



**Bachchan's tweet on 'clapping vibrations destroy virus potency' draws ire, actor later deletes it**

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**Coronavirus: Could the World Have Prepared Better for a Pandemic?**

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# SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 64 | Gangtok | Wednesday | 25 March 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI NO. SIKENG/2016/69420

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## Quarantining of returning students leads to clash between public and admn; Take entire day to resolve

### ASSAM LINGZEY RESIDENTS TO BE BOOKED FOR VIOLATING SECTION 144 OF CrPC

**AARON RAI**  
**Gangtok, 24 Mar:**

Fear of COVID-19, together with a lack of awareness, led to a clash between the administration and residents of Assam Lingzey on Monday as the locals refused to allow a group of students being brought to the quarantine facility established at SICUN in Assam Lingzey.

The 68 students studying outside the state under Chief Minister's Meritorious Scheme were brought back to Sikkim and sent for quarantine in the SICUN building at Assam Lingzey on Monday.

When the residents learnt of this, they came out on the roads and protested.

The mob allegedly also manhandled the medical team accompanying the students.

According to the local panchayat president, Ganesh Chettri, people believed that this group of students were being brought to the quarantine facility because they were carrying the virus.

Today, the Sub Divisional Magistrate, Gangtok, issued a directive to the SHO,

Ranipool Police Station to file a case against the 'miscreants' among the residents for violating the prohibitory orders under section 144 of CrPC.

The SHO has been further directed to file charges under sections 188, 189, 269, 270 of the IPC. Three of the four people named in the complaint are under detention.

Speaking to Summit Times, SP East, Hari Chettri confirmed that they managed to convince the residents and that the students were taken to the SICUN facility today at around 7 30 p.m.

Following the fracas at Assam Lingzey, the students had been kept at a hotel in Gangtok on Monday.

## Sikkim begins lockdown

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**Gangtok, 24 Mar:**

While the State prepared for a complete lockdown from 25 till 31 March, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi announced a 21-day lockdown of the entire country on Tuesday evening. While he has assured that essential services will continue, it is not clear what all the nationwide lockdown includes and whether the announcements made by the State Government will change.

Speaking to Summit Times after the PM's announcement, the DC East confirmed that the lockdown protocol already announced by the State Government will remain unchanged. He however added that a meeting is scheduled between the CM and senior state government officials for Wednesday morning after which a clearer picture can be expected.

The state government had said that ration shops, LPG and fuel outlets,

power projects, etc will remain open in the state during its own lockdown, with the PM's announcement this could change.

Today, the Sikkim Chemists Association had announced that pharmacies will remain open from 9 a.m till 12 p.m and 4 p.m till 6 p.m.

The East district administration had announced that two hotels in Gangtok to remain open for those stranded due to restriction on inter-state movement the two hotels are Hotel Madhawi at Baluwakhani and Allison Hotel [Dechen & Palmu], opposite Police Headquarters.

It was also announced that pick up and drop facility would be provided for government employees from 25 March.

Many government agencies have announced the suspension of non-urgent citizen services like car registrations, trade license, etc.

## Gyalshing fetes its Safai Karamcharis for manning nCov frontlines



**Gyalshing, 24 Mar [IPR]:** The Safai Karmacharis of Urban Local Bodies are at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19.

In order to ensure that they are fully motivated and healthy, Minister-cum-area MLA of Gyalshing Bermiok constituency, Lok Nath Sharma, provided free ration to the safai

karmacharis of Geyzing Municipal Council.

Each Safaikarmachari received 40 kg rice, 5 kg Daal, 5 kg sugar, Soaps and hand sanitizers.

The municipal council chairman, IK Neopaney, and the Municipal Executive Officer, Gyalshing Municipal Council, Bhumika Pradhan, handed over

various essential grocery items and sanitizers, masks, gloves etc. to each Safaikarmachari at Gyalshing today.

All the Safai Karmacharis expressed their gratitude for he grants acknowledging their dedication and responsibilities to be delivered on regular basis amidst proposed lockdown in the State.

## Gorkha Kalyan Samity donates to CM's Relief Fund for efforts against nCov

**Gangtok, 24 Mar [IPR]:** A Gorkha Kalyan Samity delegation led by its president, Khirrod Negi, and vice president Pemba Tshering Lama called on Special Secretary to the Chief Minister at Tashiling Secretariat this afternoon and handed over a contribution for the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the State's fight against the Novel Coronavirus pandemic.

The Special Secretary, on behalf of the Government, expressed her heartfelt gratitude towards the association.

It may be recalled that the Gorkha Kalyan Samity is a nongovernmental organization working in Sikkim since 1994 on various public interest works in different sectors.

## Sikkim Legislative Assembly passes Annual General Budget for Financial Year 2020-21

**Gangtok, 24 Mar [IPR]:** The second and final day of the Budget session of Sikkim Legislative Assembly began with obituary reference on the passing away of Late Shri Pradeep Yonzon, former Member of Sikkim Legislative Assembly.

Hon'ble Speaker Shri L.B. Das read the Obituary Reference of Late Shri Pradeep Yonzon.

Late Shri Pradeep Yonzon was Member of the Second Sikkim Legislative Assembly. He breathed his last on 10th March 2020 in Siliguri following a long battle with cancer at the age of 69 years.

Late Shri Pradeep Yonzon was born in Kalimpong, West Bengal on 2nd July 1950 to renowned literary figure late Agam Singh Tamang and Upen Maya Moktan. He was survived by his wife Mrs. Tshering Doma, a son and two daughters.



Late Shri Pradeep Yonzon completed his schooling from Dr. Graham's Homes in Kalimpong in 1967 and went off to pursue Engineering from Pilani, Rajasthan. After coming back from Rajasthan, he started working as a teacher in 1971 and left the same job to join the Sikkim Excise Department in 1972 and again started teaching in 1975. In the same year, he resigned from the teaching job and joined politics and became a well-wisher of Sikkim Congress led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji. He also worked as a

contractor for three years until 1978. He contested election in 1979 from Damthang Constituency as a candidate of Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) led by Ram Chandra Poudyal and became the first Tamang Member of the Sikkim State Assembly.

After having some conflicts in ideas and visions with Ram Chandra Poudyal, he joined late Nar Bahadur Bandari led Sikkim Janata Parishad party in 1981. Later, he joined the Indian National Congress in 1984 and became Minister, from 11th to 25th May 1984 in

the Cabinet headed by Shri B.B. Gurung.

Late Shri Yonzon also served as the Member of the Public Accounts Committee, Estimates Committee, Privilege Committee and Panel of Chairman. He was also the Chairman of Government Assurances Committee and the Life Member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Sikkim Branch).

Of all his various contributions, the ones which are the most noteworthy are the construction of the Blind

turn pg 2

## MESSAGE OF THE CHIEF MINISTER OF SIKKIM TO AVOID THE CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC

### Respected people of Sikkim!

The human civilization today stands face to face with the challenge of the Corona Virus.

I urge the people of Sikkim to strictly comply with the guidelines issued by the state government as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of the Corona Virus.

From today, i.e the 25th Of March, 2020, the state government has declared a complete lock-down over the entire state of Sikkim.

This lock-down is not intended to paralyze the daily functions of the citizens, but at the moment, is the only measure to avoid further transmission and spread of this epidemic plaguing the globe. In view of the safety of the people, the state government has decided for a complete lock-down in Sikkim.

Social distancing, limiting physical human interactions in large groups and staying indoors is the only armor towards surviving the uncertain Corona Virus as of now. Hence, I request the people of the state to stay indoors and protect themselves.

Any out-of-state vehicle will not be allowed to enter Sikkim during the lock-down period which starts from tomorrow. Likewise, no vehicle from Sikkim will be allowed to cross the state borders.

I appeal to the people of Sikkim to stay indoors and minimize their and their society's risk of transmitting the virus. There is nothing greater than the safety of the people of Sikkim and I request the people to stay indoors and refrain from meeting others unless absolutely necessary. Let us follow the concept of Social Distancing for the time being.

I urge the people of Sikkim to follow the basic but effective health standards of washing our hands frequently and keep ourselves and our surroundings clean. Let us cover our nose and mouth while coughing and sneezing and if anybody fears they have the symptoms of the virus, I request you to be a responsible citizen and kindly visit the nearest health centre and get yourself checked immediately. Kindly refrain from rumors and hearsays and contact the concerned officials for any clarifications on the matter.

The state government stands in ready assistance and solidarity with the people of Sikkim.

Protect yourselves so you can protect others.

**Prem Singh Tamang (Golay)**  
**Chief Minister**  
**Sikkim Government**  
**24 March, 2020.**





## Sikkim Legislative ...

School in Namchi, Loyala College, a better building for Namchi District Hospital and Alay Gumpa among others. During his tenure, Namchi Senior Secondary School & Namchi Girls School were also upgraded.

