Pune. Our testing capacity was just 4000 per day. Now there are nearly 300 labs to conduct COVID tests and



give results. Now we can test 80,000 plus tests a day.

Ventilators were few to the tune of 8400. With initial orders, now we have nearly 30,000 ventilators. Already Indian manufacturers have started manufacturing ventilators and we expect to produce domestically 30,000 ventilators.

Simultaneously, he remained connected with the world, talked to various leaders, shared their and our experiences, learned from each other and implemented everything that he found useful. Simultaneously, he thought of the impending lockdown and its impact. Therefore, he declared a huge package of Rs.1,70,000 crores to protect the poor. India has the biggest food security programme under which all vulnerable classes and some more people totaling 80 crores who are given 5 kg of wheat / rice at Rs.2 / 3 a kilo. Now, for April, May and June he decided to give per-person 15 kg rice / wheat plus 3 kg dal free of cost. This took the basic care of ration in the house.

## Stop exodus of migrant workers, Bajwa urges Punjab govt

**CHANDIGARH, MAY 6 (PTI):** Congress MP Partap Singh Bajwa on Wednesday urged the Punjab government to stop the exodus of migrant workers from the state to avoid a 'self-made' economic crisis after the coronavirus lockdown is lifted.

In a letter to Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, Bajwa said around 10.08 lakh workers, who are an integral part of the state economy, have applied to go home and the state government should convince them to stay back to avoid a labour crisis after the lockdown.

Without these individuals, we will have a labour crisis that will irrevocably hinder our economy. With the

workers gone, I fear our factories will have no labour post-lockdown, Bajwa wrote.

Bajwa said the government must do everything to encourage these workers to remain in the state, otherwise, "we are staring at a self-made economic crisis", adding to the woes of the industry already reeling under the damage caused by COVID-19.

I believe it would be better at this moment if the government could do its best to convince the workers to remain so that the industries can function again at the earliest, he added.

Referring to migrants, Bajwa said they have the right to go back but their departure raises many

questions and issues.

The state has done its best to provide food, shelter and healthcare to these individuals, as well as pleas from the government to remain in Punjab. Yet, now that the central government has opened travel for stranded individuals to return home, the state is now promoting the aforementioned exodus, he said.

This shifting of position has left many industries confused. After all, in these troubled times, the drivers of our state economy look to the government for direction, he wrote, stating that he has received pleas of help from various industries due to the exodus of migrant workers.

## Tripura announces COVID-19 test for all journalists



**AGARTALA, MAY 6 (PTI):** The Tripura government on Wednesday announced that all journalists in the state, who are working on the ground would be tested for COVID-19.

"Along with other frontline warriors, media personnel are also moving from one place to another for news coverage.

In view of their safety, we have decided to test the samples of all media personnel who are working on the ground.

#TripuraCares4all", Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb tweeted on Wednesday evening.

He also said the state government would soon announce a scheme to en-

sure safety of family members of journalists working in the midst of coronavirus outbreak.

"The media personnel are playing a pivotal role in the fight against COVID-19. In view of the safety of media personnel and their families, we have decided to introduce a scheme soon," he tweeted.

Meanwhile, 200 students of Tripura who were stranded at Kota in Rajasthan reached Churaibari in Assam-Tripura border of the northern district by a bus.

Officials said they were sent to quarantine centre, where they would be tested for COVID-19 and would be released if found unaffected.

20 crore women from low income groups were given direct benefit transfer of Rs.500/- per month for next 3 months in their Jandhan accounts. Further, 8.4 crore farmers were transferred Rs.2,000 in their bank accounts straightaway. 8 Crore beneficiaries of Ujjwala LPG scheme have been offered 3 cylinders free of cost. He

being paid to the farmers at the earliest in order to ensure that agricultural economy started working normally.

Lockdown is a massive decision. It will never be successful till people participate voluntarily. Prime Minister has a continued dialogue with people. Poorest of the poor person also feels that the Prime Minister is working for their progress and he cares for them. So, he could prepare them psychologically for the long lockdown, suspension of activities and face the resultant hardship. He announced that on 22nd March, people will observe People's Curfew - "Janata Curfew". In a country with 130 crore population, practically, 99% of people observed it and made it a huge success. On that evening at 5.00 PM, he asked people to ring thalis, bells, crouch and clap for COVID workers. This really helped to motivate people to fight COVID unitedly and instill discipline.

He also gave the simple four steps to safety:

- To put on mask
- To wash hands regularly
- To keep social distancing, and
- To stay at home

By and large, people have observed this. Many sections of the society are in learning curve and as its behavior changes, after that, he asked people to light lamps for 9 minutes at 9.00 PM and the whole country participated enthusiastically. Even the slum dwellers and some homeless also lit the light. When they were asked they said we are saved because of Modi so we will listen to him. He continued his dialogue in between. On 3rd May, a new innovative programme of saluting Corona Warriors from sky and water was a huge spectacle which inspired people.

Thus, PM Modi planned in advance, planned in detail, practiced meticulously, communicated effectively, kept world in the loop and, therefore, India could succeed in better managing the COVID crisis than many other advanced economies.

*[the writer is the Union I&B Minister]*

## Area MLA inspects Sreethang Bridge project



**GYALSHING, 06 MAY (IPR):** Minister Lok Nath Sharma visited the site for the new Sreethang Bridge in Gyalshing Omchung area today and met officials of Public Works Department headed by ACE Thupden T. Bhutia.

The Minister, who is also the MLA of the area where the bridge is coming up, was accompanied by Gyalshing Municipal Council chairperson, IK Neopaney, Panchayats

and other officials.

The Minister and ACE (PWD) met on the spot to discuss and make proper assessment on the probability and plans of the new project.

The Minister urged the public to cooperate with the department so that structural progress is achieved at the earliest.

During his visit, he also met with the local elected representatives

and urged them to work in cooperation with the department so that the new developmental works could be completed soon.

He also directed the Department to ensure that the work is started at the earliest.

The public gathered at the spot thanked the Government's initiatives for the development of the area and extended their support.

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# Cash incentive disbursed to Mangan's safai karamcharis

**MANGAN, 06 MAY [IPR]:** Roads & Bridges Minister, Samdup Lepcha, who also happens to be the area MLA, disbursed incentives of Rs 5,000 each to Safai Karamcharis of Mangan Nagar Panchayat for their dedicated service in keeping the town clean amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

The disbursement programme, held here in the Mangan Nagar Panchayat conference hall, was also attended by Mangan Nagar Panchayat President, Zangmu Bhutia, Councillors and MEO Tempo Tshering Bhutia.

This incentive, it may be recalled, was announced by the Chief Minister on 01 May [Labour Day] considering the hard work put in by the safai karamcharis to keep the state clean in its fight against Novel Coronavirus.

As informed, similar incentives will be handed over to the safai karam-



charis at Chungthang and Dikchu as well.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Lepcha applauded the work done by the safai karamcharis and heralded them as frontline warriors against COVID-19 and said that in the coming days, there will be more real challenges to faceoff

with regard to the virus and appealed to all to put in collective effort irrespective of religious or political differences.

He has also assured the MNP councillors of all possible help from his end to combat the pandemic and called upon them to share their feedback and suggestions on how the

quarantine could be made more effective without any stigma or discrimination of the returnees.

The Minister also met the District Collector, North, Tenzing T. Kaleon, Sr. SP Sonam Gyatso Bhutia and CMO Dr Purna Basnett and took stock of the implementation of Lockdown 3.0 and arrange-

ments for institutional and paid quarantine facilities of the district.

He insisted that all quarantine centres follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Health.

Further, the Minister directed the officials to set up Vehicle Disinfection Facilities at Kabi and Rangrang Check Posts.

## Despite lockdown, EPFO-Siliguri disburses April pension to 32,116 pensioners

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 06 MAY:**

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation has disbursed Rs 764 crore to 65 lakh pensioners for the month of April, 2020 under the pension scheme, it is informed.

All the 135 field offices of EPFO processed pension payments for April 2020 in advance to avoid inconvenience to pensioners on account of the nationwide lockdown and a total of Rs

764 crore was released to nodal branches of pension-disbursing banks throughout India.

The local field office of EPFO for Sikkim - EPFO Siliguri - informs that it has disbursed a total of Rs 379.86 Lakh to 32,116 pensioners under the jurisdiction of the Regional Office at Siliguri for April.

It is further informed that there are a number of other relief measures taken by the govt for the ease of employers and

employees which include extension of date of filing of ECR challan, enabling Govt. contribution of 24% i.e. both employer and employee share to be remitted by Central Govt. as under Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojna, special provision for withdrawal of advance of EPF subscribers, relaxation in criteria for change of EPF subscribers details including name, date of birth and KYC of the members among others.

## Governor visits Rangpo screening centre



*Provides masks, sanitizers and food packets to frontline workers*

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 06 MAY:**

In order to have first hand information on the ongoing process, protocols, preparedness and logistics at the screening centre at the Rangpo border check post in East Sikkim, Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad paid a visit to Rangpo today, a Raj Bhavan communi-

qué informs. He was accompanied by Addl Chief Secretary to Governor, Dr K Jayakumar and other officers.

In a formal interaction held at Rangpo Tourist Lodge, Chief Medical Officer East District, Dr Tshering Laden apprised the Governor on the detailed process of screening at the facility created

near the check post on the arrival of Sikkimese from other states.

She stated that the since the arrival of Sikkimese from various parts of the country as per the guidelines of the government started on 05 May, the screening process and sending the persons to various facility quarantine centres have begun.

