



**PRAGATI FOUNDATION  
DISTRIBUTES RELIEF  
AT SINGTAM  
pg 02**

**Feel Free to Disagree**  
...but don't deny yourself access to free voices  
pg 4

**RHENOCK DONATES RS 1  
LAC TO CM'S RELIEF FUND  
pg 02**



# SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 110 | Gangtok | Wednesday | 29 April 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | 5

## Fire destroys 4 shops at Lall Bazaar



**SAGAR CHHETRI**

**GANGTOK, 28 APR:**

A fire was reported at Kanchenjunga Shopping Complex here at Lall Bazaar on Tuesday afternoon.

Four stalls on the first floor of the complex were destroyed in the incident.

While goods in two stalls have been majorly damaged, goods in the other two stalls have sustained partial damage.

Prompt action by a team from the Gangtok Fire Station first confined the fire to stop it from spreading to other stalls, bringing it under control within half an hour of operations.

It is informed that the Gangtok Fire Station received the fire call today at 2:24 PM and two fire tenders along with a 12-member team led by FSO Matthew Rai and SFSO Samsher Subba rushed to the spot.

The firefighters were supported by workers of Gangtok Municipal Corporation and others.

The cause of the fire has still not been established and the matter is under investigation.

Minister for Urban Development & Housing Department, Arun Uprety also visited the spot and met the affected vendors.

Speaking to media persons, the Minister stated that after proper investigation and assessment, the government will take appropriate steps for the affected vendors.

He appealed to the people to stay alert and conscious regarding fires.

## COVID-19 death toll rises to 934 in India; cases climb to 29,435: Health ministry

**NEW DELHI, APR 28 (PTI):** The death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 934 and the number of cases climbed to 29,435 in the country on Tuesday, according to the Union Health Ministry

The number of active COVID-19 cases stood at 21,632, while 6,868 people have recovered and one patient has migrated, the ministry said

The total number of cases include 111 foreign nationals

A total of 48 deaths were reported since Monday evening of which 27 fatalities were reported from Maharashtra, 11 from Gujarat, five from Rajasthan, four from Madhya Pradesh and one from Jammu and Kashmir

Of the 934 deaths, Maharashtra tops the tally with 369 fatalities, followed by Gujarat at 162, Madhya Pradesh at 110, Delhi at 54, Rajasthan at 46 and Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh at 31 each

The death toll reached 26 in Telangana, 24 in Tamil Nadu while West Bengal and Karantaka have reported 20 deaths each

Punjab has registered 18 fatalities so far. The disease has claimed seven lives in Jammu and Kashmir, four in Kerala while Jharkhand and Haryana have recorded three COVID-19 deaths each

Bihar has reported two deaths, while Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Assam have reported one fatality each, according to the ministry's data

The ministry's data updated in the morning stated that the highest number of confirmed cases in the country are from Maharashtra at 8,590 followed by Gujarat at 3,548, Delhi at 3,108, Rajasthan at 2,262, Madhya Pradesh at 2,168, Uttar Pradesh at 1,955 and Tamil Nadu at 1,937

The number of COVID-19 cases has gone up to 21,183 in Andhra Pradesh and 21,004 in Telangana.

The number of cases has risen to 697 in West Bengal, 7546 in Jammu and Kashmir, 7512 in Karnataka, 481 in Kerala, 345 in Bihar and 313 in Punjab

Haryana has reported 296 coronavirus cases, while Odisha has 118 cases. Eighty-two people have been infected with the virus in Jharkhand and 51 in Uttarakhand

Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh have reported 40 cases each,

Chhattisgarh has 37 cases while Assam has registered 36 infections each so far

Andaman and Nicobar Islands has 33 COVID-19 cases while Ladakh has reported 20 infections

## Sikkim gets four Truenat machines for COVID-19 screening TESTING IN SILIGURI WILL CONTINUE: HEALTH SECY

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 28 APR:**

Health Secretary, Dr PT Bhutia today informed that Sikkim received four Truenat machines today which will be used for conducting screening tests for COVID-19. The machines are being set up and calibrated, and if all goes well they would be ready for use by Wednesday, he added.

Dr Bhutia informed that along with these screening tests, samples will continue to be sent to North Bengal Medical College Siliguri for testing.

There was already a machine in the STNM hospital which is also being recalibrated to be used like the Truenat machine and altogether the hospital should have 5 machines that can conduct 5 tests in one hour, he said.

He further informed that another CBNAAT machine is also expected to arrive soon which can also conduct COVID-19 screening tests.

However, it is not confirmed if these new machines are capable of carrying out proper tests and are more likely to be used for screening purposes.



Meanwhile, the Health Secretary informed that it has been decided to conduct tests for the state's frontline workers like health workers, police personnel, truck drivers, etc working in border areas are also going to be tested since they are more at risk of infection.

Testing guidelines continue to change and while earlier the guidelines said that indiscriminate

testing should be avoided, now the centre has asked states to carry out more tests especially of frontline workers, he added.

Dr Bhutia informed that the State Task Force on COVID-19 held a meeting today where it was decided to give first priority to patients from the state who are stranded outside. After that the state will try to bring home students

### WHAT ARE TRUENAT MACHINES?

- Indian Council of Medical Research [ICMR] has approved the use of Truenat machines for COVID-19 testing. The machines were earlier used for testing of Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis.
- Truenat is a smaller, battery operated machine which does not require intensive training and can be used in smaller settings like PHCs.
- Nasal and throat swabs will be used for testing and the machine can provide test results in around 60 minutes.

who are stranded outside.

The meeting discussed preparations to receive people from outside whenever that happens, he added.

So far, 113 samples have been sent for testing to Siliguri and test results are awaited for one sample. He informed that the state is equipped to handle any case of COVID-19 for now.

## CM apprises Governor on COVID-19 preparedness Data collection on stranded Sikkimese in process: CM

**GANGTOK, 28 APR (IPR):**

Chief Minister, PS Tamang (Golay) called on Governor, Ganga Prasad earlier at Raj Bhawan today to discuss the prevalent situation regarding COVID-19. The CM was accompanied by Cabinet Ministers, Chief Secretary, DGP and HoDs of the line department.

The CM apprised the Governor regarding the measures taken by the State government during the second phase of lockdown and conveyed gratitude for his concern for the State and the people of Sikkim.

The Governor enquired about the well



being of the frontline warriors and the status of the construction of the testing facility and availability of essential

commodities in the State.

The CM informed that the State government has initiated the process of collecting data of people

who are stranded outside

the State. However, these people can come back to the State provided the interstate transportation

is open, he added.

Mobile testing units have been set up at Rangpo and we have already received four testing machines which are being installed at STNM, the HCM stated.

The Governor was also briefed about the quarantine facilities that have been identified for the same. The testing lab is on the verge of completion and the testing machine and technicians are being brought to Sikkim as soon as possible, the CM informed.

Similarly, specific vehicles have been identified for transportation of

essential goods.

Agricultural works and factories have been functioning and construction works are being carried out with materials available in the State.

The Governor emphasized that we should continue with social distancing, take necessary precautions and respects the authorities during the time of crisis.

The CM has assured him that guidelines will be implemented based on the situation in the State while keeping in mind the instructions received from the central government.

## Moody's slashes India growth forecast to 0.2 pc for 2020

**NEW DELHI, APR**

**28 (PTI):**

Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday slashed India growth forecast for calendar year 2020 to 0.2 per cent, from 2.5 per cent projected in March.

For 2021, Moody's expects India's growth to rebound to 6.2 per cent.

In its report titled - Global Macro Outlook 2020-21 (April 2020 update), Moody's has lowered G-20 advanced economies as a group to contract by 5.8 per cent in 2020.

Moody's said the economic costs of coronavirus crisis amid the near shutdown of the global economy are accumulating rapidly.

It expects G-20 advanced economies as

a group to contract by 5.8 per cent in 2020. Even with a gradual recovery, 2021 real GDP in most advanced economies is expected to be below pre-coronavirus levels.

China's economy is forecast to grow by 1 per cent in 2020.

"India extended a nationwide lockdown to 40 days from 21 days, but relaxed restrictions in rural areas to facilitate agricultural harvesting in the second half of April. The country has determined that many

of these areas are free of the virus. India also plans a phased opening of different regions while continuing to carry out identification and contract tracing," Moody's said.

## Sikkimese tests positive for COVID-19 in Delhi CM REASSURES THAT SHE IS RECEIVING PROPER TREATMENT, CALLS ON PEOPLE NOT TO PANIC

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 28 APR:**

One person from Sikkim undergoing treatment in New Delhi has tested positive for COVID-19.

The 36-year-old woman was staying at Denzong Kunga Khangsang [DKK Bhawan] in New Delhi while undergoing treatment.

Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay], is a statement issued

online today, confirmed the incident and explained the lady was undergoing dialysis at a hospital in New Delhi.

He informed that it has still not been established where she contracted the virus from. Meanwhile, the lady and her attendants have been hospitalized in Delhi, the CM informed and all other people currently staying at DKK Bhawan have been proper

quarantined.

The CM stressed that there was no need to panic and that all should pray for the lady's recovery.

In his daily bulletin, the Health Secretary, Dr PT Bhutia confirmed this and said that others residing in DKK Bhawan have also been quarantined and will undergo tests.

"We are trying to get all of them tested and treated," said Dr Bhutia.

## NGT issues instructions on its functioning from May 4

**NEW DELHI, APR 28**

**(PTI):**

The National Green Tribunal Tuesday issued instructions regarding its functioning from May 4, when the Covid-19 lockdown is slated to be relaxed, stating that the Chairperson, Members and officers (Deputy Registrars and above) will attend the Office with 100 per cent attendance.

As for the remaining staff, up to 33 per cent

of the strength will physically attend the office as separately notified from time to time, the NGT said.

According to the office order issued by the NGT, the section heads/incharge of all sections shall prepare rosters of staff required to attend office physically by rotation and the staff members not required to present physically at the office.

However, they shall

always remain available on phone and electronic means of communication, and shall attend office physically as and when required, it said.

"Considering the health and safety of lawyers / public / litigants / staff, till the situation of Corona improves, judicial work will be conducted by the Benches of NGT only by Video Conferencing, without physical presence/

appearance of parties or their counsel in the NGT complex," the circular said.