Late Yonzen became the President of South District Sports Association, Namchi (1994-98), the Chairman of National Gorkha Federation (formed in Aizwal & Mizoram 2001), Secretary of Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh (2001-2006) and Secretary in the forum for Constitutional Rights of Tamang and Limboo Community. He also formed the organization like the Sikkim Nepakese Unity (SIKNU) in 1997 and Maitri Sangh, Kalimpong in 2002.

Late Pradeep Yonzan had a passion for arts and literature. He always possessed a true sentiment for his people and community and fought for justice and fairness. He always stood by the poor and the needy ones and helped them in their upliftments.

The Hon'ble Speaker said that the passing away of Late Shri Pradeep Yonzen is an irreparable loss to our state and community as a whole. He extended his deepest condolences to his family and offered prayers to the almighty to give strength to the bereaved family.

The House observed two-minutes silence as a mark of respect to the departed soul.

During the Question Hour that followed, all the starred and unstarred questions were laid on the table of the House.

During the Legislative Business, all the seven Bills introduced by concerned Minister-in-Charge of various departments on the first day of the budget session, were passed by the House.

On a question raised by MLA Smt Raj Kumari Thapa about the need to bring about amendment in the FRBM Act, 2010, Hon'ble Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Department, Government of Sikkim, explained that the Amendment Bill was framed in view of the decision of the Government of India to allow additional borrowing to the State as a onetime dispensation in the current year 2019-20 to offset fiscal hardship due to shortfall due to shortfall in actual receipt of Share of Central Taxes.

Subsequently, the Second Supplementary Demands for Grants for Financial Year 2019-20, which was presented by the Hon'ble Chief Minister on the first day of the Session, was passed by the House. Likewise, the Sikkim Appropriation Bill, Bill No. 3 of 2020 for the Second Supplementary Demands for Grants for FY 2019-20, which was introduced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Department, Government of Sikkim, was passed by the House.

This was followed by discussion on Motion of Thanks on the Hon'ble Governor's address and General Budget 2020-21.

The discussion on Motion of Thanks on the Hon'ble Governor's address and General Budget 2020-21 was participated by Hon'ble MLAs Shri D.R Thapa, Shri Y.T. Lepcha, Smt Raj Kumari Thapa, Shri Pawan Chamling, Shri T.T Bhutia, Shri Sonam Tshering Venchungpa, Shri Pintso Namgyal Lepcha and Smt Farwanti Tamang.

In his reply to the discussion on Motion of Thanks on Hon'ble Governor address and General Budget 2020-21, Hon'ble Chief Minister, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Department, Government of Sikkim, said that the proposed budget is Sikkim-centric, rural-centric and youth-centric. He added that the Budget has laid special emphasis on youth-centric schemes, especially for the skilled youth in the form of Skilled Youth Startup Program for which Rs. 25 Crore has been earmarked in the proposed budget. He said that capable and skilled youth will largely benefit from this scheme.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister mentioned about the recent initiative of the Government to launch the 'Sikkim Film Policy' in the presence of renowned national and international film makers, producers and investors. He said that the Film Policy will enable national and international filmmakers to explore the scenic locations of Sikkim to shoot their films. He announced that the Government has allocated a substantial budget for the purchase of film shooting equipment. He further said that the Government will provide incentive to regional, local and large budget filmmakers from outside the State who shoot their films in Sikkim and use local artists and crew.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister spoke about the Government's decision to provide incentive to farmers who produce high yield of milk and other agriculture and horticulture products.

He also highlighted the initiatives planned for the education sector in the form of international, national and local level training and capacity building for teachers, as well as exposure and educational tours for students. He also mentioned about the plan to introduce moral science and mental health programmes in schools. He also informed about the 'Foreign Employment Training and Recruitment' programme of the Government aimed at opening up vistas of opportunity for youth who wish to work abroad.

Speaking about Social Welfare initiatives, the Hon'ble Chief Minister informed that from henceforth, old age pension for each age group will be enhanced by Rs. 500 and will be provided on a monthly basis. Likewise, he informed that any married woman who loses her husband and becomes a widow will be entitled to the widow pension, regardless of her age. In the event of her choosing to re-marry, she will automatically lose the entitlement for widow pension, he informed.

Underlining the special privilege envisaged for women, the Hon'ble Chief Minister informed the House that all enlisted women contractors will be exempted from TDR for any contract work up to an amount of Rs. 5 Crore, and 50% exemption in TDR for any contract work between Rs. 5 Crore to Rs. 10 Crore.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister also announced that from henceforth, registration for all power projects with a generation capacity below 5 Mega Watt will be granted to interested youths of Sikkim who have the technical and financial capacity to run it.

In his reply to the question raised by Hon'ble MLA Smt Raj Kumari Thapa about the limited role of MLAs in their respective constituencies, the Hon'ble Chief Minister stated that the Government has not issued any notification to restrict the role of MLAs. He said that MLAs should rather work as a bridge between the common people and the Government and submit the people's demands and aspirations to the Government on a regular basis. He added that the present Government is highly receptive to representations made by MLAs in matters pertaining to their constituencies, and is quick to provide necessary support.

Replying to Smt Thapa's question about the status of allotment orders for CMRHM housing scheme issued during Janta Mela 2019, the Hon'ble Chief Minister stated that the Government has not issued any directive to cancel the allotment orders. He, however, stated that the Government will ensure that only genuine beneficiaries are entitled to any housing scheme. He said that upon verification, if anyone is found to have flouted the criteria for entitlement, the Government will be compelled to cancel their order. He informed that the budget allocation for Sikkim Garib Awas Yojana has been considerably enhanced. He also shared that the plinth area of each house has been enhanced to 678 sq ft. He reiterated that only genuine beneficiaries will be awarded a house under the scheme.

Responding to her question about the preparedness of the State in the wake of Covid-19, the Hon'ble Chief Minister informed that the State Government is fully prepared to face the prevailing situation. He said that the Government will come up with a solution to help daily wage workers in this time of crisis.

Replying to a question put forth by Hon'ble MLA Shri D.R Thapa about the Government's stand on the Limboo Tamang seat issue and the proposal for tribal status to the 11 left out communities, the Hon'ble Chief Minister said that the State Government is fully committed to resolve these two issues. He said that the Government will organize a public debate and deliberation on the issue of Limboo Tamang seat reservation, and the outcome of the debate will be submitted to the Government of India for consideration. About the Tribal status to the 11 left out communities, he said that the State Government will initially request the Central Government to grant 'Economically Weaker Section' status to the left-out communities, and subsequently pursue the demand for Tribal status.

Replying to Shri Thapa's question on the Government's initiatives to tackle the issue of drug/substance abuse, the Hon'ble Chief Minister informed that the Government is coming up with a drug rehabilitation infrastructure in Kichudumra, South Sikkim, with an investment of Rs. 9 crore 40 lakhs, slated to be completed by March 2021. He shared that the Government is highly concerned about the issue of drug/substance abuse and is contemplating methods like dialogue and discussion with drug user community to come up with a concrete solution.

Responding to the question on COVID-19, the Hon'ble Chief Minister informed the House that Rs. 2 crores 92 Lakhs has been transferred to the Health Department from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to deal with the current situation. Speaking about establishing a testing lab for Corona Virus in the State of Sikkim, the Hon'ble Chief Minister shared that he had a word with Union Health Minister Dr. Harshvardhan yesterday, who shared that it would take over two months for the testing paraphernalia to reach Sikkim. The Hon'ble Chief Minister shared that an alternate arrangement was requested for, and the Union Health Minister has assured for a testing facility in Siliguri at the earliest possible.

Responding to points raised by Hon'ble MLA Shri Pawan Chamling with regard to the State Government's preparedness for Covid-19, the Hon'ble Chief Minister said that the State is equipped in all ways to handle the current situation and any exigency thereof. He informed about the initiative of the Government to fly back 58 students studying under the scholarship scheme in various parts of the country, and have them quarantined in SICUN complex, Assam Lingzey since yesterday. He further informed about the State Government's correspondence with the Union Home Secretary yesterday with regard to 70 students studying in Tamil Nadu, with a request to keep them safe with requisite facility. He also shared that the Government of Sikkim is ready to share the economic burden with the State of Tamil Nadu to ensure that these students are lodged safely. He appealed to the people of Sikkim to abide by the precautionary protocol and instructions to be followed for their wards travelling back to the State from other cities ad towns. He further said that the Government has been proactively ensuring thorough screening and scrutiny of anybody travelling into the State from the two border checkposts at Rangpo and Melli. He informed that manpower has been increased in these checkposts, and NGOs have been requested to lend their assistance.

Replying to the question raised by Hon'ble MLA Shri Pintso Namgyal Lepcha with regard to a recent case of the Oncology Centre at STNM Hospital turning down a request to administer Chemo Therapy on a patient, the Hon'ble Chief Minister said that he has taken serious note of this and thorough investigation will be done to find out if there were any lapses. He stated that stern action would be taken against the concerned officer or staff if found guilty. The Hon'ble Chief Minister reiterated that the Government has laid the highest priority on the health sector, and all efforts are being made to ensure the best of facilities to the people of Sikkim. He said that at times of crisis, genuine patients are granted travel assistance from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Replying to points raised by Hon'ble MLA Shri Y.T. Lepcha, the Hon'ble Chief Minister stated that the present government is sensitive towards the needs and aspirations of all government employees.