CMO further apprised about the mandatory COVID 19 test of persons sent to facility quarantines within 5 days for further process and protocols. Director Health Services, Dr Sonam T Ethenpa and SDM Rangpo, Prem Kamal rai were also present during the briefing.

Governor expressed his pleasure on the state of preparedness and precautions being ensured at the Rangpo Check Post by the frontline COVID warriors including Health professionals, Po-

lice and members of Civil Administration.

As a token of encouragement to the COVID warriors, Governor handed over the consignments of sanitizers, face masks and ready to eat food packets to all three wings of frontline workers i.e. health, police and civil administration.

On his return journey, Governor made a brief stopover at facility quarantine centres at Himalayan Hostel, Khanikhola and SMIT Girls Hostel, Majhitar and handed over the ready to eat food packets meant for students under quarantine to the in-charge of the respective centres.

He stressed on the absolute discipline, safety and precautions to be followed in each centre in view of the gradual increase in the number of occupants and the flow of Sikkimese coming to the State from outside.

06 May, 2020.

## Minister Kharel visits IRBn jawans patrolling border at Linkhim Tar



**SUMMIT REPORT  
RANGPO, 06 MAY:**

Transport Minister Sanjeet Kharel visited the remote village Linkhim Tar today morning to visit IRBn jawans deputed there on patrolling duty. The Minister also happens to be the area MLA of the region [Namthang-Ratey-

pani] where the personnel have been posted.

Linkhim Tar is a remote village about an hour's walk from Turung. The main purpose in this visit was to meet the IRB Jawans who have been posted there and to boost their morale in these stressful times.

The Minister prom-

ised to provide them with tents, two ceiling fans and some essential provisions. These, he assured, will be delivered by Wednesday.

The Minister said that the Chief Minister has deputed IRB personnel to open borders across the state to ensure that there were no illegal entries from any side.

## Shyadar Pidar greetings from Governor

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 06 MAY:**

On the occasion of Shyadar Pidar, Governor Ganga Prasad has extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim.

In his message, Governor conveys: "Shyadar Pidar, popularly known as Ubhauli Puja, is associated with our Sunuwar brethren and is integral part of our agrarian culture and tradition. The occasion reinforces our commitment and respon-

sibility towards Mother Nature, who is worshipped as the ultimate source of our happiness, health and well being. We pray to Mother Nature for continued blessings, bountiful harvest and general well being of all.

May this occasion unite us for the larger cause of humanity in the wake of current global crisis and strengthen our resolve to nurture mother nature for a sustainable and brighter tomorrow."

## Govt bans exports of alcohol-based hand sanitizers

**NEW DELHI, MAY 6 (PTI):** The government on Wednesday banned exports of alcohol-based hand sanitizers to boost its availability in the domestic market amid coronavirus pandemic. "Alcohol based hand

sanitizers are prohibited for exports," directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) said in a notification.

Sanitisers are used as disinfectant to prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

## Karnataka hikes excise duty on liquor by 11 per cent

Bengaluru, May 6 (PTI): The Karnataka government on Wednesday hiked excise duty on liquor by 11 per cent to mop up revenues, two day after allowing its sale, following the easing of COVID-19 induced lockdown.

This hike is in addition to the six per cent that was announced in the budget.

"Yes, this 11 per cent increase in excise duty is in addition to the six per cent announced in the budget," Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa told reporters here.

According to sources, the hike will translate into a consumer paying Rs five more for an 180 ml bottle of liquor.

The hike is applicable on brandy, whisky, gin and rum, but not to beer, wine, toddy and feni, they said.

The government had allowed CL-2 (retail shops) and CL-11C (state-run retail shops such as MSIL) to sell liquor between 9 am and 7 pm only in areas that

are outside COVID-19 containment zones from May 4.

The third day of liquor sales in the state on Wednesday after easing of lockdown curbs Rs 231.6 crore worth spirits were sold.

According to top Excise Department officials, 39 lakh litres of Indian-made liquor worth Rs 216 crore and 7 lakh litres of beer worth Rs 15.6 crore was sold on Wednesday.

On the first two days-Monday and Tuesday, Rs 45 crore and Rs 197 crore worth liquor was sold respectively.

Responding to criticism by certain sections, claiming lack of preparation before allowing liquor sale, Yediyurappa with a laugh said, "When there are people to drink, what preparation is needed?"

State Excise Minister H Nagesh had recently pegged the losses at Rs 60 crore per day because of closure of liquor shops due to the over 40 day lockdown.

## US infection rate rising outside New York as states open up

**NEW YORK, MAY 6 (AP):** Take the New York metropolitan area's progress against the coronavirus out of the equation and the numbers show the rest of the US is moving in the wrong direction, with the known infection rate rising even as states move to lift their lockdowns, an Associated Press analysis found Tuesday.

New confirmed infections per day in the U.S. exceed 20,000, and deaths per day are well over 1,000, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University.

And public health officials warn that the failure to flatten the curve and drive down the infection rate in places could lead to many more deaths perhaps tens of thousands as people are allowed to venture out and businesses reopen.

Make no mistakes: This virus is still circulating in our community, perhaps even more now than in previous weeks said Linda Ochs, director of the Health Department in Shawnee County, Kansas. Elsewhere around the world, Britain's official coronavirus death toll, at more than 29,000, topped that of Italy to become the highest in Europe and second-highest in the world behind the United States. The official number of dead worldwide surpassed a quarter-million, by Johns Hopkins' count, though the true toll is believed to be much higher.

The densely packed New York metropolitan area, consisting of about 20 million people across a region that encompasses the city's northern suburbs, Long Island and northern New Jersey, has been the hardest-hit corner of the

country, accounting for at least one-third of the nation's 70,000 deaths.

When the still locked-down area is included, new infections in the US appear to be declining, according to the AP analysis. It found that the five-day rolling average for new cases has decreased from 9.3 per 100,000 people three weeks ago on April 13 to 8.6 on Monday.

But subtracting the New York area from the analysis changes the story. Without it, the rate of new cases in the U.S. increased over the same period from 6.2 per 100,000 people to 7.5.

While the daily number of new deaths in the New York area has declined markedly in recent weeks, it has essentially plateaued in the rest of the U.S. Without greater New York, the rolling five-day average for new deaths per 500,000 people dropped slightly from 1.86 on April 20th to 1.82 on Monday.

U.S. testing for the virus has been expanded, and that has probably contributed to the increasing rate of confirmed infections. But it doesn't explain the entire increase, said Dr. Zuo-Feng Zhang, a public health researcher at the University of California at Los Angeles.

This increase is not because of testing. It's a real increase, he said.

Pockets of America far from New York City are seeing ominous trends.

Deaths in Iowa surged to a new daily high of 19 on Tuesday, and 730 workers at a single Tyson Foods pork plant tested positive. On Monday, Shawnee County, home to Topeka, Kansas, reported a doubling of cases from last week on the same day that business restrictions began to ease.



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.

### Symptoms of nCoV

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

### Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

### Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- 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.



If you seek help, you may call :  
-Toll free no. 104  
District surveillance Officer  
EAST : 7029372100  
WEST : 9593297809  
NORTH : 9641957468  
SOUTH : 7407691463  
New STNM  
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM



## Urban Woes

*There is a lot that is beyond repair, but some things can still be salvaged*

For a town that has been a capital for little over a century but has ‘developed’ (read expanded) only in the past three decades, Gangtok is a frightfully ill-planned hill top. Monsoons invariably leave behind calling cards ranging from the disastrous 1997 slides to routine reminders in the form of a flooded highway, scratched hillsides, slipping foundation walls and storm-drain grills exploding out of their fitments and barreling down the highway. Living in a region that signs in at Zone IV on the earthquake expectancy chart and then clocks in rainfall that can leave Cherapunji blushing at times, Gangtok residents knew what they were aspiring for when they chased files to get sites allotted and offered sheepish explanations when the construction concrete digressed extensively from the original blueprint. There is no way that nature can be made to behave any differently from the way it wants to, but better planning and effective monitoring can keep human indulgence in check and even succeed in keeping even a safety-challenged town like Gangtok safe.

If Gangtok habitations are unsafe, they are so as much because of the weather conditions here as they are because of the short-sighted decisions that the eighties and nineties are littered with. Few other places carry the ignominy of a building collapsing in an area marked out as a ‘Development Area’ or live with national highways which narrow into single-lane passages and lose blacktop with the briefest of showers. For a town that expanded much after ideas of town-planning had become the norm, Gangtok is frightfully littered with habitations, which, while they are most exposed to risk, are also most inaccessible to rescue and evacuation.

Unfortunately, there is very little that can be done for Gangtok anymore except sending up prayers to keep disasters at bay; fortunately, other towns in Sikkim that are ‘expanding’ even as the monsoons advance still have a fighting chance. District towns like Namchi, Gyalshing, even Rabongla and Singtam, are, however, replicating the Gangtok curve of development. These towns have already reported frightful stories of buildings growing into High Tension cables and continuing with excavations even though the slopes have announced they won’t tolerate any more ‘cutting’, but there is still hope for them. Most of these growing towns now have Nagar Panchayats and municipal councils for themselves. One hopes that these bodies will eventually become about more than just situation-required [politically-correct and aid agency-friendly] receptacles for development funds. One hopes that these urban bodies are run by people who understand urbanisation and respect the virtues of planning. One hopes that the elected members of these bodies don’t forever remain busy playing chief guests and also spend some sessions brainstorming on how to develop their areas as safe zones for habitation.



# How Coronavirus Sparked a Wave of Innovation in India

**SREEVAS SAHASRANAMAM**  
*theconversation.com*

Entrepreneurs and innovators across India have responded quickly to the challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. A host of new innovations, some emerging from start-ups that have been incubated by universities, have appeared in recent weeks.