It said that only online filing (e-filing) of cases will be allowed and no physical filing is permitted. It further said: "The parties/lawyers may request for listing or adjournment of their cases or make urgent mentioning, by sending an email

Turn Page 2

## RSWA supports frontline workers at Rhenock

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 APR:

Rorathang Social Welfare Association [RSWA] under Rhenock Constituency in East Sikkim has been providing tea and lunch to frontline workers from the beginning of the lockdown period.

DurgaPradhan and vice president, PrabhaPradhan, Nari Shakti (SKM) of Pacheykhanialso participated in distributing tea and lunch today. MsPradhan has been providing lunch and tea to all the frontline workers in the area.

She has conveyed gratitude to all frontline workers who are working relentlessly to combat COVID-19. RSWA has extended gratitude and best wishes to Mr and MrsPradhan.



### Pragati Foundation distributes relief at Singtam



YOGEN THATAL SINGTAM, 28 APR:

Pragati Foundation of Singtam distributed relief packages at Singtam

Bazaar today. The foundation provided 10 kg rice, ½ kgdal, 2 kgonion, 3 kgpotato, ½ ltr oil and 1kg salt to around 100 people.

**to book advertisements in SummitTimes, call 03592-208698 9734152541**

## Yoksam-Tashiding contributes to CM's Relief Fund

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 APR:

Deputy Speaker cum MLA Yoksam-Tashiding, Sangay Lepcha called on the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at Samman Bhawan this afternoon and handed over a cheque of Rs. 3,57,900 as

contribution made by people from his constituency for Chief Minister's Relief Fund to support government's effort to fight global crisis of COVID-19.

The Chief Minister thanked him and the contributors for their generous contribution and kind gesture.

### Rhenock donates Rs 1 lac to CM's Relief Fund



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 28 APR:

Rhenock Gram Panchayat Unit, Office of Gram Prashasan Kendra,

Rhenock GPU donated a sum of Rs. 1 lakh to Chief Minister's Relief Fund today. The cheque has been handed over to BDO,

Rhenock BAC along with a statement that the people of Rhenock are with Government of Sikkim to combat COVID-19.

## Migrant labourer tests positive for COVID-19 in C'garh

RAIPUR, APR 28 (PTI):

A 58-year-old migrant labourer tested positive for coronavirus in Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district on Tuesday, taking the number of active cases in the state to four, a health official said.

The state has reported 38 cases of COVID-19 so far, of which 34 patients have been discharged after recovering from the infection.

The swab sample of a labourer, hailing from Garhwa district in the neighbouring state of Jharkhand, was sent for testing to Pt Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Medical College in Raipur, Surajpur collector Deepak Soni told PTI.

This is the first confirmed case of coronavirus detected in the state's Surguja division, which consists of five districts.

The patient, who works as a labourer at Wardha in Maharashtra, had travelled to the border district of Rajnandgaon along with other labourers during the lockdown early this month, the official said.

He was placed in a quarantine facility on the inter-state border, but in view of crowding at the facility, migrant workers, most

of them hailing from Jharkhand, were shifted to the quarantine centre in Surajpur on April 17, he said.

"We collected random samples from people at the quarantine centre to check for the infection, following which his report came out positive," the collector said, adding that the patient was undergoing treatment at Ambikapur Medical College in Surguja

district.

Samples of people who had come in contact with the patient will also be sent for testing, he added.

With this, the state has so far recorded 38 cases of coronavirus, of which 34 have been discharged following recovery and three, apart from the labourer, were undergoing treatment at AIIMS Raipur, a health official said.

## SpiceJet engineer tests positive for coronavirus

MUMBAI, APR 28 (PTI):

Budget carrier SpiceJet on Tuesday said one of its engineers has tested positive for coronavirus and that all measures are being taken to provide appropriate medical care to the person.

The employee last reported for duty on April 22 and was tested

positive on April 27, an airline spokesperson told PTI.

As a precautionary measure, all crew and staff who had been in direct contact with him have been asked to self-quarantine by staying at home for the next two weeks, the spokesperson said in a statement.

This is at least the second case of a SpiceJet staff getting coronavirus infection. Earlier, a pilot with the airline tested positive for coronavirus.

"One of our colleagues, an engineer with SpiceJet, has tested positive for COVID-19. He had last reported on duty on

April 22 at the Delhi airport. The engineer got tested on April 27," the statement said.

According to the airline, all measures are being taken to provide appropriate medical care to him.

"We have been diligently following the guidelines issued by the government

and WHO," it said, adding that all aircraft are being disinfected thoroughly since the end of January and the disinfectants used are as per the WHO standards.

Nearly 30,000 people have been infected by coronavirus and more than 930 people have died due to the infection so far in the country.

### AP sets up death audit panel on COVID-19

AMARAVATI, APRIL 28 (PTI):

The Andhra Pradesh government on Tuesday constituted a nine-member State-Level Death Audit Committee on COVID-19 to examine all the case records to ascertain the cause of death pertaining to the victims of coronavirus.

The Committee, to be chaired by the Director of Medical Education, will conduct "verbal autopsy" with all the stakeholders to identify the cause

of death, Special Chief Secretary K S Jawahar Reddy said in an order.

The committee would also analyse the trends and use the data to predict future trends, plan management strategies and suggest measures to reduce the mortality, the special chief secretary said.

The committee would submit its report to the state nodal authority for Covid-19 and Commissioner of Health

and Family Welfare, he added.

Till date, 31 people died of coronavirus affliction in Andhra Pradesh. Majority of the cases had comorbidities like asthma, hypertension, diabetes and cardiac problems with amortality rate of 2.46 per cent (of the total cases), according to official sources.

As on Tuesday, the state registered 1,259 coronavirus positive cases, of which 970 were active.

## Cong calls on govt to provide proper relief to migrant workers

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 APR:

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee [SPCC] has demanded that the State government study the situation of workers in the State and provide appropriate relief to them.

The party has further urged the government to make proper

arrangements to provide relief and transportation for migrant workers in the State to return them to their respective states.

An SPCC press release mentions that stranded workers in different parts of the country, including Sikkim, have been facing problems following the lockdown.

On the same, the party

has appealed to the state government to study the present condition of migrant workers and provide adequate relief to them.

The party has further urged the government to make immediate transportation arrangement for these workers to take them outside the state.

### NGT issues instructions...

in advance to "mailto:judicialngt@nic.in"judicialngt@nic.in. All communication with NGT qua listing of cases, filing of documents/reports, filing of written submissions / synopsis / audio of oral submissions (if any) etc. shall be done only through this email ID."

The decision has been taken in light of order issued by of the government on the subject of functioning of Government establishments during lockdown period on account of pandemic Covid-19, requiring 100 per cent attendance of the officers of level of Deputy Secretary and above and up to 33 per cent attendance of remaining staff.

The office order further said that the lawyers and litigants desirous of participating personally in video conferencing hearings are required to send request at the above email ID in advance, giving their names, case title, case number, date of hearing, e-mail IDs and mobile numbers.

"For VC hearings, NGT shall be using 'Vidyo' App whereby users can join Vidyo room from their mobile phones/laptops/desktops having adequate internet facility. Vidyo App can be downloaded from link given in website "http://ecourtvc.nic.in/"ecourtvc.nic.in as well as Google Play Store (for android) and Apple Store (for iOS). If request for personal hearing through VC is permitted by the Bench, the time and link with one-time password for VC hearing shall be shared with the parties by the Office," the communication said.

Entry to NGT complex shall be restricted only to its staff and all the safety and precautionary guidelines issued by the government shall be scrupulously followed by all concerned, the office order said.

"Staff shall maintain social distancing norms and protocols, shall wear face masks throughout, shall pass through thermal scanner at entry gate and shall sanitise/wash hands at appropriate intervals. There shall be no crowding at any place / branch in NGT complex and seating of staff shall be arranged accordingly," it said.

The office order said, "The NGT complex, including surfaces of furniture and frequently touched objects, shall be sanitised with disinfectants on daily basis. This shall be subject to further modification if and when further instructions are received from the government.

## Two more test positive for coronavirus in Ladakh

LEH, APR 28 (PTI): Two members of a family were tested positive for coronavirus in Ladakh, taking the total number of cases in the union territory to 22, a senior government official said on Tuesday.

However, 16 of the patients were already cured and discharged from hospitals. "We have received 32 sample reports from NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control), New Delhi and two of them are positive," Commissioner Secretary (Health) Rigzin Samphel told reporters here.

He said both the cases are members of the same family hailing from Sankoo village, which was already declared a containment zone last month.

"They had returned to Kargil from Delhi on February 29. We have identified 29 contacts of these people and segregated them in high-risk and low-risk categories, besides taking their samples for testing," he said.

Samphel said the 11 people in the high-risk category were shifted to isolation wards, while 18 others in the low-risk category were put under home quarantine.

Meanwhile, over 230 stranded passengers left Leh in a fleet of 29 vehicles, including four SRTC buses, for their homes in Zaskar subdivision of Kargil district on Tuesday morning.

With this, a total of over 850 residents of Zaskar who were left stranded in Leh and Kargil due to the lockdown imposed to curb the COVID-19 spread have reached their homes, the officials

said, adding that they were directed to remain in home quarantine for the next 14 days.

Welcoming the evacuation of the stranded passengers, Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC, Kargil Feroz Ahmad Khan appealed to Lieutenant Governor Radha Krishna Mathur for facilitating inter-state movement of stranded people of Kargil in different parts of the country and provision of security for bringing these passengers back home.

In a letter to the LG Ladakh, Khan stated that in view of the prevailing situation due to COVID-19 and the problems being faced by the residents of Kargil stranded outside UT Ladakh due to the extended lockdown, subsequent cessation

of traffic, besides hot climatic conditions, LAHDC Kargil would like to propose that it will make all necessary arrangements for bringing the residents of Kargil back home via surface transportation.

"LAHDC (Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council) Kargil also plans to utilise the services of stranded taxis, private vehicles as well as SRTC and disaster management resources for ferrying residents back to their homes while strictly adhering to the standard operation procedures and guidelines issued by authorities with regard to COVID-19 mitigation," he said.

Khan has assured the LG Ladakh that due screening of all the returnees would be ensured before their entry into the district at a feasible location.

~ SummitTIMES ~  
CLASSIFIEDS

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

Contact: 9800201335

### LAND FOR SALE

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

### LAND FOR SALE

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

### Earthquake hits Himachal's Chamba district

SHIMLA, APR 28 (PTI):

An earthquake measuring four on the Richter scale shook Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district on Tuesday. No loss of life or property was reported.