Replying to points raised by Hon'ble MLA Shri T.T Bhutia, the Hon'ble Chief Minister said that the Government will deliberate over the creation of an 'MLA fund' to empower them and facilitate development at the grass root level. Responding to the question about inviting CBI into Sikkim, the Hon'ble Chief Minister said that the Government is ready to invite the investigating authority. He said that the decision will be taken in its appropriate time.

Responding to points raised by Hon'ble MLA Shri Sonam Tshering Venchungpa, the Hon'ble Chief Minister said that the Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Bill will abolish party-based system in Panchayati Raj Institutions and will usher in true democracy in grass roots governance. Further, the Hon'ble Chief Minister shared the enhancement in the Health budget to suggest that the Government is laying highest priority to the health sector.

Replying to the question raised by Hon'ble MLA Smt Farwanti Tamang, the Hon'ble Chief Minister said that though emphasis has been laid on empowering the skilled and trained youth through a start-up programme, unskilled youth will be imparted skill and capacity building training through the Skill Development Department to prepare them for skill-based jobs.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister thanked all the Hon'ble MLAs for their participation in the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on Hon'ble Governor's address and Annual General Budget 2020-21.

Thereafter, the Motion of Thanks on the Hon'ble Governor's address was put to vote and passed by the House.

The Financial Business saw presentation and voting on Separate Demands for Grants of all the Government Departments for the financial year 2020-21.

Thereafter, the General Budget for the State for FY 2020-21 was put to vote, and was passed by the House.

Likewise, the Sikkim Appropriation Bill, Bill No. 4 of 2020 for the General Budget of 2020-21, was also passed by the House.

Hon'ble Speaker Shri L.B. Das presented the following Reports in the House:

- Appropriation Accounts 2018-19, Government of Sikkim
- Finance Accounts (Volume I & II) 2018-19, Government of Sikkim
- Annual Consolidated Audit and Review Report on the Accounts of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipalities for the year 2018-19
- Separate Audit Report on the Accounts of Sikkim State Legal Services Authority – Legal Aid Fund for the year ended 31st March, 2018
- Separate Audit Report on the Accounts of State Trading Corporation of Sikkim for the year ended 31st March, 2018
- Separate Audit Report on the Accounts of Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission for the year ended 31st March, 2018
- Separate Audit Report on the Accounts of Sikkim Power Development Corporation Limited for the year ended 31st March, 2018
- Medium Term Fiscal Plan for Sikkim 2020-21 to 2022-23
- Half Yearly Review Report 2019-20 (Review of the Trends in Receipt and Expenditure in relation to Budget 2019-20)

Hon'ble Speaker Shri L.B. Das laid the copy of the Rules of the Sikkim Public Records Act, 2017 (11 of 2017), published in Sikkim Government Gazette 329, dated Friday 02nd August, 2017, on the table of the House.

The Hon'ble Speaker also presented the Annual Reports of Commission/ Departments in the House.

Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri P.S. Tamang in his valedictory remarks, expressed his gratitude to the Hon'ble Governor for his address to the House at the start of the Budget Session. He thanked the Hon'ble Speaker and the Assembly Secretariat for conducting the Assembly session even under the highly challenging circumstances due to Covid-19 outbreak globally and in most parts of the country. He thanked the Hon'ble Deputy Speaker, Hon'ble Ministers, Hon'ble MLAs, Chief Secretary, DGP, Additional Chief Secretaries, and all officers for their presence and contribution to the Session.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister announced that the State will be under complete lockdown from the morning of 25th March, 2020 to 31st March, 2020 as a precautionary measure to contain the current situation. He appealed to the people of Sikkim to support the Government's decision and adhere to all the directives being issued from time to time.

Hon'ble Speaker Shri L.B. Das in his valedictory remarks thanked the Hon'ble Governor for his address in the House. He thanked the Leader of the House and all the Members for their active participation. Summarizing the two-day Budget Session, the Hon'ble Speaker thanked all the Members for their cooperation to ensure that all the Businesses could be carried out within the available time.

The two-day Budget Session came to a conclusion with the Hon'ble Speaker adjourning the House Sine-Die.

## DC WEST takes stock of preparedness ahead of lock down

**Gyalshing, 24 Mar (IPR):**

District Collector, West, Karma R Bonpo, visited the Isolation Center at Ayush Hospital, Kyongsa and Quarantine Center at the Girls Hostel, Kyongsa, West Sikkim.

The District Collector made a survey on the available resources and facilities being set up till date at the centers ahead of the district wide lockdown which begins from 25 Mar, 2020 6.00am onwards till the 31 Mar, 2020.

He informed that the Isolation Center and Quarantine Center would be fully stocked in the next few days which would cater to around 50 patients at a time. He also informed that the district

is trying its absolute best in keeping the public safe with keeping the medical supplies stocked for any emergencies in the district. He further mentioned that the safety equipments for Medical Personnel has also been acquired and would soon be made available to them.

He further appealed to the public of West Sikkim to avoid any social gathering and travel. Social distancing should be practised along with maintaining of good hygiene. He also informed that the public need to be at their homes and use the time to help the state with their practice of self-quarantine which help them to tackle the problem from spreading out.

## Govt bans export of sanitisers, all types of ventilators

New Delhi, Mar 24 (PTI):

The government on Tuesday banned export of all sanitisers and ventilators with immediate effect in wake of the coronavirus outbreak. "Export of all sanitisers...is prohibited with immediate effect," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification.

It also banned exports of all types of ventilators, including any artificial

respiratory apparatus or oxygen therapy apparatus or any other breathing appliance or device. Last week, it had banned export of certain ventilators, surgical and disposable masks and textile raw material used for making masks.

There is a shortage of hand sanitisers and face masks in the market amid the coronavirus outbreak as people resorted to panic buying.

### Not being ...

allocated any fund for COVID-19 preparation and did not speak a single word about it in this budget session.

He added that while the State Government has made administrative announcements, it had not put health preparedness in place.

Mr Chamling stated that the government has been failed to provide personal protection gear or other arrangements for medical and other professionals working on the frontlines against COVID-19.

He added that there was not still no testing laboratory for COVID-19 in the State and suggested that the government take proper contact and travel history of people returning to the State and undertake disinfection programmes at all public places.

He further advised the State government to announce an economic package to bring relief to drivers and others relying on daily wages for sustenance. He further suggested provision of essential commodities at further subsidized rates and exempt educated unemployed youth and StartUp schemes from loans.

On the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation issue, Mr Chamling pointed out that the CM had promised a scientific formula for LT seats by taking public opinion, but has not followed up on the same.

He further alleged that the State government intentionally extended the Central Motor Vehicles [Amendment] Act 2019 to the State and thus betrayed drivers of Sikkim.

He added that local protection was under threat from Citizenship Amendment Act, NRC and NPR so the State government should use clause 12 of Sikkim Subjects Regulation Act 1961 to safeguard the rights of the people of Sikkim.

## ~ 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



# SKM DISTRIBUTES SANITIZERS AND SPREADS AWARENESS IN GANGTOK

*Govt doing all it can to keep Sikkimese, whether in the state or outside, safe: Jacob Khaling*

**SAGAR CHHETRI**  
**Gangtok, 24 March:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha distributed hand sanitizers and awareness leaflets in a bid to help people keep safe against Novel Coronavirus here at MG Marg on Tuesday.

The party began the initiative, supported by Panchadeep Constructions Ltd, from the Star Hall complex.

The SKM team was led by Political Secretary to the CM, Jacob Khaling.

Speaking to media-persons, Mr Khaling mentioned that along with

the State government, the SKM party was also working actively in urban and rural parts of the State to keep COVID-19 at bay.

He informed that SKM workers have been distributing awareness pamphlets and hand sanitizers across the State and have also carried out cleanliness and sanitization drives at public spaces across the State.

He mentioned that the party has dispatched sent around 2 lakh pieces of hand sanitizers to its MLAs and party in-charges of different

constituencies to distribute for free to people across the State.

Mr Khaling informed that the sanitization programme at MG Marg by professionals of Panchadeep Constructions Ltd will be held twice a week till the situation normalized.

He thanked Panchadeep Constructions for coming forward for the good of public health.

While speaking about the lockdown of the State, he appealed to the people to support the initiative of the government and not come out of their homes

until it was for urgent emergency work.

He informed that Chief Minister PS Tamang [Goley] has been working in close coordination with the Union Home Minister and Ministers and Chief Secretaries of different States for the protection of students and people from Sikkim studying and working in other States.

He added that the government has arranged to bring 53 Sikkimese students studying under the CM's Meritorious Scholarship Scheme in Delhi and keep them in

quarantine in the State until it was safe for them to return to their respective homes.

He further informed that the government was also making preventive arrangements for Sikkimese students in Tamil Nadu, Dehradun, Kolkata and other parts of the country either in their respective places of current residence and/or to bring them back to the State if required.