There are a number of reasons for the quick response, including the urgency of the humanitarian situation and a proactive approach to crowdsourcing ideas from the government. India also has a wealth of trained engineering talent and helps foster what’s called *jugaad* – a frugal innovation mindset to find hacks to problems with limited resources.

## ROBOTS, APPS AND VENTILATORS

Around the world, social distancing and contact tracing have been the buzzwords of the response to COVID-19. A particular problem as lockdowns begin to ease will be how to stop the virus spreading in public spaces such as airports or bus stations. Asimov Robotics, a start-up based in Kerala, has deployed robots at entrances to office buildings and other public places to dispense hand sanitiser and deliver public health messages about the virus.

Robots deployed by Asimov Robotics are also being deployed in hospital isolation wards to carry food and medicines, which eases the pressure on medical staff.

In early April, the Indian government launched a COVID-19 tracking app called Aarogya Setu which uses GPS and Bluetooth to inform people when they are at risk of exposure to COVID-19. The app was launched before a similar initiative from tech giants Google and Apple got off the ground.

Start-ups including KlinikApp and Practo, are providing COVID-19 tests at home and online consultation with doctors through their platform.

In response to the shortage of ventilators for critical care, start-ups such as Nocca Robotics (incubated at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Kanpur), Aerobiosys Innovations (incubated at IIT Hyderabad) and AgVa Healthcare are developing

low-cost, easy-to-use, and portable ventilators that can be deployed even in rural areas of India. These ventilators would need medical regulatory approval before they could be deployed.

Start-ups are also supporting the government’s public information campaign on coronavirus by developing technology platforms to disseminate government notifications. The Kerala state government launched an app called GoK-Kerala Direct using a platform developed by QKopy. It sends COVID-19 updates and travel information via phone notifications, and via SMS to older phones for the less than half of India’s population without smartphones. These messages are delivered both in English and in Malayalam, the local language.

The hygiene of public spaces is another area of notable innovation. Start-ups such as Aqoza technologies and PerSapien claim they have developed chemical formulations that disinfect public spaces. Aqoza’s approach, developed during an outbreak of Nipah virus in Kerala in 2018, is a water-based sanitiser disinfectant, while Airlens minus Corona from PerSapien is a machine which the company claims dispenses ionised water droplets to oxidise the viral protein.

Another startup, Droom, claims it has come up with a special anti-microbial coating called CoroShield, which inhibits the growth of microorganisms such as bacteria, algae, yeast, moulds, and mildew on the surfaces of vehicles. It is being tested by police in Gurugram in Haryana state.

Start-ups such as Marut Dronetech have partnered with state governments to test the use of drones to monitor adherence to social distancing rules. Drones are also being used to deliver medical supplies and even check people’s temperature using thermal imaging.

## CONNECTING PEOPLE

My conversations with some of these entrepreneurs and innovators from India have highlighted a good example of the triple helix model of innovation, integrating efforts between universities, industries (start-ups) and the government, in response to COVID-19. Although the active involvement of engineering volunteers from universities and industry is

the lifeblood of these innovations, two other enabling factors are also particularly crucial.

First, the intermediary organisations helping to bring the three groups together. For instance, the national government’s Department of Science and Technology has set up a task force to map technologies developed by start-ups related to COVID-19. It is also funding start-ups to develop relevant innovations such as rapid testing for the virus.

Another example is that of the Kerala Start-up Mission (KSUM), a government-supported entrepreneurship development agency. It launched initiatives such as “Breath of Hope” which brings together an interdisciplinary volunteer team of IT professionals, biomedical engineers and doctors to develop innovative medical devices. Start-ups such as Asimov Robotics and QKopy are part of KSUM.

## CROWDSOURCING IDEAS

Second, crowdsourced platforms have also proved to be an important channel for bringing together the wisdom from universities, industry and government. The national government launched the COVID-19 solution challenge on March 16 that invites innovators to offer ideas and solutions for tackling the pandemic. Industry associations such as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry collaborated in an online hackathon to develop non-medical solutions for COVID-19.

Similar crowdsourced platforms from start-up incubators such as BreakCorona received 1,300 ideas and 180 product solutions within two days of launch. In another effort, volunteers have set up an online crowdsourced portal called Corona-safe-Network, a real-time open-source public platform containing details on COVID-19 precautions, tools and responses which serves as a useful starter-kit for innovators.

India needs to sustain and enhance this entrepreneurial mindset to create the next wave of innovation to continue the fight against COVID-19 and for the socio-economic recovery once lock-down restrictions begin to ease.

*[the writer is Chancellor’s Fellow (Lecturer) in Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Leadership, University of Strathclyde]*

# Don’t hold your breath for a COVID-19 vaccine in 2020

**SIMON KOLSTOE**  
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Donald Trump may be “very confident” we will have a vaccine for COVID-19 by the end of the year, but the rest of us should be more cautious. Billions of dollars are being spent trying to develop vaccines and treatments as a more permanent solution to the crisis than the lockdowns currently being enforced around the world.

As of May 2020 there are 182 treatments and 99 different vaccines being developed globally. But, based on recent history, only one or two are likely to be transformative, a couple may be partially helpful, some will be shown as downright dangerous, and the majority will have conflicting evidence as to their effectiveness.

This is because medical research is a slow and painstaking process. It is also very complicated and easy to come to the wrong conclusions.

## TRUSTING THE EXPERTS

One good thing to have come out of the coronavirus pandemic seems to be a renewed trust in experts. The routine presence of scientists at government briefings seems to recognise that rather than deserving our suspicion, we need these people to beat the virus.

But more trust in experts means more scrutiny

of science as it happens – the latest studies showing promising results are now headline news. This can be worrying because, while there is no doubt that treatments for COVID-19 will eventually be found, it is easy for enthusiasm to turn into cynicism if expectations are not met as quickly as the public and politicians may hope.

There seems to be little recognition that, while thousands of drugs have shown promise in early animal or clinical tests – for example, the vaccine trials at the University of Oxford – the vast majority that show early promise will never make it into routine clinical use. On average it takes 12 years and over US\$1 billion (£805 million) to get a drug to market.

## GOOD RESEARCH TAKES TIME

I chair research ethics committees. Over the last few years I have reviewed thousands of research protocols representing the very best, and occasionally some quite poor, examples of medical research.

Good research is defined as rigorous and reliable, producing results that are not only interesting, but are practical, useful and in some cases transformative. They are also reported clearly, transparently and in the context of previous studies. This is precisely the type of research we need to address the COVID-19 crisis.

But such good research comes at a cost. Much of society thinks of cost in terms of dollars and pounds,

and indeed mindful of our own survival, scientists and researchers are of course always going to lobby for more investment. While it is very helpful to have the funds to order any chemical that is needed, access highly specialised equipment, or pay others to conduct experiments and analyse results quickly, we must take care never to underestimate the importance of taking time to think carefully about what results actually mean.

It is only once researchers have taken the time to understand the context of results that they can start turning them into effective applications or treatments. The real cost of good research is therefore time.

The frustrating truth about medical research is that the majority of experiments appear not to work because the subject being studied is so horrendously complex. In fact, rather than “not working”, many experiments are simply inconclusive. To make progress you have to slow down, look at the evidence and take time to think very carefully about what the results might mean.

The thinking needed for this takes years. I was involved with one project that was delayed for almost ten years while the team tried to work out why a single animal showed cardiovascular complications. Another project I worked on showed promise reducing an Alzheimer-like pathology in mice, yet 18 years later similar effects have yet to be conclusively shown in humans. Commendably, the team is still working on it.

The reality is that the long road to a vaccine or drug for any disease is littered with trials that did not lead to expected results. Even when a study is successful, it takes a long time to go from the lab to the general public.

## THE PRESSURE TO FIND A CURE

One worrying aspect of the current situation is the pressure on researchers to work quickly and come up with solutions for COVID-19 almost immediately. For perhaps the first time, financial resources are not a limiting factor, and so politicians and the public are expecting researchers to take the cash and provide the answers. This has been coupled with significant pressure on regulators to streamline or even suspend

some of the normal processes so that treatments can get to the clinic as quickly as possible.

Lured by promises of unlimited funding, and perhaps fame should their chosen idea work, some researchers may be tempted to engage in questionable research practices. History shows that whenever a large amount of money is involved, the temptation to commit, fraud, misconduct or other questionable practices increase. The UK spent more than £400 million during the 2009 swine flu outbreak stockpiling a drug whose effectiveness had been inflated by the manufacturers due to publication bias – where negative or inconclusive results from a trial are not published in scientific journals, but positive results are.

Without appropriate scrutiny there is a real risk that ineffective, or even harmful, treatments begin to get used. This may be considered an acceptable risk in the current crisis, but if so, it is important that any new treatments are monitored very closely and withdrawn without hesitation if the harms mount up.

Given time – maybe two, three or perhaps even ten years – researchers will be able to take stock of the evidence from experiments and trials, perform a meta-analysis and systematic review, hold international conferences, and then, following careful thought, tell the world what the best treatment for COVID-19 is.

The world clearly needs scientific and medical answers to the current pandemic as soon as possible, but we need to recognise that initially we may only find partial or tentative answers. Instead of a quick vaccine that completely prevents COVID-19, a variety of partial successes will be combined until eventually a full solution is found.

There may even be some blind alleys with promising, but ultimately futile, treatment ideas. This is not a failure of research, or misuse of resources. Above all, researchers need to be supported to work with integrity, and not be made scapegoats for the challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead.