"The earthquake was recorded at 12:17 pm today," said Shimla Meteorological Centre director Manmohan

Singh. The epicentre of the earthquake was at the depth of 19 kilometres in the northeast of Chamba, he said, adding that mild tremors were also felt in adjoining areas including Kangra district.

Most parts of Himachal Pradesh, including Chamba, fall in a high seismic sensitive zone.

# Allahabad: Stuck UP students start leaving for home

**LUCKNOW, APR 28 (PTI):** Uttar Pradesh students stuck in Allahabad due to the coronavirus lockdown have started leaving for their native places, an official said Tuesday.

“Around 50 buses have departed from Allahabad. It will continue on Wednesday. The health check-up of students will be done. Only after the health check-up, they will be allowed to board a bus. After they reach their destination, another health check-up should be done,” Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Information) Awanish Awasthi told reporters.

People coming from other states will be quarantined for 14 days at shelter homes in the state, Awasthi said.

“The labourers who arrived from Haryana on Monday night have been kept in quarantine. A discussion for bringing back workers from other states has started, said Awasthi

He said, The chief minister has directed that it should be publicised that people who are interested in coming back to UP should contact their respective district administrations in other states and report at quarantine centres, so that their medical examination is done.

“And then, arrangements can be made to bring them back from the quarantine centres,” Awasthi said.

He added that people coming to UP from other states will have to

undergo pool testing for the infection.

The UP chief minister has also asked officials to take a pledge to break the coronavirus transmission chain, said Awasthi.

Referring to reports about the use of improper PPE kits in the state, Awasthi said, “Before COVID-19 cases were reported in the state, PPE kits meant for SARS (a respiratory illness caused by coronavirus) were used. The kits were bought in October 2019 at Rs 115 each. At the time of the COVID-19 crisis, these PPE kits were made available to the health workers for their immediate protection.

However, as soon as PPE kits became available as per

standards prescribed for COVID-19, the PPE kits for SARS were recalled.

The new kits cost over Rs 1,100.

He said the matter is being investigating as to who is responsible for spreading this misleading and baseless information about the PPE kits.

Adityanath also gave orders to officials to start activities in green and orange zones by making an action plan, Awasthi said.

A COVID-19 hotspot is classified as a red zone, while a green zone is a place from where no fresh COVID-19 case has been reported for the past 28 days. An orange zone is a place from where no fresh case has been reported for the past 14 days, he said.

# Two temple priests killed in UP, Oppn targets BJP

**LUCKNOW, APR 28 (PTI):** Two priests were found murdered at a temple in Bulandshahr district on Tuesday morning, allegedly killed by a local youth.

Jagdish (55) and Sher Singh (45) were apparently hit with a lathi at Paguana village’s Shiva temple in Anupshahr police station area, police said. The alleged killer was arrested.

Opposition leaders targeted the BJP over the crime, with the Congress and the Shiv Sena referring to Uttar Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s reaction after the lynching of two sadhus and their driver in Maharashtra’s Palghar recently.

According to Uttar Pradesh Police, Murari, also known as Raju, was accused by the sadhus two days ago of stealing a pair of tongs used by them.

The youth, allegedly under the influence of cannabis, was caught near the temple soon after the two were found dead.

Senior officers rushed to the spot and questioned the man, who told them that after taking bhang on Monday night he went to the temple and killed the sadhus with a lathi lying there.

According to one official, the intoxicated youth said he carried out God’s will, denying he had any quarrel with the priests.

The senior official said the youth will be interrogated at length later as he was still under the influence of the drug.

Villagers caught the youth when he was spotted roaming naked about two kilometres from the scene of the crime, police said.

Some reports said he

was carrying a sword and initially police said the two priests were hacked to death.

Yogi Adityanath directed strict action in the case and sought a detailed report from officials.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray spoke to Adityanath, expressing concern over the killing. Days earlier, Adityanath had made a similar phone call to him over the lynching of two sadhus and their driver in Palghar.

“Uddhav ji said when such incidents happen, we should refrain from indulging in politics and unitedly work to punish the culprits,” Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said.

In his own tweet, Raut called the Bulandshahr incident terrible and said it should not be turned communal the way they tried to

make Palghar .

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said there should be through probe into the killing of the sadhus in Bulandshahr and nobody should politicise such incidents.

Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala also reminded the Bharatiya Janata Party about Palghar.

“The BJP was trying to give a political twist to the killing of two priests in Palghar. We demand that there should be no politics on the killing of priests in Bulandshahr,” he said.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav called the Bulandshahr murders extremely condemnable and tragic .

Instead of politicising such murders, there is a need to look into the criminal motive or the root cause of such violent mentality, he tweeted.

# Arrests in relation to Delhi riots be made in accordance with SC guidelines, says HC

**NEW DELHI, APR 28 (PTI):** The Delhi High Court has directed that arrests in connection with the recent riots in the national capital, shall be done in accordance with the Supreme Court guidelines related to arrest and detention.

The direction was issued by a bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Talwant Singh which also issued notice to the Centre, Delhi government and police seeking their stand on a plea alleging that arrests in connection with the riots were being made during the coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic.

The plea, by an organisation of Islamic scholars called Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind, has contended that when

the apex court had said there was a need to decongest jails in wake of coronavirus, the police was arresting people “on the pretext of investigation of offences related to the Delhi riots” earlier this year.

The petition, filed through advocate Mohd Taiyab Khan, also contended that if left unchecked, the action of Delhi Police would “frustrate” the top court’s order to decongest jails.

The Centre, during the hearing conducted via video conferencing, told the bench that all the arrests made so far and those which would be made in future, shall be strictly in accordance with guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court.

“Directed accordingly,” the court said on Monday after noting the Centre’s submission and listed the matter for further hearing on June 24.

The bench also said that all the individuals who according to the petition have been arrested so far, “are at liberty to institute appropriate proceedings in accordance with law, including seeking regular bail..”

The petitioner organisation has claimed in its plea that police “unilaterally and arbitrarily” arrested persons from their homes during lockdown without informing their families the reasons for arrest.

The petition has

sought that police officials be restrained from picking up or arresting persons in connection with the 2020 Delhi riots on the pretext of investigation and sending them to jail during the lockdown period.

It has also sought that the investigation into the riots be put on hold till another plea moved by the organisation seeking an SIT probe into the violence is decided by the high court.

The plea also seeks departmental action and contempt proceedings against concerned police officials who allegedly violated the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court regarding arrest and detention of accused persons.

# Centre procures 3.75 lakh tonnes of pulses, oilseeds under PSS so far

**NEW DELHI, APR 28 (PTI):** Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, the Centre has procured 1.92 lakh tonnes of gram and tur dal and 1.83 lakh tonnes of mustard seeds, totalling 3.75 lakh tonnes under the Price Support Scheme (PSS), according to the Agriculture Ministry.

The PSS is operationalised on state governments’ request when prices fall below the minimum support price (MSP).

The procurement is undertaken by nodal agencies like Nafed at minimum support price (MSP). Only fair average quality commodity is purchased.

However in view of COVID-19 pandemic, the daily procurement limit has been increased from

25 quintals to 40 quintals per day under the PSS for rabi crops.

In a statement, the ministry said PSS has been operationalised for procurement of pulses and oilseeds growing in the rabi season of 2019-20 crop year (July-June) in seven states -- Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

Among pulses, about 72,415 tonnes of gram (chana) have been procured from five states -- Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

About 1.20 lakh tonnes of tur dal has been procured from seven states -- Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra

Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and Odisha.

In case of oilseeds, the Centre has purchased 1.83 lakh tonnes of mustard seed from three states -- Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, the ministry said.

As per the second estimate of the ministry, pulses and oilseeds output during 2019 rabi season has been pegged at 15.11 million tonnes and 10.75 million tonnes, respectively.

According to the ministry, standard operating protocol (SOP) related to crop harvesting and threshing is being adhered to by farmers and workers.

States have been asked to ensure compliance of SOP in order to protect the

health of farmers and farm workers and contain the spread of coronavirus.

Meanwhile, wheat harvesting across the country is continuing at a brisk pace amidst the COVID-19 lockdown.

As reported by the states, nearly 99 per cent of wheat crop has been harvested in Madhya Pradesh, 92-95 per cent in Rajasthan, 85-88 per cent in Uttar Pradesh, 55-60 per cent in Haryana, 60-65 per cent in Punjab and 87-88 per cent in other states so far.

The ministry also said that the National Horticulture Board (NHB) has uploaded on its website the availability of planting material from its 618 accredited nurseries to help farmers buy good planting material for the ensuing sowing season of kharif crops.



## 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.



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## Feel Free to Disagree

*...but don't deny yourself access to free voices*

May 3rd, that date when the current round of lockdown is scheduled to end, is observed the world over as the Press Freedom Day. It is a day when the fourth estate, forever reporting on others, indulges in some vanity. But the day is much more than just an exercise in narcissism. It is more about remembering and recording the continuing struggle of those in the media to keep people informed.

The fact that in every continent, journalists, editors and publishers are murdered, assaulted, detained or harassed is proof that freedom of speech exacts a cost. And now, as governments around the world turn increasingly insular and restrictive, the responsibilities on the media to help the saner voices reach a wider audience has grown even heavier. The UN has recognized this situation and hence themes Press Freedom Day this year as, “Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media’s role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies”. While this was always part of the media’s role, it has grown in significance in these, well, “critical” times. In times when insecurities have become political vote-banks, agencies are always at work to tease out insecurities and the only defence against such propaganda is free flow of factual information. A better informed people, better informed even about the threats facing them, is a more secure population because they can prepare better instead of just jumping at shadows. They are also less paranoid because they have access to factual updates instead of fake news curated to reinforce their fears. Access to factual and professional information also builds trust in institutions because it also enforces accountability; the crisis of critical times then get resolved through informed decision-making instead of growing worse due to neurotic fear-mongering.