He appealed to the people to support the government initiatives to keep Sikkim safe from COVID-19.

## After his BJP entry, forgery case against Scindia closed

**Bhopal, Mar 24 (PTI):**

The Madhya Pradesh Economic Offences Wing has closed a case against former Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and his family members, where they were accused of falsifying a property document while selling land, an official said on Tuesday.

Scindia quit the Congress on March 10 and later joined the BJP. His resignation from the Congress triggered a revolt in the Madhya Pradesh party unit, with 22 MLAs who belong to his camp also tendering their resignations. This led to collapse of the Kamal Nath-led state government last week.

On March 12, when the Congress was in power in the state, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) decided to verify facts afresh into the complaint against Scindia and his family of allegedly indulging in wrongdoing while selling a land in Gwalior in 2009.



"The complainant, Surendra Shrivastava, approached us for the second time on March 12 seeking a re-look into his complaint against Scindias. We forwarded the complaint to our Gwalior office which, after a re-investigation, closed it," a top EOW official said.

According to sources in the EOW, it closed the case against Scindia and his family on Friday.

Incidentally, Kamal Nath also stepped down as chief minister on Friday after his government was reduced to a minority.

On March 12, Shrivastava filed a fresh complaint against Scindia and his family, alleging that by falsifying a registry document, they sold him a

piece of land at Mahalgaon which was smaller by 6,000 sqft than the original agreement in 2009, the EOW official said.

He initially lodged the complaint on March 26, 2014 against Scindia, who was then a Congress leader, and his family. But it was investigated and closed in May 2018 (when the BJP was in power in the state), the official said.

Earlier this month, 22 MLAs loyal to Scindia resigned from the Congress, paving way for the BJP to come to power in the state again.

Senior BJP leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan took oath as chief minister of the state on Monday night.

## Rangpo taxi drivers on COVID-19 awareness drive

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**Gangtok, 24 Mar:**

Rangpo local taxi Drivers cum Drivers Welfare Association (DWA) again came forward to spread awareness regarding prevention from COVID-19 by distributing sanitizer and sanitizing Rangpo Market; General Secretary, Govind Biswakarma, Cashier, Kumar Chhetri, Advisor, Mahindra Adhikari along with members of the association seen sanitizing the market also distributing sanitizers to the needy. Govind Biswakarma talking with this correspondent informed that association is too much serious to aware the residents of the area to prevent from this disease. They had distributed 1500 face mask to the residents and drivers just a couple of days before. Mr Biswakarma also welcomed the Government decision to stop the vehicular movement.

## Amazon makes kids and family content available for free

**Mumbai, Mar 24 (PTI):** As more and more people work from home due to the coronavirus quarantine, Amazon has made a number of its kids and family content available free to watch on Prime Video.

Shows such as "Pete the Cat", "Baahubali: The Lost Legends", "Just Add Magic" Magic, "The Stinky Dirty Show", nursery rhymes and stories of 'Chhota Bheem' are available for free for Indian viewers.

Viewers don't need a Prime account but they still need to set up an account on Amazon to access the content, a release from the company said.

## Sonia urges PM, Cong CMs to take measures for wage support to construction workers

**New Delhi, Mar 24 (PTI):** Expressing concern over the plight of construction workers after the country-wide lockdown over coronavirus, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to announce emergency measures, including wage support to those in distress.

In a letter to the prime minister, Gandhi said over 44 million construction workers are now faced with a "precarious" future as many of them are stranded in cities and are deprived of livelihood due to the lockdown.

In a separate letter to the chief ministers of Congress-ruled states, the Congress chief urged them to ensure urgent wage support to construction workers who are now deprived of work due to the restrictions.

She said the country is in the midst of the worst global pandemic and this has necessitated stringent measures for containment and management of the COVID-19 transmission.

"These measures have led to widespread economic disruptions that had a debilitating impact on the informal sector," she said in her letter to Modi.

Nearly 500 coronavirus cases have been reported in India so far, according to Health Ministry data on Tuesday.

As cases of the viral infection surged, authorities have put almost the entire country under lockdown, banning gathering of people and suspending road, rail and air traffic till March 31, to check the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

The Congress president said that over the last year, lakhs of migrant workers in major cities across India have left for their home towns and villages fearing a prolonged economic downturn.

"As the second largest employer in India, over 44 million construction workers are now faced with a precarious future. Many are stranded in cities and are deprived of their livelihoods due to the stringent lockdown measures," Gandhi told the PM.

The Congress chief said several countries around the world, most notably Canada, have announced wage subsidy measures as part of COVID-19 Economic Response Plan.

"Considering the extraordinary circumstance, I request you to consider advising the State Building and other Construction Worker's Welfare Boards to roll out emergency measures, particularly wage support to the construction workers who are in distress," Gandhi urged the prime minister. She said the Building and other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 provides for various welfare measures for workers.

The Act also provides for constitution of state welfare boards and the constitution of welfare fund, she said, noting that it is reported that the welfare boards collected cess amounting to Rs 49,688 crore till March 31, 2019. She said only an amount of Rs 19,379 crore had been spent.

In her letter to Congress chief ministers, she commended their tireless efforts towards responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This public health emergency has triggered a severe economic downturn that threatens the livelihoods of millions, she noted.

"The construction sector is still reeling under the twin blow of demonetisation and GST, and slowdown triggered by COVID-19 is likely to further deepen the crisis. While lakhs of migrant workers fled large cities over the last week due to panic and stoppage of work, many are left stranded due to stringent lockdown measures and closure of public transport. Given their dependence of daily wages, it is important to provide urgent wage support to construction workers who have been deprived of work," she wrote to the CMs.

"At this juncture, it is critical to ensure that workers are given the benefits they are entitled to under various statutory provisions," she said.

State Welfare Boards set up under the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 have a large pool of unutilised funds collected through the levy of Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess, she told the Congress chief ministers. Given that a significant amount of cess lies unutilised, the State Welfare Boards may consider providing wage support to their registered beneficiaries, Gandhi told the chief ministers.

## SDM-Yangang sensitizes bazaar residents

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**NAMCHI, 24 MAR:**

A team led by Sub Divisional Magistrate, Yangang, Sangay Gyatso Bhutia, visited shops in Yangang Bazaar today to sensitize shopkeepers about closure order of shops, commercial establishments, hotels, restaurants which commenced from 6AM on 25 March till 31 March [now, probably 15 April since the PM has

announced a national lockdown] by District Administration. He also informed the shopkeepers about the complete safety restrictions and other exempted categories of shops. During the visit, strict directions were given on hoardings and over pricing on essential commodities. The SDM was accompanied by BDO Yangang, Kishore Thapa and SHO Yangang Police Station, CK Subba.

## Mount Distilleries donates hand sanitizers

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**Gangtok, 24 Mar:**

Mount Distilleries Limited, Majhitar, East Sikkim, distributed 600 bottles of sanitizers at different places around Rangpo today. According to officials of the company, they deposited the sanitizers with the Health and Police Department offices in Rangpo and the

Nagar Panchayat Office. On behalf of Health Department, Dr Tshring Laden, received the consignment while Councillor Pinku Prasad and RNP officer Chitramani Khawas did the same on behalf of the Nagar Panchayat. Around 50 bottles of sanitizers were also distributed in the market.

## Corona-panic sees increase in hospital visit in Singtam

**YOGEN THATAL**  
**Singtam, 24 Mar:**


Novel Coronavirus fears have seen an uptick in the number of visits to the District Hospital here.

Praveen Tamang, the registration clerk at Districts Hospital, Singtam, informs that more than eight Singtam residents have registered for medical checkups because they have returned from outside the State.

Another Singtam resident, a 27-year-old, who recently returned from Singapore also came in for a health checkup.

Meanwhile, Bardang youth distributed masks, hand sanitizers and soap to people in their area.

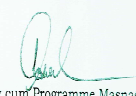
DHS officials and concerned residents of new market have also installed a mini-tank in the market area so that people could wash their hands there.

  
**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**  
**SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT**  
**CHILD PROTECTION SCHEME**  
**GANGTOK**

No: 1000/SJ&WD/CPS/2020 Dated: 24/03/2020

**NOTICE**

This is to inform all eligible applicants, who had applied for the post of Programme Officer/ Protection Officer/ Legal -cum- Probation Officer/ Accountant under Child Protection Scheme, Social Justice & Welfare Department, that due to the outbreak of Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19), the date of written examination has been postponed till further order.

  
Deputy Secretary cum Programme Masnager,

R.O.No. 406/IRP/PUB/Class/1920  
Dated: 24.03.20

Deputy Secretary (ASJS, SJ&WD,  
Social Justice & Welfare Dept.,  
Govt. of Sikkim, Gangtok


## KUTSE SHEGU (WITH A DIFFERENCE)

The 49th Day death ceremony (Kutse Shegu) of our beloved mother, Pasang Lhamu Ethenpa (Pasang Guruma of PN Girls School, Gangtok) who left for her heavenly abode on 13 Feb, 2020 falls on Wednesday the 01 Apr, 2020. Owing to Coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic vis-à-vis appeal of Chief Minister, PS Goley for social distancing followed by precautionary advisory notifications issued by Govt of Sikkim and DC (East), Gangtok, the puja at Ethenpa Villa, Lower Tadong, Gangtok will be solemnised ONLY with the religious rituals.