*[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Evidence Based Healthcare and University Ethics Advisor, University of Portsmouth]*



# TMC blames Centre for migrant labourer crisis

**KOLKATA, MAY 6 (PTI):** The Trinamool Congress on Wednesday blamed the Centre's "lack of farsightedness" for the migrant labourer crisis in the country and asked why the PM CARES fund is not being used to finance their journey home.

The party also said it is condemnable that migrant labourers who have been "starving" for over 40 days are being made to pay for their tickets, as is being alleged.

"The PM Cares Fund has now turned into the PM Does Not Care fund. Where is the money of the fund going? Why isn't it is being used to finance the return of the labourers? The Centre is not bothered about migrant labourers who are in a mess due to the sudden announcement of the lockdown," senior TMC leader Derek O'Brien said during a virtual press conference.

It is the duty of the central government to ensure these labourers return safely to their home states, he said.

"There are allegations that the labourers, who have been literally starv-



ing for the last 42 days, had to shell out money to buy tickets for returning. This is condemnable," the party leader in the Rajya Sabha added.

Tens of thousands of migrant labourers have been stranded away from their homes in different parts of the country due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown, which came into force on March 25.

Following requests

from various states to help ferry home these labourers, the Railways has run 115 special trains since May 1, taking more than 1 lakh workers to their native places.

Opposition parties have accused the government of charging money from the labourers for the train journey. However, the government has said 85 per cent of the fare is being borne by the Railways and the remaining

15 per cent is being borne by the state government on whose request a train is being run.

TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay alleged there is a dearth of managerial efficiency and planning on the part of the central government.

"It was due to the Centre's lack of farsightedness that labourers across the country are facing such a crisis," he said. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata

Banerjee has been compassionate to the cause of the migrant labourers, he added. TMC MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar hit out at the ruling BJP over allegations that the West Bengal government is suppressing information about the coronavirus situation in the state.

She said the "BJP's fake news factory is spreading misleading information to malign the people of Bengal".

## Four more die of Covid-19 in West Bengal; toll now 72

**KOLKATA, MAY 6 (PTI):** West Bengal reported four Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 72 in the state, Home Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said on Wednesday.

These patients died directly because of Covid-19, he said.

Bandyopadhyay said 72 others succumbed to various concurrent ailments and the novel

coronavirus infection in them was "incidental".

He said 112 new coronavirus infections were detected during the past 24 hours and the total number of active cases is now 1,047.

During this period, 2,570 samples were tested for Covid-19.

The total number of samples tested in the state so far is 27,571, Bandyopadhyay said.

## Byculla Zoo to have its own YouTube channel



**MUMBAI, MAY 6 (PTI):** The Veer Mata Jijabai Bhosale Udyan, popularly known as Byculla Zoo here, plans to start its own YouTube channel for animal lovers and wildlife enthusiasts, an official said on Wednesday.

The zoo, which usually witnesses a heavy footfall of visitors during summer holidays, now wears a deserted look

because of the lockdown that has been imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus. "The plan is to take the zoo to people's homes so that animal lovers and wildlife enthusiasts can enjoy glimpses of nature and animals through these videos," zoo director Dr Sanjay Tripathi said.

A social media expert will be appointed by the

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to run the account, he said, adding that some educational and awareness-related content will also be posted through the channel.

Last month, the zoo authorities had shared a video and some photographs of two tigers from the civic-run facility, which went viral on social media.

## Govts imposing taxes in times of distress 'cruel': Chidambaram



**NEW DELHI, MAY 6 (PTI):** Governments must borrow to meet their deficits and not impose higher tax burdens when economic activity has ground to a halt amid the coronavirus pandemic, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said on Wednesday after the Centre and the Delhi government hiked taxes on petroleum products.

New or higher taxes are justified only when the economy is booming, the former finance minister said, dubbing the imposition of taxes as "cruel".

Tax burdens on the middle class and the poor is actually taxing distress, he said in a series of tweets.

"Governments should give money to the people in times of distress, not squeeze and take money from the people," Chidambaram said.

"We have been pleading for cash transfers from the government to the bottom half of the people/families. Instead governments are doing a reverse transfer of money from the people to the government! Cruel," he

said. New or higher taxes will impoverish families further, Chidambaram asserted.

"Governments must borrow to meet their deficits, not impose higher tax burdens when economic activity has ground to a halt," he said.

Chidambaram's remarks come after the central government on Tuesday night hiked the excise duty on petrol by a steep Rs 10 per litre and that on diesel by Rs 13 a litre.

Retail prices of petrol and diesel will not be impacted by the tax changes as state-owned oil firms will adjust them against the recent fall in oil prices, industry officials said.

Petrol prices in the national capital were hiked by Rs 1.67 a litre and diesel by a steep Rs 7.10 per litre after the Delhi government raised local sales tax or value-added tax (VAT) on the two fuels.

Petrol in Delhi now costs Rs 71.26 a litre as against Rs 69.59 previously, oil industry sources said. Diesel price has been hiked to Rs 69.39 per litre from Rs 62.29.

## Tennis establishes virus player fund, raises \$6 million

**PARIS, MAY 6 (AFP):** A fund for tennis players hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic has been created, the sport's governing bodies announce, adding that they had contributed more than 6 million (5.3 million euros).

In a joint statement, the ATP and WTA tours, the International Tennis Federation and the four Grand Slam tournaments -- the Australian Open, Roland-Garros, Wimbledon and the US Open -- said the Player Relief Programme will support those "who are facing unprecedented challenges due to the global impact of COVID-19".

With the tennis season suspended until at least July 13, some "800 ATP/WTA singles and doubles players" are in need of financial support, the statement continued, with eligibility for the fund determined by a player's ranking and previous prize money earnings. The fund can also be



donated to via initiatives including auctions, player donations and virtual tennis games, added the governing bodies, who last month announced talks about creating the programme. The virus has caused havoc to the calendar, with Wimbledon cancelled for the first time since World War II and the French Open postponed until the end of September.

The United States Tennis Association will decide in mid-June whether or not the US Open will take place in New York.

However despite the

financial difficulties facing hundreds of players, the idea of a relief fund was dismissed by world number three Dominic Thiem, who said last month he would not give lower-ranked players his money.

"Quite honestly I have to say that no tennis player will be fighting to survive, even those who are much lower-ranked," Thiem said, speaking of a separate fund idea revealed by Novak Djokovic.

"None of them are going to starve ... I would rather give money to people or organisations that really need it.

## Two more persons recover from COVID-19 in Assam

**GUWAHATI, MAY 6 (PTI):** Two patients, including the first to test COVID-19 positive in Assam, have been cured and discharged from hospital on Wednesday, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Assam has so far reported 44 COVID-19 cases and 34 patients have been cured and discharged from hospital, he said.

The first COVID-19 patient in the state was released from Silchar Medical College Hospital and the other was released from Mahen-

dra Mohan Choudhury Hospital here, the minister tweeted.

The patients were discharged from hospital after they tested negative in three repeated tests, he said.

The first COVID-19 patient in the state, who is also a cancer patient, spent more than 35 days in the hospital as his tests did not turn negative for nearly a month.

Of the 44 COVID-19 cases in the state, nine are active and in hospital, one has died and 34 patients have recovered and discharged from

hospital. Two persons, including one with travel history to West Bengal, had tested positive for COVID-19 in Kokrajhar and Goalpara districts on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has recognised Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh as an accredited laboratory for testing samples for COVID-19 and with this, the total number of laboratories in the state has gone up to seven.

In Assam so far 13,442 samples have been tested for COVID-19.

## I have learnt to accept my failures in last two years: Sanju Samson



**NEW DELHI, MAY 6 (PTI):** He has flattered to deceive on umpteen occasions but highly-rated wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson says he has learnt to accept his failures in pursuit of the calm demeanour that former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni possesses.

The 25-year-old from Kerala has always been talked about by the likes of Rahul Dravid and Gautam Gambhir but it hasn't translated into international success with only four T20 Internationals in his kitty in the last five years.

"I have learnt to understand and focus more on my strengths and (be more) accepting (of) the failures. I try to contribute to the team's cause and try to take the team over the line. I am learning to focus and control my emotions while batting like MS Dhoni," Samson said during a podcast organised by Rajasthan Royals. He recently made

a comeback in India's T20 side and it was a worthy experience for him.

"It was great to be a part of the Indian team again. To be a part of one of the best teams in the world, surrounded by players like Virat bhai and Rohit bhai, it was a fantastic experience," Samson said.

In one of the games in New Zealand, Samson was sent to bat in the Super Over, something which made him feel wanted in the Indian set-up.

"It was a great feeling to be trusted by the players such as Virat bhai and Rohit bhai to go out there and bat in the crucial moments. It's a great feeling when the team and the players consider you to be a match winner."

On a lighter note, Samson revealed that he refers to Steve Smith as "chachu" (uncle) after Brad Hodge once started calling him by that name.