The Press Freedom Day also exists to recognise the sacrifices made in the struggle for freedom of the press and to put pressure on the numerous countries that continue to deny their citizens this basic human right. The current figures for suppression of free voice are eloquent in the dismal picture they paint: 78 journalists were killed in 2016. This year, 11 journalists have already been killed because of their journalistic work. These figures, put together by Journalists Without Borders, “covers only journalists for whom RSF was able to clearly establish that they were killed or imprisoned in connection with their journalistic work. It does not include those who were killed or imprisoned for reasons unrelated to their work or for whom the link with their work has not yet been confirmed”. So yes, reporting from ground comes at a cost, and more than recording their numbers or names, a better homage will be to respect and support press freedom.

Freedom of speech is a tricky issue and perhaps this is the right time to debate it. While it is easy to guarantee freedom of speech, since only censorship can deny it, it takes much more resolve to tolerate and appreciate it. Given the democracy we live in, freedom to report cannot be denied, it is the reaction to free voice which can leave a bad aftertaste. Threats and attacks are the physical reactions and economic restraints the more subtle form of clamping free voice and while these are deplorable, little can be done to contain them unless the society matures some more. As journalists, such pressures, not always from the outside, have to be accepted as unpleasant weeds which come with the territory. Just as the media’s right to report cannot be curtailed, the reaction to what it reports cannot be denied either. All that remains to be worked out is the limit within which such reactions should be vented. As the society grows more tolerant of its image that the Press reflects, this will automatically tone down to acceptable limits and till then the Press will have to run the proverbial gauntlet in its attempt to remain free. Since the world we live in spans various shades of grey, reporting in black and white will have its limitations and there will always be those with a different recollection of what newspapers report.

At the end of the day, it also needs to be accepted that pressures keep journalists sharp and their copy tight. It is in the absence of such pressures that newspapers lose accountability and few things can be more dangerous than a Press that misleads.

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# We are all niqabis now: Coronavirus masks reveal hypocrisy of face covering bans

KATHERINE BULLOCK  
THECONVERSATION.COM

Grey’s Anatomy, the longest running prime-time medical drama on U.S. television, contains many scenes of doctors and nurses in full gear (hospital scrubs, surgical caps, face masks) around the operating table. As they talk, laugh and argue, close-ups of the actors’ eyes convey concentration and emotion.

These scenes contradict one of the common arguments against face coverings — or more accurately, niqabs worn by some Muslim women — that they are a barrier to communication.

Now that face masks are being used to help fight against the spread of COVID-19, it has caused some to look anew at general discrimination against Muslim women wearing niqabs. And it has got me wondering about Québec’s face-covering ban, which came into law in October 2017 as well as France’s ban which came into law in 2011.

If Canadians, Americans and Europeans can get used to the new ubiquitous face masks, will they also get used to niqabs? Will discrimination against the few women in the West who wear it stop?

### HISTORY OF FACE POLITICS

The European disapproval of the face veil has a long history, as I learned while researching for my book on Canadian Muslim women and the veil.

Niqab has been seen as both a symbol of cultural threat and also of the silencing of Muslim women. In her book, Western Representations of the Muslim Woman, Moja Kahf traces one of the first discussions of the veil in western fiction to the novel Don Quixote. One of the novel’s characters, Dorotea, asks about a veiled woman who walks into an inn: “Is this lady a Christian or a Moor?” The answer came: “Her dress and her silence make us think she is what we hope she is not.” As this



scene from Don Quixote indicates, European women sometimes also covered their faces or hair but when they did so, it was not associated with something negative.

Eventually, the rise of western liberalism, with its prioritization of the individual, capitalism and consumerism led to a new “face politics.” Jenny Edkins, professor of politics at the University of Manchester, studied the rise of a politics centred around this new meaning of the “face,” including the idea that the face “if it can be ‘read’ correctly, may be seen to display the essential nature of the person within.”

The flip side of this new face politics became true as well: concealing the face became something suspicious, as if the person had something they wanted to hide, and prevent others from knowing the real them.

At the same time, we grow up learning our face is something to be manipulated, in the same way actors manipulate their faces to entertain viewers. We learn about “putting on one’s face” with makeup; “facing the world” through our education and personal grit; cultivating “poker face” to deceive people in cards or lying to parents and teachers. We learn how to compose our face so as not to show emotion in the wrong places, like crying at work.

The face is often a mask of our real selves.

ANTI-NIQAB ATTITUDES AND HATE CRIMES

Generally, hate crimes are on the rise in Canada with the highest increases in Ontario and Québec. In Ontario, the increase was tied to hate crimes against Muslims, Black and Jewish populations. In Québec, the increase was the result of crimes against Muslims. According to a recent peer-reviewed study by Sidrah Ahmad, a PhD student at the University of Toronto, a tally of hate crimes in Canada released by Statistics Canada in 2015 noted that Muslim populations had the highest percentage of hate crime victims who were female.

The rise in hate crimes mirrors the opinion of many public leaders who have loudly proclaimed their anti-niqab attitudes. Jason Kenney, the former Canadian Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, tried — and failed — to ban niqab in citizenship ceremonies. In 2015 he called the niqab “a tribal cultural practice where women are treated like property and not like human beings.” In the same year, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper called it a dress “rooted in a culture that is anti-women ... [and] offensive that someone would hide their identity.”

A 2018 Angus Reid poll found that the majority of Canadians support a ban of niqabs on public employees. These contemporary attempts to unveil Muslim women echo British and French attempts to the same in both colonial and current times.

MEDICAL FACE VEILS

In a recent op-ed for the Toronto Star, University of Windsor law student Tasha Stansbury pointed out that in Montréal hospitals, people are being asked to wear surgical masks. They walk in and interact with medical staff without being asked to remove their mask for identity or security purposes.

But a woman wearing a niqab walking into the same hospital would be forced by law to remove it.

A decade ago, U.S. philosophy professor Martha Nussbaum brilliantly exposed the hypocrisy of face veil bans, in an opinion piece for the New York Times. If it is security, she asked, why can we walk into a public building bundled up against the cold with our faces covered in scarves? Why are woolly scarves not seen to hamper reciprocity and good communication between citizens in liberal democracies? She wrote:

“Moreover, many beloved, trusted professionals cover their faces all year round: surgeons, dentists, (American) football players, skiers and skaters ... what inspires fear and mistrust in Europe ... is not covering per se, but Muslim covering.”

Is a face mask used to help block coronavirus really that different from a niqab?

Both are garments worn for a specific purpose, in a specific place and for a specific time only. It is not worn 24/7. Once the purpose is over, the mask and niqab come off.

The calling of the sacred motivates some to wear the niqab. A highly infectious disease propels many to wear face masks.

If we all start wearing masks does it mean we have succumbed to a form of oppression? Are we submissive? Does it mean we cannot communicate with each other? If we are in Québec, will we be denied employment at a daycare? Refused a government service? Not allowed on the bus?

[the writer is Lecturer in Islamic Politics, University of Toronto]

# Speaking about the ‘new normal’: how language innovation helps us cope with crises

ROBERT LAWSON  
THECONVERSATION.COM

As the world comes to grips with the “new normal” coronavirus has wrought on our towns, cities and communities, society faces the challenge of figuring out how to talk about the impact the virus is having on our everyday lives.

Coronavirus has led to an explosion of new words and phrases, both in English and in other languages. This new vocabulary helps us make sense of the changes that have suddenly become part of our everyday lives.

Established terms such as “self-isolating”, “pandemic”, “quarantine”, “lockdown” and “key workers” have increased in use, while coronavirus/COVID-19 neologisms are being coined quicker than ever.

These include “covidiot” (someone ignoring public health advice), “covidéo party”(online parties via Zoom or Skype), and “covexit” (the strategy for exiting lockdown), while coronavirus has acquired new descriptors – including “the ‘rona” and “Miley Cyrus” (Cockney rhyming slang).

Other terms deal with the material changes in our everyday lives, from “Blursday” (an unspecified day because of lockdown’s disorientating effect on time), to “zoombombing” (hijacking a Zoom videocall). “WFH” (working from home) and “quaranteams” (online teams created during lockdown) are helping people deal with changing work circumstances.

This is to say nothing of the metaphors people are using to talk about our response to Coronavirus, from war metaphors – for example, Boris Johnson’s briefing where he stated that: “This enemy can be deadly, but it is also beatable” – to sports, storms, monsters, natural disasters, and more.

Linguists are already starting to analyse these metaphors, while Veronika Koller of Lancaster University is crowdsourcing the non-war metaphors that people use (readers can contribute to this repository via Twitter using the #ReframeCovid hashtag).

Attention has also been paid to how effective different metaphors are in encouraging compliance with public health advice, as well as issues of translation,

interpretation and access to healthcare.

### THE LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL CRISES

While the scope of lexical innovation in relation to coronavirus is unprecedented, we only need to look to other periods of history to see how such linguistic creativity manifests itself in times of serious social crisis.

World War II gave us “radar” (Radio Detection And Ranging) as well as “fubar” (Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition), “snafu” (Status Nominal: All Fucked Up, although Situation Normal All Fucked Up is also a common interpretation).

From Vietnam we got both “clusterfuck” (a mishandled or disorganised situation) and “fragging” (the deliberate killing of an unpopular member of one’s own fighting unit, from the shortening of fragmentation grenade).

More recently, the UK’s departure from the EU (colloquially known as “Brexit”) gave us a variety of terms including “brexiteers”, “remoaners”, and “regrexit” – while conversations were dominated by new concepts such as “backstops”, “hard borders”, and “cliff edges”.

For major health pandemics, the lasting effect on language is usually that the name of the disease enters common parlance, as happened with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Spanish Flu (1918-1920), SARS (2002-2004), Swine Flu (2009) and others. But coronavirus has flipped the script and appears to be influencing public discourse beyond simply adding a new disease to the dictionary.

Given this process of lexical innovation, there are two questions worth asking: why are new coronavirus-inspired terms coined in the first place? And why have these terms found purchase in our lives so quickly? After all, new words are introduced all the time, but few of them enter the wider public consciousness in the way we’ve seen with coronavirus terminology.

### LANGUAGE UNITES

In his widely cited article on linguistic creativity, Ronald Carter, former Professor of modern English language at the University of Nottingham, makes the point that “verbal play is often undertaken for humorous purposes,

serving in part to bring people closer together”, as well as challenging the “normal” view of things. Carter goes on to argue that inventive language is not just ornamental, but practical.