Being responsible citizens of the society and with heavy heart, we felt, it would be wiser to prevent the gathering of all our friends & well wishers taking into consideration everyone's health & safety. Instead, we humbly request all our friends and well wishers who had planned to visit us on that day to kindly pray for the departed soul from the sanctity of their respective home/office. Instead, we would like to invite all our well wishers to visit us in the First Death Anniversary (LOMCHEY) of our beloved "MUMMY" sometime early next year, details of which will be publicised widely. At a moment of this global crisis of Corona Virus endangering human life, we appeal you all to kindly help us to help you.

We fully know that this action of ours will be disapproved by some section of our respected people but being a social animal, we equally feel, we do have some social responsibility towards our Sikkimese society at large. Ethenpa family will be forever grateful for your understanding.

**Mr. Menla T. Ethenpa & Dr. Sonam T. Ethenpa (Sons)**  
**Mrs. Tshering Pem Ethenpa & Mrs. Chunki Ethenpa (Daughters-in-law)**  
**Mrs. Diki Y. Ethenpa, Ms. Chopel S. Ethenpa & Mrs. Sangay P. Ethenpa (Daughters)**  
**Mr. Karma Chankapa & Mr. Pemba Lama (Sons-in-law) & hosts of grand children and great grand children**

  
**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	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fever</li> <li>● Difficulty in breathing</li> <li>● Dry Cough</li> <li>● Severe acute respiratory syndrome</li> <li>● Pneumonia - like symptoms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wash your hands often with soap.</li> <li>● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer</li> <li>● Observe good personal hygiene.</li> <li>● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.</li> <li>● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.</li> <li>● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.</li> <li>● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.</li> <li>● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.</li> </ul>
Treatment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.</li> <li>● No vaccinations available as of now.</li> <li>● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.</li> </ul>	

If you seek help, you may call :  
-Toll free no. 104  
District surveillance Officer  
EAST : 7029372100  
WEST : 9692978008  
NORTH : 9641957468  
SOUTH : 7407691463  
New STNM  
AMS : 9434711402

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE**  
**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**



## Native Speakers without a Language

*Unfortunately, that could happen sooner than we feared*

Some years back, the People's Linguistic Survey of India released 11 volumes in its planned 50 volume survey of the country's languages. The volumes, published by Orient BlackSwan, covered languages from the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Karnataka. Yes, Sikkim is not in this initial set, but several of the languages spoken in the region must have figured in the linguistic survey. What should also be worrying is that the regional languages, what we also know as mother tongues, here must be in as precarious state as the survey has found in the ten states in question. The People's Linguistic Survey of India (PSLI) raised the alarm during the launch of the volumes when it shared that as many as 780 languages are spoken in India, at least 400 of which are at risk of dying in the next 50 years. That's an average of eight languages every year! That should have everyone worried, but clearly, the disinterest and the indifference which brought so many languages to the brink is too pervasive. There is not much happening, anywhere, at any level to save the languages at risk of being lost. May be whatever little is being attempted to avert such extinction is driven by the emotion of "save" and that is why it is failing. Perhaps we should consider nurturing instead of saving or protecting because while the latter can make the efforts insular and imperil the language even more, the former option of "nurture" allows languages space and opportunities to grow, adapt and remain relevant.

The PSLI surveyors also discovered that 250 languages were lost in the last five decades in India. The extinction is obviously picking up pace, and who knows, the timeframe of 50 years for 400 languages might actually shrink as the extinction snowball gathers more momentum as it hurtles to the abyss and who knows, maybe even obliterates more languages along the way. It is a worrying scenario. But is it? Because, as mentioned earlier, it does not appear to have generated too much concern.

The Survey, now already eight months old, might or might not resuscitate the fate that awaits regional languages, but offers us a chance to ponder more seriously on where we are going wrong with our efforts at keeping languages and dialects alive. Languages are essentially about communication and then they take on aspects of culture and invariably underline the very ethos of a people. That said, a language obviously ceases to be one when there is no one left speaking it. This does not necessarily happen with the complete annihilation of a people and is most times caused by the language becoming redundant as a communication tool. There is also the whole generational challenge. While it is not rare to, say, catch some old folk from different communities chatter away in Limboo language in parts of West Sikkim, it is already rare to find even Limboo kids speaking to each other in their mother tongue. The same applies to some other languages as well, all of which appear to be surviving, but because they are not being passed on, are already imperiled.

But there has to be more to it. How does a language die? Past experience proves that the moment "outsiders" stop trying to learn a language, it is already on death-row. It is not enough for only native speakers to continue using a language because we do not lead closed lives anymore and need to interact all the time with people from other communities, speaking different languages among themselves. And outsiders stop learning a language when they feel no need for it as a tool for communication. For instance, all old members of the plainsmen business community speak fluent Tibetan. They had to pick up the language if they wanted to trade with Tibet which is what most of them were engaged in till six decades ago. Everyone in Sikkim, including those who have been here barely a year, speaks Nepali. They have to because they need to get their message across. Similarly, any Sikkimese going out for studies comes back equipped with at least passable Hindi-speaking skills. The Chinese are introducing English in their schools because they want to now converse with the world. That more or less settles what is actually a settled argument that language is first about communication.

Being solely about communication, however, imperils a language because the link-language keeps changing as our networks widen or as new technologies become popular. Languages, hence, also need to remain relevant and important, and this they can achieve by patronizing high literature and the sharing of important thoughts and ideas in their respective languages. One misses that in Sikkim. There is so little quality literary work in regional languages that even the aesthetic appeal of learning them is being lost. We have to strive to make it worth the while for those learning regional languages by making it about more than just chatting. For that, those who complain about losing their language need to create more awareness, produce more literature, get a pop-culture going in their languages, make it more vibrant.

# Coronavirus: Could the World Have Prepared Better for a Pandemic?

NEIL PYPER  
*theconversation.com*

As much of the world gets used to social distancing, school closures and restrictions in movement in response to the coronavirus pandemic, obvious questions are being asked about how governments and companies can prepare themselves for these sorts of extreme events.

One technique that has gained prominence in helping business people and officials deal with events that have a low probability but high impact is called scenario analysis or scenario planning. There are a number of different methods that can be used to model scenarios, but in essence these all involve developing stories about a number of possible ways that the future could unfold.

Probably the best known and most widely used approach, which was developed within Shell during the 1970s, involves groups of stakeholders discussing what happens when two unrelated but highly uncertain drivers of change interact in extreme ways. The eminent scenario analyst Kees van der Heijden, a former head of scenario planning at Shell, has described how one of the company's early scenario-planning exercises examined the government approach to the energy sector and the potential discovery of significant natural gas reserves.

This approach does not aim to predict the future, and in fact recognises that this is a fundamentally impossible and futile thing to do. Instead, it encourages what van der Heijden has called "strategic conversations", which allow those involved to have their world views challenged. The hope is that this makes business people and officials more aware of when things are not going according to plan – and so better able to respond.

NOT A BLACK SWAN EVENT

There is little doubt that this sort of agile thinking has helped some officials and companies respond earlier and more decisively to the changing events of recent weeks. In some ways, the COVID-19 pandemic is a prime example of a black swan event – a term coined by the writer Nassim Nicholas Taleb to describe very high impact events that are unimaginable before they happen.

But the COVID-19 pandemic should not really be a black swan event. Epidemiologists have been warning for decades that a pandemic of a novel flu strain was inevitable. There have been a number of scares over the past two decades, such as the SARS outbreak in 2002-04, which was concentrated in southern China and Hong Kong, the swine flu pandemic that originated in Mexico in 2009, and H5N1 avian flu in the 2000s.

While all of these epidemics were serious, they weren't on the same scale as COVID-19. This may well have led to business and political leaders focusing their attention on what they perceived to be more pressing priorities in recent years. In the US, for example, the Trump administration cut funding to disease security programmes as recently as 2018.

The behavioural economists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman have developed the idea of the availability heuristic, which suggests that people overestimate the probability of things that are high profile and memorable, such as terrorist attacks.

However, the reverse is also the case, and the sustained absence of a pandemic such as COVID-19 – a high-impact, once-in-a-generation event – has led people to underestimate its likelihood and impact. A number of think tanks and consultancies provide early warning services about low-profile, high-impact events, such as conflict in the South China Sea. However, if they feature events that are considered far fetched, they risk losing credibility among their clients and readers.

### OUT AHEAD

It's probably no accident that a number of the countries that have responded effectively to the COVID-19 outbreak are in east Asia, where the SARS outbreak and H5N1 scares are relatively recent memories. For example, Taiwan has been praised for taking early action to contain the potential spread of the virus, and Singapore has been able to keep down infection rates through widespread testing for the virus, enabling effective quarantining and treatment of cases.