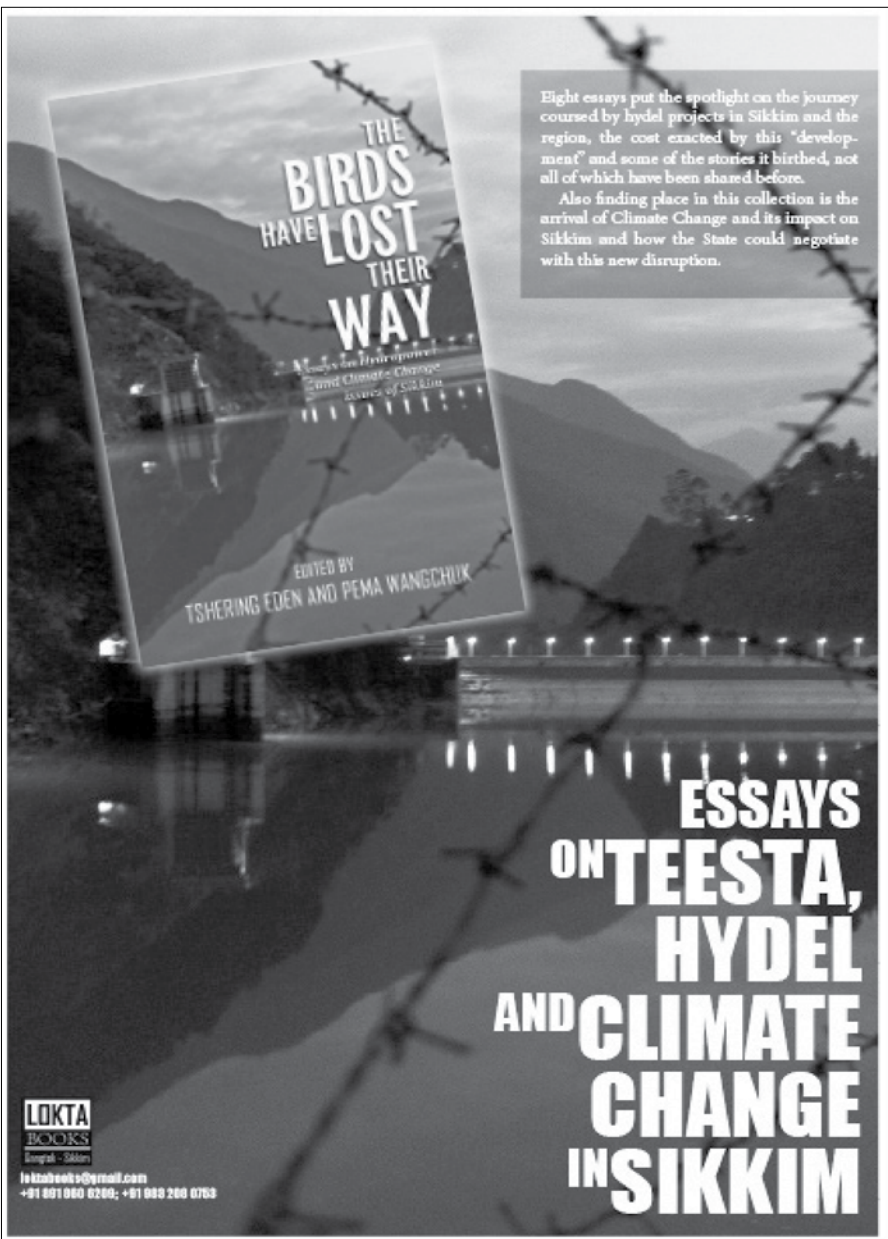
"I share a very good relationship with 'Cha-

chu' Steve Smith. He is one of the best brains in world cricket and we all enjoy a lot playing under him."

Asked what's the back story of the nickname, Samson said: "It started with Brad Hodge, he used to call Smith 'Chachu', then when Hodg left, I started calling Smith 'Chachu'. In return Smith also started calling me 'Chachu'. We both really enjoy and continue calling each other that."

While Dhoni is his idol, he also loves watching Jos Buttler in Royals and makes notes on how the star Englishman prepares for games. "I observe Jos especially given he too is a wicketkeeper-batsman. He's always working on his skills and his game and never sits idle.

"He's either working on his keeping, batting in the nets or running around the park. I love to observe and know how he thinks and prepares as a keeper before a game.





## RKFC coach and family returning home on Thursday

**NEW DELHI, MAY 6 (PTI):**

Stranded in Srinagar for more than a month due to the coronavirus-forced national lockdown, Real Kashmir FC head coach David Robertson and his family will finally return to Scotland on Thursday, ending an anxious wait to attend to his sick mother.

Robertson, his wife Kim, son Mason, who plays for the club, and three support staff reached Jammu on Wednesday by an official bus of RKFC which left Srinagar early in the morning. They will fly back home in a British Airways flight from Amritsar on Thursday afternoon.

With his mother undergoing chemotherapy in Aberdeen, Robertson and his family became anxious after international flights were suspended due to the lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been waiting for the state permit to travel to Amritsar and they got it on Tuesday.

"The British High Commission gave them the permit yesterday and so they left Srinagar at 5am in our club bus which has reached Jammu at 1pm today," RKFC co-owner Sandeep Chattoo told PTI from Srinagar.

The six of them will take rest for a while at the residence of Chattoo, who hails from Jammu, before proceeding to Amritsar in the evening in the same bus.

"It was my duty to look after them and they were in high spirits throughout as they have been staying in Srinagar for so long. But who does not want to go back home? I am in a way relieved that they will go back home and meet their near and dear ones," he added.

Under Robertson, Real Kashmir finished fourth this season (22 points from 15 matches). With five matches left to play, the All India Football Federation decided to wind up the I-League early due to the pandemic.

"We have chalked out our plans (for the future) and they will come back to Srinagar whenever the situation allows them," Chattoo said.

Robertson, Kim, Mason and other foreign recruits have been staying in Chattoo's hotel in Srinagar ever since the announcement of the lockdown.

Four other foreign players, all from Africa, including skipper Lovday Enyinnaya are still stuck in Chattoo's hotel.

# No soccer balls in sight: Serie A teams train individually

**ROME, MAY 6 (AP):** No soccer balls. No contact with teammates. And no entering the locker room.

One by one, Serie A players are returning to the training field this week under a strict set of guidelines amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Ten Sassuolo players were the first ones back Monday, with each player working out on their own at the club's training facility. Players were spread out over several fields some had an entire field to themselves and performed only light running exercises without any balls involved.

Another 10 Sassuolo players were due for workouts on Tuesday, when league-leader Juventus, Atalanta, Bologna and Udinese were also restarting.

Most of the other Italian league clubs were also expected to resume training on an individual basis this week before full team training is slated to restart on May 18.

There's a big desire to resume playing and the return to training, even individually, was definitely positive because little by little the players are returning to their jobs whether or not the season resumes, said Damiano Tommasi, the president of the Italian soccer players' association.

Having already been tested for the virus, cleared players are showing up at training centers already dressed for practice then leave immediately afterward to shower at home.



Cristiano Ronaldo arrived back in Turin late Monday after spending most of the lockdown at home in Madeira, Portugal, meaning he'll now have to spend 14 days in isolation before reporting to Juventus for training.

AC Milan has been the only major holdout so far, seeking more clarification from health and government officials before calling their players back to train.

While soccer officials hope to resume the season in June without fans, the Italian government has not given the go-ahead yet for the re-

maining 124 games.

The government is waiting for soccer officials to revise their protocol for what to do if a player or team member gets infected after returning to training: quarantine the entire team which could quite possibly result in the season being suspended again or only the positive player or team member.

Team training will resume May 18 if the protocol is approved, said Vincenzo Spadafora, Italy's sports minister. We should have a response by the end of the week. The Italian government is likely watching to see

what Germany decides Wednesday on restarting the Bundesliga.

I'll do everything I can so Serie A can resume safely, Spadafora said. At the same time, however, I can't tell you now if it can restart a month from now or in mid-June.

At least 15 Serie A players have tested positive for the virus since the league was suspended on March 9, when the government ordered a nationwide lockdown. Juventus standout Paulo Dybala and Atalanta reserve goalkeeper Marco Sportiello were reportedly still positive after several weeks of tests.

About 4.4 million Italians were allowed to go back to work Monday and more people ventured out after restrictions on movement eased for the first time in nearly two months.

There are 12 rounds remaining in Serie A, plus four matches that were postponed from the 25th round. Also, the Italian Cup semifinals were interrupted after the first-leg matches.

The only certain thing is that nobody has answers, Tommasi said, and therefore it's even more complicated to make decisions and know what the right thing to do is.

## British sport faces devastating £700m black hole from Covid-19 pandemic



**SEAN INGLE**

**LONDON, 06 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]:**

The devastating financial effect of coronavirus on British sport was laid bare on Tuesday with the Football League, the Rugby Football Union and the England and Wales Cricket Board revealing they could lose more than £700m between them in the next year.

With Premier League clubs also facing a potential £750m TV shortfall if the football season does not resume this summer, the financial damage to sport from Covid-19 is likely to run into billions.

That, however, is only the tip of the iceberg with UK Sport also confirming that six unnamed Olympic and Paralympic sports are facing a threat to their solvency within the next three months because they are unable to host events and membership fees and sponsorship have dried up.

Such is the severity of the problem – first revealed by the Guardian last month – that the chair of UK Sport, Dame Katherine Grainger, has asked the government for £53.4m in exceptional funding “within weeks” to ease the financial uncertainty for Great Britain's athletes and sports as they prepare for the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, now to be held in 2021.

“Sports are already struggling from loss of revenues from sponsorship, membership fees and events being cancelled,” Grainger said. “So if we can give them the reassurance that their long-term funding is in place, then they will not need to make decisions that could be quite disastrous for their sports.”

But as the digital, culture, media and sport select committee was told, all sports are facing crippling costs owing to being unable to hold matches in front of spectators. Tom Harrison, the chief executive of the ECB, warned that English cricket could

lose as much as £380m if there is no play this summer.

“We are still working on impact of Covid-19 across the entire game, but we anticipate the cost of no cricket this year could be as bad as £380m across all of our professional clubs and the ECB,” Harrison told MPs. “That is the worst-case scenario.”