In a mere three months, coronavirus has fundamentally changed our ways of living. It has closed businesses and transformed our working patterns. This new vocabulary has come to be a utilitarian shorthand for talking about coronavirus-related issues – from the impact the virus has had on our working lives, to the influence of the lockdown measures – or even just a way to poke fun and laugh at the world around us. The outpouring of metaphors, neologisms and lexical innovations we have seen in the past few months points to the fact that linguistic creativity is a key part of language, reshaping our ways of engaging with the world.

This new vocabulary also helps people articulate their worries about the biggest health crisis we have seen in generations. It brings people together around a set of collective cultural reference points – a kind of lexical “social glue”. In the absence of the regular social contact, shared talk is an important part of helping people feel connected to one another.

Perhaps one of the biggest factors in the spread of coronavirus terminology is the fact that we’re more digitally connected than ever before – in a way we weren’t during the SARS outbreak in 2002 or the Swine Flu outbreak in 2009. Instant access social media is now an integral part of our lives – and we share content with friends and family through a variety of social media outlets. The scale of our online connections means that there are now far more opportunities for individuals to coin a new term and share it beyond their immediate local communities.

In times of significant social or civic change, linguistic creativity not only reflects the major preoccupations of the time, but also shows how people gather to talk about new challenges and contexts. As coronavirus rages on, understanding the language surrounding it will be ever more important.

[the writer is Associate Professor in Sociolinguistics, Birmingham City University]

# Laxman conducts first online session for Bengal batsmen

**KOLKATA, APR 28 (PTI):** Former India player VVS Laxman on Tuesday conducted his first online session for batsmen of Ranji Trophy runners-up, Bengal, and to start with, he focussed only on the mental aspect.

During his two separate 45-minute sessions with Abhishek Raman and Kazi Junaid Saifi, Laxman also had in attendance Bengal coach Arun Lal, cricket operations manager Joydeep Mukherjee, and state U-23 coach Sourasish Lahiri.

Bengal opener Raman, who frittered away a bright start last season, was given lessons on how to deal with failures and ways to regain confidence.

"We talked about our last season. What were my mindset through the season. A session with lot to learn from and how to prepare the mindset during ups and downs of the season," Raman said in a statement issued by the Cricket Association



of Bengal.

Raman started the season with successive hundreds, against Kerala and Andhra, but eventually aggregated 406 runs at 25.37 from 10 outings.

Laxman talked about how to control the mind in order to avoid playing loose shots, importance of batting in the the

first one hour of play on bowling friendly pitches.

Rookie batsman Kazi, who made his debut and went on to play two matches, was told about how to ensure a seamless transition from age-group to senior cricket.

"It was a very useful and important session today. Laxman sir was sharing his experience

with me, how it is normal to be nervous, to be doubtful but at the same time one need to keep faith in himself and his abilities.

"What I learnt is that cricket is a learning process and you have to be consistent in your thought and preparation," Kazi said. The CAB will

continue with its online classes with focus being on their top-order batsmen, their biggest letdown in an otherwise eventful season when they reached their first Ranji Trophy final in 13 years.

But their dream to lift the title for the first time since 1989-90 remained unfulfilled with the team's top-order batting failing to rise to the occasion against Saurashtra.

CAB president Avishek Dalmiya said this exercise is the way forward at a time when the world is under lockdown owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our cricketers are at home yet working out under the guidance of the trainers. We also need to keep them in the proper frame of mind.

"And the right way to do it was to engage them with mentors and coaches who would analyse their performances from the previous season and chalk out ways to overcome the challenges," he said.

## ER dismantles unsafe road overbridge in Kolkata

**KOLKATA, APR 28 (PTI):** The unsafe road overbridge (ROB), that connects Kolkata with the northern suburbs, has been dismantled over railway tracks, paving the way for the commencement of construction of a new bridge, an Eastern Railway official said here on Tuesday.

Though passenger train services are suspended owing to the coronavirus-triggered

lockdown, a number of freight and parcel express trains pass through the railway tracks under the ROB.

The ER facilitated the dismantling work of the bridge by controlling the operation of freight trains, he said.

After finding it unworthy of traffic movement, state PWD engineers decided to pull down the decades-old bridge, located between Tala and Bagbazar stations of

the Circular Railway over railway tracks.

Movement of vehicles or pedestrians on the bridge was stopped in October last year.

A task force comprising engineers of the state government and the ER was formed to coordinate the work, the official said.

The West Bengal government has decided to construct a new bridge at the same place after completion of the dismantling process.

## Forecast of rain, thunderstorm in West Bengal till May 2



**KOLKATA, APR 28 (PTI):** The Met department on Tuesday forecast widespread rainfall or thunderstorm over the districts of West Bengal from April 28 to May 2 due to the formation of cyclonic circulations in the region.

Intermittent sharp showers or an overcast sky greeted most parts of the state from the morning of Tuesday, with the metropolis

receiving a few moderate spells during the day.

Due to the presence of a cyclonic circulation over sub-Himalayan West Bengal and its neighbourhood, and another over south Chhattisgarh, enhanced thunderstorm and rainfall are likely till May 2, the weatherman said.

Another cyclonic circulation over

Malacca Strait is likely to concentrate into a low pressure by April 30 over the south Andaman Sea and into a depression in another two days, the Met department said.

The system is very likely to move into the area along Andaman and Nicobar Islands and then towards Myanmar coast between April 30 and May 3, it said.

## Work on important highways on: Arunachal Pradesh CM

**ITANAGAR, APR 28 (PTI):** Construction work on all important highways in Arunachal Pradesh is being carried out during the lockdown period while adhering to COVID-19 precautions, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said on Tuesday.

He said this while attending a video conference with Union minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin

Gadkari.

Several highway construction projects, including the Trans National Highway (TAH), are going on in the state.

The TAH is an ambitious two-lane highway project covering 2000 km from Tawang district in the west to Longding district in the eastern part of the state. Several phases of the TAH project have been

completed.

Land acquisition issues are also being taken up on a priority basis, the chief minister said.

Movement of vehicles carrying essential items to the state is being carried out smoothly, Khandu said.

Mentioning that connectivity is a priority for the state, Khandu, who also holds the PWD

portfolio, requested the union minister for clearing the pending projects pertaining to four-laning of the Itanagar-Banderdewa road, two laning of the Hukanjuri-Khonsa road of NH-315A and measures to check erosion on the Hollongi-Itanagar highway, officials said.

The video conference was organised by Gadkari with Transport and PWD ministers of

all states for ensuring hassle free movement of goods in the lockdown period and resumption of work on highways across the country.

In a detailed guideline issued after the lockdown was extended till May 3, the government had said it would allow resumption of certain economic activities in key sectors like construction, agriculture and manufacturing.

## Palghar: Rs 200 fine for not maintaining social distance

**PALGHAR (MAHA), APR 28 (PTI):** Spitting in public in Palghar district of Maharashtra will now attract a fine of Rs 500 while a person not adhering to social distancing norms will have to pay Rs 200 and shopkeeper concerned Rs 2,000 if he fails to ensure that rules are followed.

Issuing an order on Tuesday in a bid to ensure strict enforcement of the coronavirus lockdown, district collector Kailas Shinde said those roaming in public places without masks or face covers will have to pay a fine of Rs 200.



"If a customer fails to follow social distancing norms, he will be fined Rs 200 while shopkeeper will have to pay Rs 2,000

for not ensuring the same," he stated.

Shopkeeper is also liable to pay Rs 2,000 if he fails to display the rate

board of grocery items, it stated. In the case of repeat offence, criminal action will be initiated against violators, Shinde said.

## Seven new COVID-19 cases in Odisha, total rises to 118

**BHUBANESWAR, APR 28 (PTI):** Seven people tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Odisha on Tuesday, taking the total number of cases in the state to 118, officials said.

Of the seven cases, four were reported from the western district of Sundergarh and three in the coastal district of Bhadrak, they said.

With these seven fresh COVID-19 cases, the number of active cases in the state increased to 80, while 37 people have recovered till now. One person died in Bhubaneswar on April 6, according to the officials.

The total cases in Bhadrak district has



climbed to 19 while in Sundergarh it is 10, an official said.

According to the Bhadrak district

administration, all the three cases have links to West Bengal. Two persons tested positive in the Basudevpur block

while one person hailing from the Bont block tested positive for COVID-19.

A total of 1,584 samples were tested on Monday. The cumulative sample tests in the state till midnight of Monday was 26,687, the officials said.

Of the 118 COVID-19 positive cases, 46 are from Khurda district of which Bhubaneswar is a part, 19 each from Bhadrak and Jajpur, 16 from Balasore, 10 from Sundergarh, two each from Kendrapara and Kalahandi and one each from Cuttack, Puri, Dhenkanal and Koraput districts.

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# Next year’s Olympics will be cancelled if pandemic not over: Games chief

**TOKYO, APR 28 (AFP):** The postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will have to be cancelled if the coronavirus pandemic isn't brought under control by next year, the organising committee's president warned, ruling out further delays.

The comments, in an interview with a Japanese sports daily published Tuesday, come as medical experts doubted whether the pandemic can be sufficiently contained by next year to hold an event drawing participants and spectators from around the world.

The pandemic has already forced a year-long delay of the Games, which are now scheduled to open on July 23, 2021.

But Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori was categorical when asked by the Nikkan Sports daily whether the Games could be delayed until 2022 if the pandemic remains a threat next year, replying: "No." "In that case, it's cancelled," Mori said.

Mori noted the Games had been cancelled previously only during wartime, and compared the battle against coronavirus to "fighting an invisible enemy".

If the virus is successfully contained, "we'll hold the Olympics in peace next summer", he added.

"Mankind is betting on it."

Masa Takaya, a Tokyo 2020 spokesman,



declined to comment on a possible cancellation of the Games and told reporters that Mori's remarks were based on "the chairman's own thoughts".

But the comments will add to growing questions about the postponement, decided last month after heavy pressure on the organisers and the International Olympic Committee from athletes and sports federations.

On Tuesday, the head of Japan Medical Association warned it would be "exceedingly difficult" to hold the Games next year if a vaccine has not been found.

"I would not say that they should not be held, but it would be exceedingly difficult," Yoshitake Yokokura told

reporters. - 'VERY PESSIMISTIC' -

And last week a Japanese medical expert who has criticised the country's response to the coronavirus warned that he was "very pessimistic" that the postponed Olympics can be held in 2021.

"To be honest with you I don't think the Olympics is likely to be held next year," said Kentaro Iwata, a professor of infectious diseases at Kobe University.