One key lesson that can be taken from the response to the pandemic so far is that companies and countries that are able to respond quickly, and change strategies in response to rapidly changing events, will do well. For example, videoconferencing software producer Zoom has made premium versions of its system available for free to educational institutions that are forced to teach online. This will expose large numbers of students to the company's platform and brand, as well as generating significant positive publicity, which is likely to prove beneficial once normal life resumes.

Scenario analysis and some of its related underlying principles can offer some tools to prepare for and deal with highly disruptive events. However, they cannot predict where and when such events will take place, nor can they completely overcome the psychological traps that cause us to underestimate them, and as a result be underprepared. Perhaps our best hope is that by being more aware of these issues, and the fact that uncertainty dominates so much of our lives, we might be a little bit better able to respond to unexpected events, big and small.

*[the writer is Associate Professor, School of Strategy and Leadership, Coventry University]*



## Coronavirus: Rationing Based on Health, Equity and Decency Now Needed

TIM LAN  
*theconversation.com*

Food security is no laughing matter at the best of times, but I gasped when I first read the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) annual food civil contingencies infrastructure report in 2018. It is barely a page long (in public at least) and assures us everything is OK and that the food system is resilient and able to withstand shocks. As the coronavirus racks the nation and panic buying continues, this complacency is about to be tested.

Few analysts of the UK food system are anything other than sober about its fragility. There is little storage. All operates on a just-in-time basis in which food travels down the supply chain – literally, just in time for when the next link or process needs it. Food businesses have been realigned to cut delays and storage. Consumers have come to expect constant flows of food, without hiccups or gaps. New industries have emerged, notably logistics and satellites which track this all from farm to shop. We are trucker-dependent now.

Only 53% of food consumed in the UK is produced in the country. Others feed the Brits. Some scientists calculate that UK external dependency is even greater, with hidden use of external land to provide animal feed.

While this distortedly efficient food revolution has been rolled out, the UK food trade gap – the difference between exports and imports by value – has widened. In 2018, food worth £46.8 billion was imported, with exports worth only £22.5 billion, leaving a food trade gap of £24.3 billion. Much of the imports are vital for health, the £10bn imports of fruit and veg in particular. UK fruit and veg growing has sunk. The UK's main "oral" export these days is whisky. Even meat – supposedly Britain's forte – is in the red. If borders close or supply chains snap, what then?

### WHAT ABOUT ACTUAL FOOD?

Putting money to one side, UK self-reliance has been slowly dropping for decades from a high point in the early 1980s. I was among academics warning the government in 2017 to beware a no-deal Brexit, as the management of ceaseless flow of food mostly through Dover and the channel tunnel is coordinated by the UK's giant supermarkets. Just-in-time systems are easy to disrupt. The retailers privately expressed alarm to the government but the no-deal posturing continued. It ought to have led the government to prepare serious change, to put the country's food flow on a secure footing. This did not happen.

A year later, another report argued that UK food security was more fragile than most people think. It too was dismissed initially by the government, only for ministers to U-turn within days and admit ships were being chartered, including from a company which owned no ships.

Now coronavirus exposes other difficulties and deep structural weakness. It is almost as though a web of supply – from land and sea via processing, distribution, retailing and food service to consumers – was designed to undermine, not just ignore, resilience.

If food security refers to continuity of supply sufficient to meet health for all, resilience means it being able to bounce back under threat, and food capacity means having the skills, technology, planning and preparedness to do it.

The current UK food system is already weak in all senses, and has been for too long. Food and agriculture account for one-quarter of greenhouse gas

emissions. They are also the biggest drivers of biodiversity destruction, huge users and polluters of water, and the major driver of much illness from noncommunicable diseases and food-borne pathogens, too. The UK consumes the highest rate of "ultra-processed" foods of any country in Europe. No wonder our obesity rates are alarming and the NHS under stress.

Food is the UK's biggest employer with 4.1 million workers. There's a feeding frenzy over who can make the most money from food. Currently, this is a battle between retailers, processors and food service, each taking about one-quarter of the £120 billion from the £225 billion that consumers spend on food and drink annually. The new kid on the block is home delivery – Deliveroo, Uber, Just-Eat for example – which now takes £10 billion from the £225 billion, almost as much money as farming.

The UK government believes home deliveries will enable people to self-quarantine at home during coronavirus. If one in five workers go ill, this strategy might fail, as they are often self-employed, so unable to claim sickness benefit and incentivised to keep working working to pay the bills – potentially spreading disease not protecting people from it.

### FOOD FOR ALL THE PEOPLE

A crunch point for UK food policy and planning is surely approaching. The coronavirus crisis is already spawning worrying actions. Whereas under Brexit no-deal threats, stoicism ruled and "preppers" – people stocking up – were generally few. Today shelves are being stripped and queues form for supermarkets to open. It's why colleagues and I have called on the UK prime minister to set up a rational system of rationing – based on health, equity and decency – to see the country through this crisis.

The just-in-time logistics system is being stretched. This is why retailers are planning to prune supplies to bare essentials and are rationing. If this is happening with government approval, it is surely an abandonment of democratic responsibility. If not, is government not in control? For people on severely low incomes, meanwhile, reliance on food banks is creaking. Donations are down. We are clearly not all in this together.

Coming weeks and months will stretch government and industry credibility, and also the public. It is a test of identity and whether the national interest really could mean all the people. We ought to be preparing a long-term redirection of the food system. However, the current agriculture bill before parliament doesn't suggest that. Instead, it's an economist's bill mainly designed to redirect subsidies around the as-yet-untested notion of "public money for public goods".

Food production and equitable distribution barely feature. We ought to be demanding that Public Health England and the devolved administrations in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast revise the Eatwell Guide, our national healthy eating guidelines, around sustainable diets, combining health, environment and social criteria such as affordability. These are what should drive production and determine rationing, if circumstances deteriorate.

Meanwhile, it is the food retailers who are beginning to ration supply. This is unacceptable in a democracy. If to happen, it ought to be in the open – and guided by health and sustainability. Surely the "public good" lies in feeding all well, according to need not income. Those values are what got the UK through the second world war, as our Churchill-inspired prime minister ought to know.

*[the writer is Professor of Food Policy, City, University of London]*



# Entire West Bengal brought under lockdown till Mar 31



**Kolkata, Mar 24 (PTI):** Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday extended the ongoing lockdown in force in Kolkata and other urban areas of West Bengal to the entire state till March 31 to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

The number of people getting infected is rising now, Banerjee, also the health minister of the state, said and urged citizens of the state to stay indoors and cooperate with the administration during the lockdown.

Banerjee announced a scheme Prochesta under which a financial help of Rs 1,000 will be extended to those working in the unorganised sector, who will be the worst hit by the lockdown.

"We are standing on the threshold of an exceptionally unnatural situation. After assessing the situation, we have decided to extend the complete safety regulation to the entire state starting 5 pm today till March 31," Banerjee told a press conference at the state secretariat here on the second day of the lockdown.

The initial five-day lockdown in Kolkata and several urban agglomerations had begun on Monday and was scheduled to continue till March 27 midnight.

"The decision was taken as a safeguard against the coronavirus. People will face problems, but if we can withstand the initial problem, it will help us in fighting the disease,"

the chief minister said.

Reiterating her claim that the Centre is yet to extend any help to her government to cope with the situation, she said, "We have already announced free ration for 8.85 crore people for the next six months."

"Now, we are launching a scheme, Prochesta, to help those in the unorganised sector. They will get a financial help of Rs 1,000. They can apply for it between April 15 and 30."

The chief minister also urged people not to crowd shops selling essential commodities.

"Make sure you are standing in a safe distance from another person. Follow precautionary measures, cover your faces,

maintain hygiene. I also request you not to play cricket on empty roads - the virus will spread," she said. Banerjee also urged those who have come back home in West Bengal from other states and abroad to follow strict isolation at home for 14 days.

In view of the fear that the virus could spread through newspapers, she said, police will monitor from Wednesday the distribution of newspapers by hawkers who will have to take necessary precautions.

The vendors will be asked not to dump the bunch of newspapers on the road before distributing them to hawkers who take them to people. In this manner, viruses get spread. You must complete

the entire process of distribution from 5 am to 7 am, she said. The chief minister also said she has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to relax the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act which provides for limiting fiscal deficit of states to 3 per cent of the SGDP and raise it to 5 per cent.

"We have not got any assistance from the central government. A few states have increased tax on petrol and diesel, but we have not done so because people will face problems."

"In the last one month, the markets have gone from bad to worse and we have no clue when the coronavirus will be controlled and what will happen to the economy in the coming days," she said.

## 255 arrested in Kolkata for defying lockdown

**Kolkata, Mar 23 (PTI):** Police arrested 255 people in Kolkata on Monday evening for violating the restrictions imposed in the metropolis in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, officials said.

The arrests were made after 5 pm when the lockdown came into effect, they said, adding that those held will be prosecuted under sections dealing with disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant.