There will be no professional cricket in England until at least 1 July and the Hundred, the governing body's flagship new competition, has been postponed until 2021. Harrison said he still hoped some international cricket would take place behind closed doors “with a following wind”, including England's matches against West Indies, Australia, Pakistan and Ireland.

However, he conceded: “We are starting at a £100m-plus loss this year whatever happens. We are going to have to take a good look at our cost base ... and cut our cloth accordingly. We have less money coming into the sport. It is the most significant financial challenge we have ever faced.”

The chairman of the English Football League, Rick Parry, painted a similarly bleak picture when he spoke to MPs, telling them the 71 lower league clubs were facing a £200m black hole by September.

Parry said it was impossible to predict how many clubs could go under but was adamant English football would have to undergo huge changes, including a salary cap for players, to sustain itself in the years ahead.

“In the Championship wages are 106% of turnover,” he said. “That is ridiculous and it is definitely not sustainable now or in the future. One benefit of going through this pain is that we will be shocked into a more sustainable model.”

“There is a need for a reset – it's overdue and it's necessary. We need a rescue package and we need to address the longer term

otherwise we will be back into problems in two to three years. We are heading for a financial hole of £200m by the end of September. Clubs are stacking up creditors and there are many uncertainties.”

Parry warned of a “very messy” legal battle if the Premier League tried to deny promotion to the three clubs from the Championship – adding that “lawyers are going to get very wealthy if that happens”.

Bill Sweeney, the chief executive of the RFU, said his organisation could lose £107m in the next year if England's autumn internationals and the Six Nations Championship were cancelled. That figure would be reduced to £85m if games against New Zealand, Argentina, Tonga and Australia at Twickenham in November were played without fans. But Sweeney warned the RFU may end up needing a government bailout.

He said: “It is a very significant loss of revenue and we are doing what we can to mitigate it. If this was to be prolonged and go through into the next summer and the Six Nations games were impacted, then there would be a catastrophic impact on rugby union in England.”

In Sweeney's view it could take between four and six years for the RFU to recover financially from the coronavirus crisis. He also confirmed that despite cutting costs, the RFU would be reporting £15m losses at the end of this financial year next month.

In evidence to the MPs the Sport England chief executive, Tim Hollingsworth, stressed the impact the pandemic was having on grassroots sport and activity. One fact from Hollingsworth particularly cut through: that 44% of children are now doing no physical activity at all, or less than the 30 minutes recommended by the chief medical officer since the crisis began. That is up from a third before the lockdown began.

## Golf industry sets three-stage to reopening US courses

**MIAMI, MAY 6 (AFP):** US golf industry leaders unveiled a three-stage plan to reopen courses with safety protocols in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Almost all states permit or are set to allow golf courses to reopen with social distancing and other measures aimed at avoiding the spread of the deadly virus over more than 16,000 layouts.

The “Back2Golf” program, supported by the PGA and LPGA Tours plus the US Golf Association and PGA of America, also has the backing of US course owners and superintendents and club managers.

“While we recognize there's no perfect solution and various areas of the country will progress in these phases at a different pace, it's imperative that we reopen golf in a way that prioritizes the health and well being of the entire golf com-

munity,” PGA of America chief executive Seth Waugh said.

The stages follow guidelines for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including social distancing and greater sanitization protocols, and allow for differing stages in different areas as city and state regulations allow activity.

Stage one allows for no more than 10 people in a single area, with players distancing from each other while walking or going solo in golf carts with those in vulnerable groups not participating. Stage two would allow for up to 50 people in an area but players still distancing from one another and still no golfing for those in vulnerable groups such as being over 60 or with existing health conditions.

A restricted course set-up remains in place, going without rakes or removing flagsticks, with

limited clubhouse activities and restrictions on leagues and events.

Stage three, dubbed “the new normal,” would allow golf for vulnerable people provided they use social distance guidelines and other precautionary measures. Others should minimize time in crowded situations but all golf operations can resume with unrestricted staffing.

Comprehensive sanitary procedures would remain in place with normal course maintenance and operations.

“Operation playbook” guidelines will be updated as CDC guidelines change based upon the coronavirus pandemic. “The importance of social distancing and responsible behavior during this pandemic has become a part of everyone's daily life,” Waugh said.

“Reopening golf responsibly under strict social distancing practices is something we can all unify behind.”

## Premier League return would lift morale says UK minister

**LONDON, MAY 6 (AFP):**

Restarting the Premier League would be a boost to Britain's morale amid the coronavirus crisis, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said.

Premier League chiefs have targeted a June return to action as they bid to finish the season over the summer.

England's top-flight has been suspended since March 13 and there are still 92 matches remaining, with the title, relegation and Champions League qualification all to be resolved.

Some critics have questioned whether the Premier League is trying to return too soon after the top tier seasons in France and the Netherlands were abandoned.

But Raab sees merit in the Premier League's ‘Project Restart’.



“I think it would lift spirits of the nation and people would like to see us get back to work and children can go to school safely but also past times like sport,” he said during a government press conference.

“I know the government has had constructive meetings with sports bodies to plan for athletes return to training when it's safe.” However, Raab emphasised sport in Britain could only resume once it can be done

safely.

“I can tell you that the Culture Secretary has been working on a plan to get sport played behind closed doors when we move to second phase so that is something we are looking at,” he said.

“Of course, the key point though, we can only do it when the medical advice and scientific advice is that it can be done safely and sustainably but certainly that is something under active consideration.”

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# Germany plans to reopen as death toll spikes in US

Germany on Wednesday unveiled a plan for reopening, as Europe's largest economy tries to get the wheels turning after weeks of shutdown, as the deadly coronavirus continued to wreak havoc in the United States with a spike in the daily death toll.

The cautious steps towards normality came as South Korea leapt back to life and children in the Chinese city that is ground zero for the global pandemic filed back to classes for the first time since January.

Progress in lifting lockdowns was seen from Europe to Hong Kong, even as the global death toll hit almost 257,000, according to an AFP tally.

In the United States, President Donald Trump pushed for an economic restart as he made his first major foray out of the White House since US virus restrictions began.

"We can't keep our country closed for the next five years," Trump said on a trip to a mask-making factory in Arizona, as he conceded that some people would be "badly affected".

And in a sign his administration no longer considers the pandemic its top priority, the White House is set to disband the emergency task force handling the country's outbreak.

"I think we're starting to look at the Memorial Day (May 25) window, early June window" for shutting it down, Vice President Mike Pence said. Highlighting the challenges involved however, New York's subway system closed for the first time in its history Tuesday night for disinfecting as authorities try to balance functionality with health and safety.

"This is a city that never sleeps, has a subway system that never shuts down. So this is unprecedented," said Sarah Feinberg, interim president of the New York City Transit Authority.

The United States remains the worst-hit country



with more than 70,000 deaths. It recorded 2,333 more fatalities in the 24 hours to Tuesday evening, according to a Johns Hopkins University tracker, twice as many as the day before.

- 'Export hit' -

The relentless march of the virus continued as Latin America logged its 15,000th death and Britain passed Italy as the country with the world's second highest number of deaths.

But elsewhere in Europe, hard-hit Spain and France reported a levelling off of figures, offering hope of an end to a pandemic that has overwhelmed healthcare systems and shattered economies.

Germany is eyeing an almost complete return to normality in May, with plans to send all pupils back to school and restart top-flight football, according to a draft agreement seen by AFP.

The Bundesliga would become the first of Eu-

rope's top five leagues to restart, a prospect Health Minister Jens Spahn said could make the competition an "export hit".

With about 165,000 cases and 7,000 deaths, Germany has so far been able to prevent the scenes of dire overcrowding in its hospitals that have been seen elsewhere in Europe.

The need to reopen the nation's economy was underlined Wednesday by fresh official data showing German manufacturers in March endured their worst plunge in new orders on record.

- School's in -

In Asia, once the epicentre of the pandemic, there were scenes of joy in the Chinese city of Wuhan as youngsters returned to school kitted out in masks. Senior students were back in front of chalk boards and digital displays for the first time since the virus exploded at the start of the year.

"School is finally reopening!" posted one user on Weibo, China's Twitter-like short messaging platform. "This is the first time that I'm so happy to go back to school, although I have to sit a monthly examination."

Wednesday's back-to-school excitement was the latest step in a gradual normalising of life in Wuhan and surrounding Hubei province, where the coronavirus is believed to have made the leap from animals to humans before spreading around the world.

In neighbouring South Korea workers went back to offices, and museums and libraries reopened under eased social distancing rules after new virus cases dropped to a trickle.

The country endured one of the worst early outbreaks of the disease outside China and while it never imposed a compulsory lockdown, strict social distancing has been widely observed since March.

The restrictions imposed globally to curb the spread of the virus have gutted national economies and on Tuesday the economic casualties continued to pile up.

Spain added 280,000 people to its jobless ranks, while airline Virgin Atlantic said it would have to fire one in three of its staff as the virus grounds planes worldwide. Walt Disney said it expected an impact on its business of \$1.4 billion in the current fiscal quarter as a result of a massive hit to its theme parks and other operations.

And with social distancing weighing on people mentally, some people have been turning to tech to deal with the loneliness of lockdowns.

Elizabeth Francola downloaded an app with an AI chatbot to keep her company during the long days indoors in Houston, creating a virtual boyfriend named Micah.

"It's nice knowing you have someone to talk to in the morning," the 32-year-old said.

## South Korea reports only two new COVID-19 cases

**SEOUL, MAY 6 (AP):** South Korea has reported two fresh cases of the new coronavirus as its outbreak continues to slow.