"Japan might be able to control this disease by next summer, I wish we could, but I don't think that would happen everywhere on Earth, so in this regard I'm very pessimistic about holding the Olympic Games next summer," he said.

But Tokyo 2020 spokesman Takaya

countered that even medical experts said it was too early to make a judgement on such a possibility.

Japanese officials and the IOC have said the Games will be a chance to celebrate victory over the virus, with some suggestions that the pandemic fight could even be incorporated into the opening ceremony.

Postponing the Games is an enormous logistical and financial challenge, with the final pricetag for the delay still unclear.

In the interview, Mori said organisers were considering holding joint opening and closing ceremonies for the Olympics and the Paralympics in an effort to cut costs.

Under the plan, the Paralympics would join

the Olympic opening ceremony on July 23, and the Olympic closing ceremony would be integrated into the Paralympics closing event in September.

But Mori admitted that Tokyo organisers had not yet obtained the consent of the IOC and their Paralympic counterparts.

"It's going to be a considerable cut in costs and a big message of victory against the global crisis, but it's not easy," Mori said.

Organisers have said the question of who will shoulder the additional costs is yet to be resolved, though Mori said the IOC should pay a share.

"We should make a decision after both sides examine and fully understand them," he added.

# Tokyo Olympics unrealistic without a vaccine?



**TOKYO, APR 28 (AP):** The head of Japan's medical association thinks it will be difficult to hold the Olympics without an effective coronavirus vaccine.

I hope vaccines and drugs will be developed as soon as possible, Japan Medical Association President Yoshitake Yokokura said Tuesday.

Japan and the International Olympic Committee agreed to postpone the Tokyo 2020 Summer Games

until July next year due to the coronavirus pandemic. Japan is under a monthlong state of emergency amid a rapid increase of infections throughout the country, where hospitals are overburdened.

Yokokura did not say whether he opposes the Olympics without a vaccine.

The key is a situation with the infections at that point. If the infections are under control only in Japan, it

will still be difficult to hold the games unless the pandemic is over in the rest of the world, he said.

Experts have said it could take 12-18 months or longer to develop a vaccine that is safe and effective for clinical use.

Japan has 13,576 reported virus cases, plus 712 others from a cruise ship quarantined near Tokyo earlier this year, with 389 deaths, the health ministry said Tuesday.

# Argentine football season declared over due to virus

**BUENOS AIRES, APR 28 (AFP):** The Argentine

football association will put an end to the 2019-20 season which has been interrupted since mid-March due to the coronavirus pandemic, its president Claudio Tapia said.

"We are going to end the tournaments so we can designate the teams qualified for continental competitions next year," Tapia told a local news

channel.

The Argentine FA also said there will be no relegation this season or next due to the disruption caused by the health crisis.

Gimnasia, the club coached by Diego Maradona, will remain in the top division as a result. Relegation is calculated by a complicated system of points taken over a three-year period.

Boca Juniors won the league championship with a 1-0 victory over Gimnasia on the final day at the start of March.

The Copa Superliga, a 24-team tournament scheduled to finish with a play-off at the end of May, has been scrapped after just one round of games.

Argentina has been in lockdown since March 20, with the quarantine restrictions in place until at least May 10.

# Ajmal still believes he got Tendulkar out in 2011 WC semifinal

**KARACHI, APR 28 (PTI):** Former Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal is still not over the disappointment of missing Sachin Tendulkar's wicket in the lost 2011 World Cup semifinal against India and is now deriving solace from English umpire Ian Gould's recent assertion that the iconic batsman was indeed out.

Tendulkar, who made crucial 85 runs in the semifinal at Mohali, was on 23 when Gould ruled him out LBW off Ajmal. But third umpire Billy Bowden, after a review, overturned the decision.

Gould, who served on the ICC's elite panel of umpires, recently said that he would

stands by his decision of giving Tendulkar out.

Recalling the incident, Ajmal, now 42, said, "It was straight in front and I was 100 percent sure he was out. Shahid Afridi, Kamran, Wahab and other players asked me was he (Tendulkar) out and I told them he is gone."

He said he was heartbroken after the third umpire ruled Tendulkar not out.

"I never got a chance to bowl to him in a Test so whenever I played against him in white ball cricket I always wanted to do my best."

"More disappointing was that we lost the semifinal and it is obvious that Tendulkar's 85 runs made all the difference," he said on a



television channel," he said.

"Even today, the third umpire's decision baffles me. Maybe luck was with him that day and he went on play such a crucial innings for his team," said Ajmal who played 35 Tests between 2009

and 2014, taking 178 wickets.

He also took 183 wickets in 113 ODIs and 85 in 64 T20 Internationals.

Ajmal said Gould was upset after his decision was overturned by the third umpire.

The off-spinner's career, however, came to an unceremonious end after a tour of Bangladesh. His bowling action was reported in 2014 and he could not cope with the subsequent modification and retired in 2017.

# 'I miss racing every day', says F1's Hamilton

**LONDON, APR 28 (AFP):** World champion Lewis Hamilton said Formula One's coronavirus suspension had left a "big void" in his life as the sport waits to see if it can return in July.

Hamilton, who began go-karting as a child and has risen through the ranks of motorsport, said he misses racing daily after the F1 season failed to get underway.

"I miss racing every day. This is the first time since I was eight

that I haven't started a season," the British Mercedes driver posted on Instagram.

"When you live and breathe something you love, when it's gone there's definitely a big void. But there's always positives to take from these times."

The first practice session of the year was just hours away when the season-opening Australian Grand Prix was scrapped in March, triggering a succession



of cancellations.

F1 bosses are now hoping to start the delayed season at the Austrian Grand Prix on July 5, while fans will be barred from the British Grand Prix on July 19.

However, Hamilton

said the virus shutdown -- which has all but closed down professional sports and dramatically slowed economic activity -- was not all bad news.

"Right now, we all have time in the world to reflect on life, our

decisions, our goals, the people we have around us, our careers," said Hamilton.

"Today, we see clearer skies all over the world, less animals being slaughtered for our pleasure simply because our demands are much lower and everyone is staying in."

"Let's not come back the same as we went into this tough time, let's come out of it with better knowledge of our world, changing our personal choices and habits."

# Coronavirus: Mumbai cops aged above 55 asked to go on leave

**MUMBAI, APR 28 (PTI):** In view of the deaths of three policemen in the last three days due to COVID-19 disease, the Mumbai Police have asked their personnel who are above 55 years of age with pre-existing ailments to go on leave as a precautionary measure, a senior officer said on Tuesday.

Besides, police personnel who are above 52 years of age and have existing medical conditions like diabetes, hypertension etc. have also been asked to stay at home for now.

While a 57-year-old head constable died on Monday of COVID-19, two of his colleagues in Mumbai Police, a 52-year-old head constable and a 57-year-old constable succumbed to the viral infection on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

During an analysis, it came to light that the three deceased and the other police personnel currently undergoing treatment for coronavirus disease were above the age of 50, a senior Mumbai Police official said on Tuesday.

"In view of this, we have decided to protect our policemen and officers - who are above 55 years of age and having some pre-existing ailment - and asked them to take leave," he said.

"Because of their

age, these police personnel are at a higher risk. Therefore, we are allowing them to take leave during these days," the official said.

Mumbai Police spokesperson and DCP Pranay Ashok said police personnel are at the forefront of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, and have been risking their lives on streets.

"Our personnel are risking their lives daily to protect citizens. It is our priority to keep their personal health and immunity strong," he said.

Apart from asking the police personnel above 55 years of age to go on leave, we have also directed those personnel who are above 52 years of age with previous medical conditions like diabetes, hypertension etc. to stay at home for now, the DCP said.

So far at least 107 police personnel, including 20 police officers, have been tested positive for coronavirus in Maharashtra. Majority of them are from Mumbai Police.

Informing about various welfare measures for police personnel, the police officer said that staff at all police stations has been directed to do a 12-hour shift per day which will be followed by a 24-hour rest shift until May 3, when the

coronavirus-enforced lockdown is expected to be lifted.

In a bid to boost immunity of Mumbai Police personnel, multivitamin and protein supplements are being provided to 20,000 of them, the officer said.

He further said that tablets of Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), an anti-malarial drug, are being given to 12,000 personnel under medical supervision.

The DCP said that special hospitals are being designated for the police personnel.

His statement came against the backdrop of reports that the 57-year-old police head constable who died on Monday was refused admission to at least three hospitals, before he was taken to KEM Hospital.

He also said that the state government granted an ex-gratia of Rs 50 lakh to the families of the deceased policemen.

He said all COVID hospitals in Mumbai have dedicated beds for the police personnel.

Among various measures, a special Covid Helpline has been set up for the policemen and their families at the Control Room to resolve any doubts or issues they might be having regarding COVID, he said, adding that medical personnel will also be attached with the helpline.

## Beijing to shut coronavirus special hospital, clears all cases

**By K J M VARMA**  
**BEIJING, APR 28 (PTI):** Authorities in Beijing are set to close a COVID-19 special hospital after clearing all the cases even as China reported six new coronavirus infections and 40 fresh asymptomatic cases, health officials said on Tuesday.

The move to shut down the hospital comes after China's coronavirus epicentre Wuhan recently closed 16 temporary hospitals and discharged its last patient on Sunday.

Xiaotangshan Hospital in Beijing, which was used in 2003 to quarantine SARS patients, cleared all COVID-19 cases on Tuesday and is scheduled to cease operation on Wednesday, official media reported.

The temporary hospital, located in the city's northern suburb, was renovated and put into operation on March 16 for the screening and treatment of imported

mild and common confirmed COVID-19 cases, suspected cases and those who need to be tested.

It was built to treat SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) patients in 2003. At that time, the hospital was built in about a week.

In all, Beijing had 593 coronavirus cases and nine deaths. According to officials, 536 patients have recovered after treatment.

Meanwhile, the country's National Health Commission (NHC) said on Tuesday that six new confirmed COVID-19 cases, of which three were imported, reported on Monday.

The other three new cases were domestically-transmitted in Heilongjiang province, the NHC said in its daily report.

The death toll in China from the coronavirus stands at 4,633.

As of Monday, the overall confirmed cases in China reached 82,836,

including 648 patients who were still being treated and 77,555 people discharged from hospitals.

China's imported cases increase 1,639, of which 552 were being treated with 21 in severe conditions.