Naka checkings are underway at every

important junction of the city, officials said.

The lockdown, which will continue till March 27, was clamped to prevent further spread of the virus.

Kolkata's police commissioner Anuj Sharma urged the people to stay at home and cooperate with the administration in maintaining law and order.

I appeal to all citizens to #StayHome and cooperate with the administration. @KolkataPolice will

continue the drive against violators, he tweeted.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also appealed to the people to follow the guidelines set by the government and not to come out of their homes unless there is an emergency.

She also asked them to cooperate with the government to fight the menace.

In West Bengal, a person has died and six COVID-19 patients are currently undergoing treatment.

## Two fresh cases of coronavirus reported in West Bengal

Two more people with recent history of foreign travel tested positive for the coronavirus in West Bengal on Tuesday, taking the number of such cases in the state to eight, a state health official said.

Of the two, one had returned from the UK and another man from Egypt.

They have been kept in the isolation ward of the Beliaghata Infectious Diseases hospital, he said.

The first medical examination conducted on

them showed they were infected with the virus. Their samples have been sent for a second test and the results are awaited.

Besides these eight cases, a 57-year-old man from Dumdum had died from coronavirus.

## Lockdown in Bengal enters second day



**Kolkata, Mar 24 (PTI):** Residents of West Bengal woke up to empty roads and deserted public places as the five-day lockdown in vast swathes of the state entered the second day on Tuesday.

The lockdown that began at 5 pm on Monday will continue till March 27. Private vehicles were off the roads while all business establishments, barring those dealing with essential commodities, were shut.

Major railway stations, bus terminals and airports were deserted. Only a few police vehicles and those associated with emergency services were seen on the roads.

Police personnel were seen asking people through public address system to stay indoors.

There were reports of newspapers not being de-

livered in most parts of the state.

A 57-year-old man infected with coronavirus died at a hospital in the city on Monday, the first COVID-19 death in the state. Eight more are infected with the coronavirus.

Most gated colonies and apartments in the state capital were locked while civic workers were seen sanitising parks and bus stands.

Police arrested 255 people in Kolkata on Monday evening for violating the restrictions imposed in the metropolis in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, officials said.

According to a state government notification issued on Sunday, Kolkata and several urban agglomerations will be under lockdown from 5 pm on Monday till

March 27 in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

The lockdown will apply to areas under the jurisdiction of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, all municipal towns in North 24 Parganas district besides Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, West Bardhaman, North Dinajpur and Howrah districts. Siliguri, Darjeeling and Kurseong are also under lockdown.

All shops, commercial establishments, offices, factories and workshops are shut.

Foodgrains, groceries, vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, bread, milk, medical services, home delivery, petrol pumps, pharmacies, the IT sector and banks and ATMs, among others, have been exempted from the purview of the lockdown.

## Panic buying in Assam before lockdown begins



**Guwahati, Mar 24 (PTI):** Ahead of the statewide eight-day lockdown from 6 pm on Tuesday, markets and shops in Assam witnessed huge rush of buyers who wanted to stock up on essential items.

Food items, soaps, disinfectants and other essential items flew off the shelves before midday as people jostled with one another in shops ignoring the one-metre social distance norm the government has advised.

Similar was the situation in the vegetable, fish and meat markets, pharmacies and even liquor shops where people were seen buying stuff in huge quantities at premium rates to stock up their homes and brace for the week-long restrictions indoors ordered by the government till March 31 midnight.

In their bid to grab the items before they get sold out, buyers also forgot Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's assurance that grocery and medicine

supply will continue to be available during the period.

Kandarpa Kalita was one such buyer who was seen near a Guwahati market carrying four large bags full of vegetables on a rod tied behind his two-wheeler.

"We have to eat well and remain strong to keep our immunity high to fight the coronavirus. That is why I have bought these vegetables for my family," Kalita said.

Home-maker Pramila Boro was queuing up in front of a grocery shop in Kokrajhar district. "I must have rice, dal, oil, milk and other items. My family consists of my elderly in-laws, children and husband. I require stuff in large quantities that should last for eight days. My husband is in the vegetable market," she said.

Bipul Gogoi in upper Assam's Sivasagar district was struggling under the weight of his purchases of fish, meat and vegetables at a local market. But he was happy that he got all

the items he wanted, "even though I paid double the normal prices".

However, this panic buying is not liked by all. Mask-wearing college student Hamid Ali of Karimganj district said, "The mad rush to buy groceries, vegetables, fish and meat has increased their prices. Shops and markets are so crowded that there is practically no space between two persons. This will turn a market a happy hunting ground for coronavirus."

Health Minister Sarma had urged people not to panic as basic essential services will be available during the eight-day lockdown period to prevent the spread of deadly novel Coronavirus COVID-19 in the state.

Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has directed district Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police to ensure that there is no shortage of essential commodities in the state.

## Statewide curfew clamped in Manipur to combat coronavirus

**Imphal, Mar 24 (PTI):** A statewide curfew was declared in Manipur on Tuesday after a 23-year-old woman tested positive for COVID-19, officials said.

The state was on Monday evening placed under a lockdown till March 31, however, people were still venturing out, they said.

The curfew was imposed to further check the movement of people in the wake of the first COVID-19

case in the northeastern region being reported from the state, they said.

It will remain in force till further orders, they said.

Certain essential services have been exempted from the purview of the curfew, the officials said, urging the public to stay indoors.

The woman, who tested positive, recently returned from the UK.

## First coronavirus positive case reported in Manipur

**Imphal, Mar 24 (PTI):** A 23-year-old woman tested positive for the coronavirus in Manipur, the first confirmed case in the Northeast, a top state health department official said on Monday.

The woman, a resident of Thangmeiband Lourung Pural Leikai area in Imphal West district, had recently returned from the UK, a statement issued by Health Services Director K Rajo Singh said. She had reached Delhi from London on March 18 and taken another flight to Kolkata, where she stayed for a few days with fever and a sore throat. From there she took a flight to Imphal via Agartala on March 21, official sources said.

Her travel itinerary, a copy of which is with PTI, showed she travelled from Kolkata to Imphal with her brother on a flight with 108 other passengers.

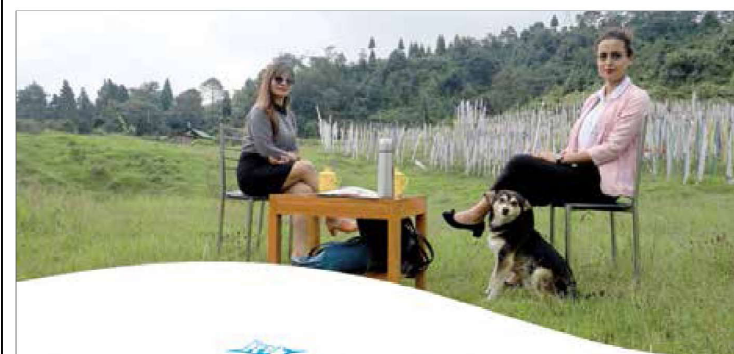
"She had visited the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute

of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) here, complaining of nasopharyngeal problems. Test reports of her swab and blood samples confirmed she is infected with coronavirus," hospital director Th Bhimo Singh said.

Rajo Singh asked people who came in contact with the woman to inform him at 8402880191, 2411668, 8003453818 phone numbers and immediately go in self-isolation till further orders. Police commandos cordoned off the residence of the woman and mobile units were seen instructing people to remain indoors.

Manipur has been placed under lockdown from Monday till March 31 in view of the coronavirus outbreak.

Meanwhile, JNIMS shut its Out Patients Department, barring its flu clinic, with immediate effect in view of the coronavirus outbreak, an order issued by medical superintendent T Rajen Singh said.



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# Olympic postponement inevitable says IOC official Pound



**Los Angeles, Mar 24 (AFP):** Senior International Olympic Committee (IOC) official Dick Pound said a postponement of this year's Tokyo Olympics is now inevitable as the world reels from the coronavirus pandemic.

The IOC said on Sunday the body would wait four more weeks before announcing its decision on the fate of the

July 24-August 9 Games, amid mounting calls for them to be rescheduled.

Pound however believes the IOC — which ruled out a cancellation of the Games — is now laying the groundwork for a postponement.

"My interpretation of the IOC's communications is they don't want to cancel, and they don't think they can continue with the July 24 date,"

Pound told AFP. "So you're looking at the 'P' word - postponement."

"They're going to explore options with the Japanese of course, and then there all kinds of stakeholders — international federations, NOCs, athletes."

"And then in four weeks they're going to try and come out with a plan B and make it as specific as they can make it in that

time period."

An IOC spokesperson did not respond directly to the substance of Pound's remarks, saying only in a statement: "It's the right of every IOC member to interpret the decision of the IOC EB (Executive Board) which was announced yesterday." Pound, who is Canadian, said the "astonishing" spread of COVID-19 across the globe left the IOC with

no other choice.

"This is not something that's going to clear up by July 24," Pound said.