Figures released by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday brought national totals to 10,806 infections and 255 virus-related deaths.

The KCDC says both new cases were detected during screening at airports and that no fresh local transmissions were reported from South Korean cities and towns.

While more than 1,100 of the country's cases have imported, such cases have declined in recent weeks as authorities stepped up border controls, such as imposing two-day quarantines on all passengers arriving from abroad.

With its caseload slowing, South Korean authorities have relaxed social distancing guidelines and are preparing to reopen school.

South Korea's professional baseball league began its new season without fans in the stands on Tuesday.

South Korean Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun during a virus meeting on Wednesday called for vigilance and instructed officials to prepare for a possible second wave of infections. He said preventing an overwhelming of hospitals in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area would be key.

## Judge restores New York Democratic presidential primary

**NEW YORK, MAY 6 (AP):** The New York Democratic presidential primary must take place June 23 because canceling it would be unconstitutional and deprive withdrawn presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Andrew Yang of proper representation at the Democratic convention, a judge ruled Tuesday.

U.S. District Judge Analisa Torres in Manhattan ruled after lawyers for Sanders and Yang argued Monday that they otherwise would be harmed irreparably.

The judge said there was enough time before the primary to plan how to carry it out safely. She acknowledged that the reason it was canceled to prevent the spread of COVID-19 was an important state interest but said she was unconvinced it justified infringing rights, especially since every voter can use an absentee ballot. She noted that no other state had canceled its primary.

Torres wrote that removing presidential contenders from the primary ballot deprived them of votes for the Democratic Party's nomination. She said it also diminished the delegates' influence on the party's platform and their ability to react to unexpected convention developments.

It also deprived Democratic voters of the opportunity to elect delegates who could push their point of view in that



forum," she said.

The loss of these First Amendment rights is a heavy hardship." The Democratic members of the State's Board of Elections voted last week to cancel the presidential primary even though New York still planned to hold its congressional and state-level primaries June 23.

They cited fears the coronavirus could spread among an extra 1.5 million voters who would show up for an election in which former Vice President Joe Biden already has been endorsed by the major candidates he had faced.

The fact that the primary was going to occur on June 23 anyway because of other contested races, including a number of congressional primaries, led Torres to question on Monday why the primary wasn't canceled entirely if safety was such a concern.

Asked for reaction, New York state Democratic party chair Jay Jacobs said: We are reviewing it. Jacobs had called

holding the primary unnecessary with the suspension of Sanders' campaign and said reduced turnout could reduce the need for many poll workers.

State board of elections spokesman John Conklin said: No comment at this time. Our lawyers are reviewing the decision. Biden's campaign declined to comment.

The campaign has kept its distance from the situation, not wanting to become embroiled in a new fight over nearly 300 delegates to the summer convention and saying the campaign didn't ask for the primary to be scrapped.

Biden became the presumptive nominee when Bernie Sanders suspended his campaign last month, but Sanders had made clear that he wanted to continue collecting delegates from remaining primaries, including in New York, to maximize his influence over the party platform and other decisions at the Democratic conven-

tion this summer.

Biden's campaign did not want to be seen as stepping on Sanders' efforts to do that in a state like New York, where the Vermont senator maintains a significant following.

Sanders' allies celebrated the ruling.

Credit to Andrew Yang and all the grassroots groups that have been carrying on the fight for democracy in New York, said Larry Cohen, who chairs Our Revolution, the grassroots organization spun out of Sanders' 2016 White House bid.

Vote by mail is the answer to the pandemic, Cohen continued, not canceling the presidential primary when more than 80% of democrats have other elections the same day.

Sanders' representatives, in a statement forwarded by attorney Arthur Schwartz, who argued before Torres, called the decision an extraordinary victory for the democratic process here in New York, a state much in need of something to cheer about."

Attorney Jeff Kurzon, representing Yang and Congressional candidate Jonathan Herzog, said he was thankful that the judge upheld the laws and protected the right to vote.

We are fired up and up and ready to go vote on June 23!" he wrote in an email.

## Trump admin ignored concern over hydroxychloroquine import from India, Pak: Fired US scientist

**BY LALIT K JHA**

**WASHINGTON, MAY 6 (PTI):** A fired American scientist has alleged that the Trump administration ignored the concern of doctors in the US over the importation of hydroxychloroquine from "uninspected factories" in India and Pakistan and flooded the country with the "unproven and potentially dangerous" anti-malarial drug.

In a complaint filed on Tuesday before the US Office of Special Counsel, which oversees the protection of whistleblowers, Rick Bright alleged that top officials of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) repeatedly ignored his messages and that of others over the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and medicines like hydroxychloroquine in particular.

When fired, Bright was the head of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, a research agency within the HHS. He reported directly to Robert Kadlec, the assistant secretary of preparedness and response at the HHS.

"Dr Bright remained extremely concerned about the drug's importation from Pakistan and India because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had not inspected the drugs or the factory that produced them," the complaint said.

"In Dr Bright's experience, drugs from uninspected factories can be contaminated or dosed improperly and this could obviously be dangerous to those who took the medication.

"Apparently unconcerned about this known danger, Dr Kadlec and others in the administration sought to 'flood' the marketplace with these drugs," it alleged.

The Trump administration imported nearly five crore units of hydroxychloroquine which in March received Emergency Use Authorisation from the FDA.

The Trump administration, the complaint said, was not interested in hearing from Bright and his department or subject matter experts.

"Dr Bright and his team had apparently spent all their political capital in their effort to limit chloroquine and rushing into a potentially dangerous situation and that there was no one to help stop the push to 'flood' the country with this unproven and potentially dangerous drug," the complaint said.

"He concluded that his only remaining avenue was to share his concern with the journalist who understood the specific issue and risks associated with these drugs and who had already gathered substantial information from multiple sources," it added.

The complaint alleged that HHS Secretary Alex Azar's directive to secure a Nationwide Expanded Access IND protocol for chloroquine, based on scant scientific evidence and on such a short time-frame, sent Bright and his colleagues scrambling.

Within the hour, Bright called a meeting of Dr Linda Lambert, Chief Medical Officer Dr Robert Walker, Director of Regulatory and Quality Affairs Dr Tremel Faison, and Drs Johnson, Disbrow and Houchens to discuss the directive.

The group expressed serious concern about a Nationwide Expanded Access IND protocol for chloroquine given the lack of clinical data available about its therapeutic benefits and concern about its potential safety risks, especially if administered without close physician supervision, it said.

Bright and his FDA colleagues were also concerned about the quality and potential toxicity of the chloroquine supplies produced and shipped in from facilities in India and Pakistan that were not approved by the FDA and therefore, not approved to be used in the US marketplace.

The HHS clinical and regulatory expert teams worked frantically for 48 hours without sleep to come up with a plan that would ensure the greatest level of safety for people who received this drug.

They discussed narrower options for the rollout, including a small pilot study, and established an inter-agency working group of clinical and regulatory experts to determine the safest way to make the unproven drug available without causing harm to the American public, the complaint said.

When fired earlier, Bright alleged that he was ousted because of his "insistence" that the government spend funds on "safe and scientifically-vetted solutions" to address the coronavirus crisis and not on "drugs, vaccines and other technologies that lack scientific merit".

The coronavirus pandemic has killed over 70,000 people and infected more than 1.2 million in the US.

## China reports two new coronavirus cases, 20 asymptomatic infections

**BY K J M VARMA**

**BEIJING, MAY 6 (PTI):** China has reported two confirmed coronavirus cases and 20 new asymptomatic infections, including three imported ones, taking their total number to over 960, health authorities said on Wednesday.

The National Health Commission (NHC) said on Wednesday that no new locally transmitted cases of COVID-19 were reported on Tuesday across the Chinese mainland.

However, two confirmed cases

arriving from outside the mainland were reported in China's Shaanxi Province, it said.

Twenty new asymptomatic infections of the novel coronavirus were reported Tuesday, including three imported ones, the NHC said.

With this total number of asymptomatic cases has increased to 967.

Asymptomatic cases refer to people who are tested COVID-19 positive but develop no symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat. However, they pose a risk

of spreading the disease to others.

The death toll of coronavirus cases in China remained 4,633 people as no new fatalities were reported, the NHC said.

The total number COVID-19 cases in China reached 82,883, while 339 patients who were still undergoing treatment, the NHC said, adding that 77,911 people have been discharged from hospitals after treatment.

No new deaths from COVID-19 were reported on the Chinese mainland, it said.

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**BEING NICE!** Actress, Ariel Winter waited in line outside the bank in a high tech red face mask, sweatpants and a Be A Nice Human t-shirt in North Hollywood.

## Cate Blanchett in talks for 'Borderlands' film adaptation

**LOS ANGELES, MAY 6 (PTI):** Two-time Oscar-winning actor Cate Blanchett is in negotiations to star in the film adaptation of popular video game "Borderlands".

The project has been set up at Lionsgate with Eli Roth of "Death Wish" fame on board as the director, according to Variety.

The 2009 action role-playing first-person shooter game is about a group of four "Vault Hunters", who travel to the distant planet Pandora to hunt down an alien vault, rumoured to contain advanced alien technology.

They find themselves battling the local wildlife and bandit population, but ultimately attempting to stop the head of a private corporation army from reaching the vault first.

If the deal goes through, Blanchett, 50, will essay the role of Lilith, one of the main protagonists in the game series who is part of the Siren class, a group of women with in-

credible powers.

The project will be produced by Avi Arad and Ari Arad are producing the project through their Arad Productions. Erik Feig will produce for Picturestart.