Also on Monday, 40 new asymptomatic cases, including three from abroad, were reported in China.

So far 997 asymptomatic cases, including 130 from abroad, were still under medical observation, the NHC said.

Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital, had 599 asymptomatic cases under medical observation by Monday.

Asymptomatic cases refer to people who test positive for the coronavirus but develop no symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat. They are infectious and pose a risk of spreading to others.

## Extremists taking advantage of global COVID-19 lockdowns to recruit youths online: UN chief

**By YOSHITA SINGH**  
**UNITED NATIONS, APR 28 (PTI):** UN chief Antonio Guterres has warned that extremist groups are taking advantage of the COVID-19 lockdowns and intensifying efforts on social media to recruit youths online by exploiting their anger and despair, asserting that the world cannot afford a lost generation due to the unprecedented global health crisis.



The UN Secretary-General made the remarks on Monday during a video conference to review the five years since its adoption of a landmark resolution on youth, peace and security.

We can already see such groups taking advantage of the COVID-19 lockdowns, intensifying their efforts on social media to spread hatred and to recruit young people who may be spending more time at home and online, he said.

Guterres told the Security Council that even before the current crisis, young people were facing enormous challenges.

Listing startling numbers, he said one of every five young people was already not in education, training or employment and one of every four is affected

by violence or conflict. Every year, 12 million girls become mothers while they themselves are still children.

These frustrations and, frankly, failures to address them by those in power today, fuel declining confidence in political establishments and institutions. And when such a cycle takes hold, it is all too easy for extremist groups to exploit the anger and despair, and the risk of radicalisation climbs, he said.

Issuing a call to action on youth, peace and security, Guterres said the world cannot afford a lost generation of youth, their lives set

back by COVID-19 and their voices stifled by a lack of participation. Let us do far more to tap their talents as we tackle the pandemic and chart a recovery that leads to a more peaceful, sustainable and equitable future for all.

With over 1.54 billion children and youth out-of-school and young people acutely feeling the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Guterres said countries must do more to harness the talents of young people to address the crisis and its aftermath.

In presenting his first report on the Security Council resolution, the UN chief said

youth were already confronting numerous challenges even before the pandemic, including in accessing education, or through being affected by violence and conflict. Those pressing for peace or upholding human rights have been threatened.

Despite these obstacles, young people across the world have joined the common fight against the coronavirus disease, supporting both frontline workers and people in need. And they continue to push for change.

UN Youth Envoy Jayathma Wickramanayake spoke of the need for more meaningful partnerships

between young people and the civil society organisations and government institutions that work on the youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda.

To date, there are no national action plans on YPS but I'm pleased to note that in some countries, these are in the process of development, she said.

For a national roadmap to be successful, a participatory, transparent and youth-led process with adequate resources are needed, she said.

Issuing his four-point call to action for the Council, Guterres urged members to do more to address the various challenges facing young people.

He also called for investment in youth participation, but also in their organisations and initiatives.

We must strengthen human rights protections and protect the civic space on which youth participation depends, he said. And fourth, we must emerge from the COVID-19 crisis with a determination to recover better - massively increasing our investment in young people's capacities as we deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Singapore to enter into recession this year due to coronavirus pandemic: MAS

**By GURDIP SINGH**  
**SINGAPORE, APR 28 (PTI):** Singapore will enter into a recession this year due to the coronavirus pandemic and the city-state's economic growth could even dip below the forecast range of -4 to -1 per cent to record its worst-ever contraction, the country's central bank said on Tuesday.

The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) in its latest half-yearly macroeconomic review warned of job losses and lower wages, with significant uncertainty over how long and intense the downturn will be.

"The Singapore economy will enter into a recession this year, said the MAS in a 132-page report.

Depending on how the pandemic evolves and the efficacy of policy responses around the world, Singapore's economic growth could even dip below the forecast range of -4 to -1 per cent to record its worst-ever contraction, said the MAS.

The grim prognosis comes as Singapore reels from the COVID-19 outbreak.

To date, nearly 15,000 people in Singapore have been infected with the disease and fourteen have died. Nearly 85 per cent of its infections are linked to foreign worker dormitories.

"At this juncture, there remains significant uncertainty over the severity of the downturn, as well as the eventual recovery. The materialisation of downside risks, that largely depends on the course taken by the pandemic and efficacy of policy responses around the world, could tip the growth outcome in Singapore below the forecast range, said the MAS.

Singapore's economy is likely to contract more sharply in the second quarter, given the severity of the outbreak among its major trading partners, as well as the domestic circuit breaker measures that kicked in early this month, said MAS.

Beyond that, the outlook is fraught with uncertainty, Channel News Asia quoted the MAS as saying.

This is because Singapore's prospects

are hinged on external circumstances, such as the transmission and incidence of the virus, as well as the pace at which other countries recover from their own health and economic challenges, the central bank said.

Yet, there is a poor understanding of how the COVID-19 situation could evolve globally, it noted.

The MAS eased monetary policy last month as the economy faces its worst recession in its 55-year history. The COVID-19 pandemic knocked Singapore's economy in the first quarter, when it shrank 2.2 per cent - its sharpest contraction since the 2009 financial crisis, The Star Online reported.

Singapore is going through a "circuit breaker" period to stem the spread of COVID-19. The period was originally scheduled to end on May 4 but has since been extended until Jun 1.

All non-essential workplaces have been closed and residents told not to leave their homes except to buy food and groceries or to exercise alone in the neighbourhood.

## New Zealand tames virus; France, Spain reveal lockdown exits

**PARIS, APR 28 (AP):** France and Spain, two of the worst-hit countries in the coronavirus pandemic, were laying out separate roadmaps Tuesday for lifting their lockdowns, while signs emerged the virus has been all but vanquished in New Zealand and Australia.

But on the other side of the globe, Brazil is emerging as a new hotspot for infections. And new doubts were raised over whether Japan would be able to host the already postponed Summer Olympics next year without the development of a vaccine.

In Europe and elsewhere, the key question of when to reopen schools loomed as nations seek to ease lockdowns and restart their battered economies.

Although the coronavirus seems to affect children far less seriously than adults, many officials, teachers and parents are concerned about the health risks that school openings pose. Some point to the difficulties of ensuring that children stick to social distancing and frequent hand washing, and teachers themselves fear risks to their own health.

But many parents would struggle to return to work without schools being open, hampering efforts to restart the economy.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron wants schools to start reopening May 11, but teachers, parents and even some mayors are raising alarms. The government says it will be up to parents to

decide whether to send children back to class, with details expected to be released by the prime minister later Tuesday.

Joel Wilmotte is among a growing number of French mayors refusing to reopen their schools, at least for now.

I am not against the reopening of schools, he said in a video on the Facebook page of his northern town of Hautmont. But he listed seven reasons why he's not ready to do so.

Among them: Teachers don't know how to make sure every child respects protective gestures and a poll suggests most French parents oppose school reopenings. Cleaning staff are afraid and under-equipped to do constant disinfections.

So Wilmotte said he's keeping the six schools in his town closed until further notice. Greece, which so far has managed to keep its coronavirus death toll low, at 136 people, was also releasing more lockdown easing details Tuesday but the issue of schools remained tricky.

Schools will be reopened gradually, with conditions and subject to constant review, said the Health Ministry's virus spokesman, infectious diseases specialist Sotiris Tsiodras. The team of experts he is on has not recommended a date.

Scientists agree that children are less at risk from the virus and appear to transmit it less than adults, said Tsiodras, a father of seven.

This is not an experiment where we want something bad to happen to our



children. It is a scientific proposal. We propose, the state will decide.

In the United States, which has the world's highest death toll at more than 56,000, President Donald Trump said states should seriously consider reopening their public schools before the end of the academic year, even though dozens already have said it would be unsafe for students to return until the summer or fall.

Some of you might start thinking about school openings, because a lot of people are wanting to have the school openings. It's not a big subject, young children have done very well in this disaster that we've all gone through, Trump said.

Trump also admitted the number of virus deaths could reach 70,000 in the U.S., after citing 60,000 several times this month.

The number of confirmed infections in the U.S. has risen to nearly 1 million and the confirmed death topped 211,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins

University.

The true toll of the pandemic is likely much higher because of limited testing, mild cases that are missed, flaws in counting the dead and governments that may be trying to conceal the extent of their outbreaks.

Italy, Spain, France and Britain accounted for more than 21,000 virus-related deaths each.

In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro has insisted that COVID-19 is just a little flu and there is no need for the type of restrictions that have slowed the infection's spread in Europe and the U.S. but upended their economies.

Brazil, Latin America's most populous country with 211 million people, has reported 4,600 deaths and 67,000 confirmed infections. But the true numbers are believed to be vastly higher given the lack of testing and the many people who haven't sought hospital care.

Medical officials in Rio de Janeiro and at least four other major

cities have warned that their hospital systems are on the verge of collapse or are too overwhelmed to take any more patients. There are also signs that a growing number of Brazilian victims are dying at home.

We have all the conditions here for the pandemic to become much more serious, said Paulo Brand o, a virologist at the University of Sao Paulo.

Bolsonaro has said Brazilians need to resume their lives to prevent an economic meltdown but most state governors have adopted restrictions to keep people home and slow the spread of the virus.

New Zealand reported just three new infections Tuesday. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said people had done an incredible job of breaking the chain of transmission but cautioned they needed to remain vigilant.

There may still be some smoldering ashes out there, and they have the potential to become a wildfire again, if we give them the chance, she said, quoting a microbiologist.

## SKorea calls for joint efforts with North Korea

**SEOUL, APR 28 (AP):** South Korea has repeated calls for joint efforts with North Korea to stem the spread of the coronavirus, which it sees as a potential opportunity to improve strained bilateral relations.

A South Korean presidential official, who refused to be named during a background briefing on Tuesday, said Seoul doesn't expect the possible anti-virus efforts to clash with international sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear program.

South Korean President Moon Jae-

in, who held three rounds of peace talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in 2018, earlier said joint anti-virus efforts could provide a new opportunity for inter-Korean engagement.

But the North has been ignoring the South's calls after it virtually shut down all cooperation with its rival in past months amid faltering nuclear talks with the Trump administration. The North in late January closed an inter-Korean liaison office in the border town of Kaesong over virus

concerns.

The North has said there hasn't been a single virus case on its territory, but the claim is questioned by many outside experts.

Edwin Salvador, the World Health Organization's representative to North Korea, said in an email to AP last week that the country reported that it tested 740 people for COVID-19 as of April 17 but that all came out negative.

He said the North also said it so far released more than 25,000 people from quarantine since Dec. 31.



**SAFETY FIRST!** Reality star, Kylie Jenner held an N95 face mask as she stepped out in L.A. wearing a white crop top and Vera Wang jeans along with a Prada bag.

## Lata Mangeshkar thanks Vikas Khanna for donating 1,000 PPE kits to her family hospital

**MUMBAI, APR 28 (PTI):** Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar has thanked celebrity chef Vikas Khanna for donating 1,000 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits to Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital in Pune.

The hospital was founded in 2001 in the memory of Mangeshkar's father, renowned Marathi theatre actor and musician Deenanath Mangeshkar.

The 90-year-old singer took to Twitter and said she was humbled by Khanna's gesture.

"Michelin Star Chef Shri @TheVikasKhanna

has donated 1000 PPE kits to Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital. The Mangeshkar family, along with the entire family of the Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital, are thankful to him," the 90-year-old singer wrote on Monday.

Responding to her Tweet, Khanna said, "Dearest @mangeshkarlata you inspire us all. Heart. Life. All for you."

India is currently under lockdown with around 1.3 billion people asked to stay home in view of the coronavirus outbreak, which has infected over 29,000 people and claimed 934 lives.

## Gospel singer Troy Sneed dies from coronavirus

**LOS ANGELES, APR 28 (PTI):** Troy Sneed, the Grammy-nominated gospel singer, has died due to complications from coronavirus. He was 52.

According to Billboard, the singer passed away on Monday at a hospital in Jacksonville, Florida.

His death was confirmed by his friend, radio personality KD Bowe, who wrote on Instagram, "I don't know how to make sense of this. I'm not ok, man. Covid19 sucks. Will y'all please pray for Emily & the kids? Please? RIH, King. Or walk

around it all day. #RIPTroySneed."

Sneed started his music career in 1999 when he released his maiden album "Call Jesus" in collaboration with Malaco Records.

He also travelled throughout the US to sing the gospel with the Georgia Mass Choir.

He has several hit songs within the gospel realm to his credit, including "Work It Out" and "My Heart Says Yes".

Sneed is survived by his wife, Emily and the couple's four children, Troy Jr., Evany, Trey and Tyler.

# Alan Bennett's 'Talking Heads' Is Returning With Jodie Comer, Martin Freeman, & More



Since the COVID-19 outbreak, not only has existing television adapted their normal routine, but there has been a resurgence of brilliant shows from the past making their way back to our TV screens. Now, Alan Bennett's critically acclaimed Talking Heads is returning to the BBC and filming begins today (April 28).

The first season of this BBC classic aired in 1986, and the second in 1998, and the monologues were performed by the likes of Julie Walters, Alan Bennett himself, and Maggie Smith who also starred in Woman In A Van, a film about Bennett's memoirs. The monologues, which are now on the A-Level and GCSE syllabus, went on to win some of the actors BAFTAs.

For the new series, the 10 original monologues will be remade alongside two new monologues that Bennett, now 85, wrote in 2019. Fittingly, themes of many of the original monologues were centred on isolation, so they should resonate quite clearly with viewers.

Speaking about the upcoming show, Bennett said: "In such difficult circumstances, that the BBC should choose to remount both series of Talking Heads, and produce two entirely new ones, is a comfort and a huge compliment. I hope a new generation of actors will get and give as much pleasure as we did 20 and 30 years ago."

The monologues will be performed by a number of beloved and talented

actors including Killing Eve's Jodie Comer, The Hobbit's Martin Freeman, Monica Dolan, Tamsin Greig, star of Happy Valley Sarah Lancashire, Lesley Manville, Lucian Msamati, Maxine Peake, Rochenda Sandall, Kristin Scott Thomas, Imelda Staunton, and Harriet Walter.

In a BBC press release, Nicholas Hytner, Bennett's collaborator and the lead director and producer on Talking Heads said: "It has been a profound and fascinating experience to work out a way of making them again, this time with a company of phenomenal actors who are the equal of those who first made them."

The monologues which will air on BBC One in the coming months.

## Michelle Obama documentary to debut on Netflix on May 6

**LOS ANGELES, APR 28 (PTI):** A top-secret documentary feature about former first lady Michelle Obama is set to start streaming worldwide on Netflix from May 6.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the doc shares its title with Michelle Obama's best-selling 2018 memoir "Becoming" and recounts some of the same history of her life.

"Becoming", like the best documentary feature Oscar winner "American Factory", comes from Higher Ground, the production company run by former President Barack Obama and the former first lady, which has an exclusive pact with the streamer.

The documentary marks the feature directorial debut of cinematographer Nadia Hallgren known for her work on "Trouble the Water", the 2008 indie about a couple surviving failed levees, bungling bureaucrats, and their own troubled past and a portrait of a community abandoned long before Hurricane Katrina hit.

"Becoming" also picks up where that story left off by following her on the 34-city tour that she undertook while promoting her book.

"Those months I spent traveling meeting and connecting with people in cities across the globe drove home the idea that what we share in common is deep and real and can't be messed with."

"In groups large and small, young and old, unique and united, we came



together and shared stories, filling those spaces with our joys, worries and dreams. We processed the past and imagined a better future. In talking about the idea of 'becoming,' many of us dared to say our hopes out loud," Michelle Obama said in a statement.

The former first lady also addressed the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

"It's hard these days to feel grounded

or hopeful, but I hope that like me, you'll find joy and a bit of respite in what Nadia has made. Because she's a rare talent, someone whose intelligence and compassion for others comes through in every frame she shoots.

"Most importantly, she understands the meaning of community, the power of community, and her work is magically able to depict it.

### ARIES:

For an extroverted sign, staying indoors is no mean feat. You've had your days of resisting the process, wanting to set the neighborhood on fire, and finding the nearest exit gate. But you're noticing something different about yourself today: an inner stillness that's reminding you that everything you seek is right here and in this moment. Embrace what the present is offering you, Aries! This is also an interesting time for those who are on a creative journey. Be cognisant of ideas that are coming through. They are leading you in the right direction.

### TAURUS:

You may find yourself walking on eggshells and with good reason. Tact may feel like an obvious way to deal with the given situation, but you want to pause and ask yourself, "How much is too much?" You deserve to be seen and heard too. So call your power back to you. Yes, there is a way to speak your truth without hurting the other person(s). An inner dialogue will help you find the best way forward.

### GEMINI:

Emotions are running high, Gemini. But you're allowed to feel what you're feeling. Don't reject one aspect of your personality while embracing the other. Make space for

the anger, the irritability, the irrational fears as you do for happiness, joy, and creativity. Accepting yourself as you are is the first step to inner alchemy. The bad news is you may not get a shoulder to cry on from your family or your immediate support system. The good news is best conveyed by the cliché: "a friend in need is a friend indeed."

### CANCER:

Don't you love it when the Universe steps in and sets things right on your behalf? Cancer, sit back, relax, and let the magic unfold. Things in your life are about to take a turn for the better. If you've been struggling with your health and finances, trust that these areas of your life will improve too. For now, practice both gratitude and kindness. Reach out to the less fortunate. See how you can be of help to those around.

### LEO:

Look beyond the prison of your limitations. The help you desire and deserve is available to you. Sometimes, asking a trusted friend to play sounding board is all it takes to find your lost sense of motivation. Self-esteem issues may also resurface in the process. Where is this feeling of not being enough stemming from? Were you not given

words of encouragement when you were little? Inner child work is in order, Leo.

### VIRGO:

Sensitivity is both a blessing and a curse, Virgo, and if you're connecting with somebody who's got all the feels, it's bound to affect your personal space. The good days are really good and the bad days threaten to drag you down to hell. The cards are reminding you of the importance of setting some rules and fortifying your boundaries. This will help you differentiate between what's yours and what's not, and bring your best self to this relationship.

### LIBRA:

In a world of replicas, dare to be an original, Libra, knowing that every great thinker is discredited by their generation. You have so much to offer the world. The next stage of your life requires you to believe in your power and uncover the jewels Spirit has buried within. As such, you're likely to feel a surge of new ideas today. Trust that they are divinely guided and leading you in the right direction.

### SCORPIO:

The idea of overnight success is a big, fat lie. You're only watching the show from the outside. There's little you know about

the challenges they've had to overcome to get to this point. Replace envy with pride. Take pleasure in watching your near and dear ones thrive. At the same time, honour and acknowledge your own journey. You are exactly where you need to be and you will get to the desired destination in due course of time.

### SAGITTARIUS:

An idea you once held sacred may be on the cards, Sagittarius. Rise above the ego space. Call in your higher self to handle the situation. Some of you may feel the need to take some time off from each other, and that's okay. Distance will help you gain perspective. Remember, the argument is not the cause of concern. The heart of the matter is. Has this relationship been built on a false foundation? Self-reflection will help you decide if it's time to let go or course correct.

### CAPRICORN:

An idea you once held sacred may begin to feel out of alignment. You're allowed to grow out of things, people and situations. You're allowed to replace your old dreams with new ones. Such is the cycle of life, Capricorn. Don't give yourself grief about where you are or hold on because you fear your withdrawal may cause harm. What you want to do instead: befriend courage and continue to

face your true north.

### AQUARIUS:

What you're experiencing right now is a classic case of 'life has other plans', and not in a pleasant way. Where are you facing a dead-end, Aquarius? Could you be pushing against the flow yet again? Take a moment to acknowledge the things that have served their purpose in your existence. Painful as it is, it's time to let go. As you do, take a moment to pause and breathe. There is no rush to figure out where you need to redirect your chariot. Trust that Spirit will reveal the road eventually.

### PISCES:

Nobody likes to be in a place where everybody is screaming and nobody is listening. Pisces, could "you" be the bad vibe in this room? Yes, you haven't seen the outside world in 35,728 days and the frustration is real, but you're not the only one dealing with the emotional complexities of living in isolation. Breathe in the love and breathe out the fear, the anger, the irritability, and the crankiness. Find a healthy manner to express what's going on within. If you're not the 'journal and chill' kind of person, consider a hectic workout that releases the tension and gets your feel good hormones flowing.