Blanchett currently stars in FX minise-



ries "Mrs. America", which marks her first cable TV gig. She will next feature in filmmaker Guillermo del Toro's much-anticipated "Nightmare Alley" remake opposite Bradley Cooper and Rooney Mara.

## Mission Impossible to Mission Control: Tom Cruise to film in space

**T**om Cruise will film his next Hollywood blockbuster on location -- 250 miles up in the air and orbiting the Earth once every 90 minutes.

The "Top Gun" star will fly through the stratosphere to shoot an as-yet-unknown film aboard the International Space Station (ISS), NASA said on Tuesday.

The American space agency's director Jim Bridenstine confirmed the news on Twitter, saying he was excited that the move would "inspire a new generation of engineers and scientists" to work on space travel.

Cruise, 56, famously still does his own cliff-hanging, car-rolling stunts.

He gained his commercial piloting license after his role in Top Gun as Pete "Maverick" Mitchell, a hotshot US Navy pilot who has a dangerous and reckless flying style, and reportedly flew some aircraft in the long-awaited sequel to the 1986 classic due later this year.

But if his latest daring project goes ahead, Cruise will be the first Hollywood A-lister to appear onscreen from outside the planet's atmosphere.

Entertainment website Deadline Hollywood first reported rumours of the film shoot on the weekend, adding that tech mogul Elon Musk's SpaceX

venture was attached to the project. SpaceX is slated to launch astronauts to space from US soil for the first time in nearly a decade later this month aboard the Crew Dragon, which will dock with the ISS.

Musk and SpaceX have yet to confirm their involvement in the film ven-

ture, but Musk responded to Bridenstine's tweet to say the project "should be a lot of fun."

His firm has established itself as a leader in the private space sector with billions of dollars in funding from NASA since the late 2000s, and its rockets

have been supplying cargo to the ISS since 2012. SpaceX was one of three companies awarded almost \$1 billion in contracts to build lunar landers, as part of efforts by the United States to return human beings to the moon.

Deadline Hollywood said there were few other details known about Cruise's



movie project but reported it was not part of his box office hit franchise "Mission: Impossible."

The seventh film in that series is set to hit screens next year after production was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

## Zoe Kravitz tried ditching her surname

**LOS ANGELES, MAY 6 (PTI):** "Big Little Lies" star Zoe Kravitz says she once thought about not using her father Lenny Kravitz's surname.

The actor is the daughter of the singer-songwriter and actor Lisa Bonet.

"I thought about not using it. I kind of tried to do it, but it just like didn't stick. People kept on forgetting. Now one was responding to this idea I had. I would tell my agent and it just wasn't happening," Zoe told Dax Shepard on his "Armchair Ex-

pert" podcast. The 31-year-old actor said she soon changed her mind as she felt her father was "a little sad" about her trying to disassociate from him. Lenny and Lisa divorced after six years in 1993.

"I also think I mentioned it to my dad at one point and I think I could feel that it made him a little sad."

"So, I just kind of stuck with it. I used to be really insecure about people just associating me with my family and now I love it - I'm so proud of them and it's cool," she said.

## Judi Dench becomes oldest personality to grace British Vogue cover

**LONDON, MAY 6 (PTI):** Veteran star Judi Dench says there is nothing likeable about getting older.

The actor, who is the oldest celebrity to appear on the cover of British Vogue, said she disagrees with the oft-quoted adage that age is an "attitude".

Asked by the magazine what she likes most about being 85, Dench said, "Nothing."

"I don't like it at all. I don't think about it. I don't want to think about it. They say age is an attitude... It's horrible," she added.

The "Skyfall" star said she

shares sentiments with colleague Maggie Smith, also 85, whom she claims is beginning to worry about losing her driving license.

"I saw Mags - Maggie Smith - the other day, and she said, 'My God, I think they're going to stop me driving my car'," she recalled.

Dench, who was forced to give up driving in 2017 when her sight began to deteriorate, said she missed getting behind the wheel of a car.

"It's the most terrible shock to your system. Ghostly. It's terrible to be so dependent on people," she said.

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## 'Grey's Anatomy' writers to start work on next season soon: showrunner



**LOS ANGELES, MAY 6 (PTI):** "Grey's Anatomy" showrunner Krista Vernoff says the writers of the series will get together to discuss its 17th season this month through conference call.

The chapter 16 of the long-running medical drama was cut short due to the coronavirus pandemic and wrapped up with its episode 21, which aired on April 9.

"I'm going to start up the writers' room in May, but it's

going to be a 'Zoom room'," Vernoff told TVLine.

The writer said under normal conditions, the cast and crew would start shooting in July, but they may have to wait considering the COVID-19 outbreak.

"The hope is that we will be able to start production when we usually do, which is in July. But we have to wait and see how this thing plays out, obviously," she added.

### ARIES:

You're in the mood to spill some truth tea this morning, and with good reason. But here's the thing about the truth: not everybody is in the space to receive it. The key is to say what you need to without hurting or attacking the other person. For instance, say, "I wish you would help me with the chores" instead of "You never do anything around the house" or "You're watching television all day".

Tip: Be mindful of the manner in which you communicate your truth.

### TAURUS:

Perfection is overrated. So is doing things by the book. You know what never goes out of style, though? Being yourself and standing in your truth. Taurus, this is a time of coming into your own; of shedding the false layers and letting go of the masks you wear in the outside world. Not everybody is going to be comfortable with who you are becoming. But their opinions matter little.

Tip: As Oscar Wilde said, "Be yourself. Everybody is already taken."

### GEMINI:

The ideas on your mind are divinely guided, but it's not time to put them into action yet. The cards are talking about the need to research, delve into the given subject, and talk to experts in the same field. The revelations you will have along the way will help create a solid base. In the realm of your interpersonal relationships, respond, don't react. It's best to share your opinions only when you have all the facts in your hand.

Tip: Do your research.

### CANCER:

Happiness is okay. Anger, sadness, loneliness, and melan-

choly? Hell, no! They don't have a place in our lives. Oh, the lies we are taught as children! The lies that become a part of our narrative. A notice issued in public interest: everything you are feeling is valid. This is not an encouragement to engage in toxic behaviour that can be detrimental to other people, but a reminder to accept yourself as you are. Awareness is the first step on the road to transformation.

Tip: Accept what's coming up rather than rejecting your emotions.

### LEO:

Ready, set, go! It's time to put the given plan into action. Stepping into the unknown is always daunting, Leo. Think of the butterflies fluttering in your belly as a sign that you are on the right track. Nostalgia is also going to be a big theme for you. You may find yourself thinking wistfully about all the places you visited over the past couple of years and the attractive strangers who made you fall in love with these places a little more than you anticipated. So what if you can't take the next flight out of the city?

Tip: It's time to put that plan into action.

### VIRGO:

No two days are alike, Virgo. Waking up on the right side of the bed makes you feel like everything is under control. Waking up on the wrong side, however, hypnotises you into believing that it's all likely to go downhill from here. But, the light chases the darkness. The ebb is followed by the flow. Accept the duality that is synonymous with our existence on the physical plane. Accept every aspect of the human existence knowing that it is but transient. This is the secret to staying centred.

Tip: Accept the duality that is synonymous with our lives.

### LIBRA:

Your time away from the matrix has helped you value and appreciate your home in ways you never did before. This is your sanctuary, Libra. A place where you can let go of the masks (and the expectations) and be who you really are. Now isn't that the most liberating feeling in the world? What the cards are encouraging you to do today: pour your energy into this slice of paradise. For some, this could mean a cleaning and decluttering spree.

Tip: Matters of the home take centre stage.

### SCORPIO:

If life is a school, then everything we have signed up for is a part of our soul contract. You can either complain about what you are experiencing on a soul level, or face each challenge with the gift of awareness. The choice is and has always been yours. Today, you're being asked to acknowledge what the Universe is showing you. It is your willingness to accept the lesson that will help you break free from the karma.

Tip: Ask yourself the question, "What are my circumstances teaching me?"

### SAGITTARIUS:

Adulting: also known as the process of regularly clearing the trash can. It's been a hard couple of weeks, Sagittarius, and there's nothing like decluttering to move the energy that's been weighing you down. Once your belongings pass the "Does it spark joy?" test, examine what's left and rearrange everything in a way that makes it accessible. Now that we have the physical space sorted, let's move on to the realm of emotions. What are the things that no longer serve you?

Tip: Declutter your space. Detoxify your mind, body and soul.

### CAPRICORN:

Nobody is whole, perfect or integrated, Capricorn. We're all a work-in-progress. What matters is that we show up for ourselves everyday and commit to becoming better versions of ourselves. Saturnians in committed relationships are being asked to exercise the same kindness and compassion towards their partners.

Tip: The cards are encouraging you to embrace the virtues of kindness and compassion.

### AQUARIUS:

Aquarius, you're being asked to reflect upon a certain goal you set for yourself around the time of your birthday. The time to put the given plan into action has come. Yes, you will have to befriend courage, especially if you are stepping into an unknown territory. A Pema Chödrön quote to live by when you find yourself confronted by self-doubt: "The interesting thing is that the more willing you are to step out of your comfort zone, the more comfortable you feel in your life."

Tip: The time to set your plan into motion has come.

### PISCES:

Sometimes we hold onto memories long after the people in question have exited our lives, and in doing so we somehow keep them alive. If they wanted to be a part of your life, they would be, Pisces. They would have found a way to stand up for you despite the many curveballs life threw at them. But they made a choice, and now you're being asked to make yours. Express your gratitude. Say a heartfelt goodbye. But know that until you cut the cords, you will not be able to make space for a new way of life.

Tip: Sometimes you have to say goodbye to the good memories too.