"And this thing isn't going to go away by September or October. A lot of the biggest countries in the world are just about overwhelmed, and it's just starting to take root in Africa. It's a no-go in my view." A one-year postponement to 2021 remained the most likely option, Pound added.

"I think the one-year postponement is the most feasible because it gives you the most time to organise," he said.

A number of Olympic committees and sports federations have already indicated unwillingness to participate in Tokyo if the games are held in July as planned. On Sunday the Canadian Olympic Committee became the first national olympic committee to declare they would not participate if the Games took place in July.

In the United States, both the governing bodies of track and field and swimming have called for the Games to be postponed.

## US Soccer names experienced sports exec Wilson CEO



**Los Angeles, Mar 24 (AFP):** The beleaguered US Soccer Federation named longtime sports executive Will Wilson as Chief Executive Officer, taking over from Dan Flynn who retired in September.

Wilson, 50, has worked the last eight years as head of the NFL division of Wasserman Media Group, where he served as the agent for his nephew, former Indianapolis Colts quarterback Andrew Luck.

Prior to spearheading the Wasserman agency's NFL operations, Wilson spent four years working for Major League Soccer and it's marketing arm Soccer United Marketing, eventually serving as executive vice president of international business and special events for SUM.

Wilson's relationship with MLS commissioner and US federation board member Don Garber goes back further. The two worked for NFL Europe in the 1990s, with Wilson

serving as general manager of the league's Scottish Claymores.

Wilson also worked as the managing director of NFL Mexico.

"We are thrilled Will is joining US Soccer as our CEO," said US Soccer President Cindy Parlow Cone. "He brings an unrivaled set of experience and expertise to soccer in America."

"His global perspective, background in marketing and growing sporting events and extensive experience in the sports business will be invaluable in growing soccer at all levels."

"Soccer is the world's game and Will is the perfect person to help us grow it to America's game."

Parlow Cone herself only took over the president's office this month, stepping up from vice president after president Carlos Cordeiro resigned amid a furore over what superstar Megan Rapinoe branded "blatant sexism" in the federation's

response to a gender discrimination lawsuit by the US women's team.

The lawsuit, in which women's national team players are seeking 66 million in back pay under the Equal Pay act and the Civil Rights Act, is set to go to trial on May 5.

The United States are also still trying to rebound from the failure of the men's team to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

"I'm very excited to be joining US Soccer," Wilson said. "I have always admired the federation from afar and have long felt that the US Soccer crest is one of the best brands in the business."

"US Soccer has an amazing fan base and our supporters are waiting for us to get things back on track both on and off the field," he said. "I'm incredibly energized and excited about the work in front of us to continue striving to become America's preeminent sport."

## A-League season halted ending all football in Australia, NZ

Sydney, Mar 24 (AP): Australian soccer's A-League has suspended its season indefinitely, bringing an end to all professional football competitions in Australia and New Zealand until the coronavirus pandemic passes.

Football Federation Australia chief executive James Johnson announced the decision Tuesday, saying the latest measures imposed by the federal government made it impossible for the A-League to continue.

The league had only a few regular-season rounds remaining before the playoffs. Johnson said the postponement will be reviewed on April 22.

"As a national competition played in all parts of Australia, as well as New Zealand, mission complicated became mission impossible," Johnson said.

He remained optimistic the season could resume and said the postponement likely was

"heartbreaking" for players, clubs and fans. All soccer in Australia from community to professional level has now been halted. "We will feel this," Johnson said. "We will feel the financial pressure on the game at all levels. The game will survive. Will we need to make changes, be different? I say yes."

The multi-national Super Rugby competition suspended its season last week and attempts in Australia and New Zealand to create domestic competitions for their teams have been put on hold.

Australian rules' Australian Football League suspended its season Sunday after only one round. The National Rugby League followed suit on Monday after two rounds.

In each case government restrictions on national and international travel, on public gatherings and non-essential activities made continuing untenable.

## Tipplers queue up before Kerala state run liquor outlets unmindful of lockdown

**Kochi, Mar 24 (PTI):** Long queues were witnessed in front of state beverages corporation outlets across Kerala on Tuesday despite the statewide lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

As tipplers thronged the outlets unmindful of the curfew, officials asked them to ensure that they kept a one metre distance between them as part of preventive steps to check the COVID-19 transmission.

Official sources said precautionary measures have been taken at the beverages outlets to prevent the virus spread.

Only those wearing masks were allowed to stand in queues, the sources said.

Police were deployed to ensure that the people

standing in queues keep a one metre distance between them, they added.

The opposition Congress slammed the CPI(M)-led LDF government for not taking steps to restrict crowds in front of the Kerala State Beverages Corporation (Bevco) outlets, apprehending that such a situation would pave way for spreading the virus. Ernakulam district congress committee general secretary Sherin Varghese claimed if the government had implemented a 2017 Kerala high court order directing the beverages corporation to take remedial steps to end long queues in front of the outlets, such a situation would not have arisen.

"Had the beverages corporation complied with the court order

## Steyn left out, Hendricks new name in CSA's national contracts for 2020-21

Veteran pacer Dale Steyn has been excluded from Cricket South Africa's national contracts for the 2020-21 season even as left-arm seamer Beuran Hendricks was included in the 16-member list.

The 36-year-old Steyn had made a comeback this February after being laid low by injury in the last three years, hoping to be a part of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Australia in October.

The South African board, however, showed faith in the young players, awarding contract upgrades to young fast bowler Anrich Nortje, all-rounder Dwaine Pretorius and batsman Rassie van der Dussen -- who played more matches last season.

Former skipper Faf du Plessis has also been offered a new contract by the board, suggesting he will be an important member of the team which has a busy summer, which includes home Tests against Sri Lanka and Australia.

"We have contracted 16 men's players and 14 women's players which we feel is the appropriate number to maintain our national squads across the formats," CSA Acting Chief Executive Dr Jacques Faul said in a statement on Monday. "This enables us



to contract both our Test players as well as those who are limited overs specialists." South Africa also has a T20 series against India at home and away tours to West Indies, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

CSA said, "those players performing and selected for the Proteas during the 2020/21 season and who are not contracted can qualify for a National Contract upgrade."

"We have decided to keep the 17th men's contract open for the moment and players can qualify for it through performance," Faul said. In the women's category, Nadine de Klerk and Sinalo Jafta have earned contract upgrades during the course of the past season.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, CSA has currently suspended all forms of cricket in the country for the next two months, including first-class cricket, List A cricket

(Momentum Cup), All semi-professional and provincial cricket, as well as All Junior and Amateur cricket. South Africa's three-ODI series in India was also called off due to the spread of the deadly disease and the players are currently in quarantine.

CSA contracted men's players: Temba Bavuma, Quinton de Kock, Faf du Plessis, Dean Elgar, Beuran Hendricks, Reeza Hendricks, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen.

Contracted women's players: Trisha Chetty, Nadine de Klerk, Mignon du Preez, Shabnim Ismail, Sinalo Jafta, Marizanne Kapp, Ayabonga Khaka, Masabata Klaas, Lizelle Lee, Sune Luus, Tumi Sekhukhune, Chloe Tryon, Dane van Niekerk, Laura Wolvaardt.

## Guj lockdown: Over 400 detained for violations, says DGP

**Ahmedabad, Mar 24 (PTI):** The Gujarat police has detained 426 people in the last 24 hours for violating lockdown rules in force in the state to combat the novel coronavirus outbreak, a senior official said on Tuesday.

They include those who came out despite being advised home quarantine, state Director General of Police Shivanand Jha said.

"The lockdown met with around 90 per cent success. We are taking

strict measures to implement the lockdown in the remaining 10-15 per cent areas. We have lodged 238 cases related to the violation of police notification and 127 cases related to quarantine rule violation. In all, we have detained 426 persons across the state," Jha told reporters in Gandhinagar.

"For better implementation of the lockdown and to address issues concerning people, we have set up a dedicated 24-hour con-

trol room and appointed two additional DGP rank officers to supervise operations. Three teams under them would work to resolve issues across the state," said Jha.

He said police commissioners and districts SPs have been asked to enforce the lockdown in an effective manner.

Essential services like vegetable and milk shops are allowed to remain open, he said, and asked people not to flock in large numbers to such shops.

## India has tremendous capacity in eradicating coronavirus pandemic: WHO



India, which led the world in eradicating two silent killers -- smallpox and polio -- in the past, has a tremendous capacity in eradicating the deadly coronavirus pandemic that has now claimed nearly 15,000 lives globally, according to a top WHO official.

The executive director of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Michael Ryan, said India, the world's second most populous country, has a tremendous capacity to deal with the coronavirus outbreak as it has the experience of eradicating the small-pox and polio through targeted public intervention.

"India led the world in eradicating two silent killers and eliminating them from the country," he said during a press conference in Geneva on Monday on the COVID-19 pandemic.

India, through targeted public intervention, ended smallpox and gave a great gift to the world. India also eradicated polio, he noted.

"India has tremendous capacities. It is exceptionally important that countries like India lead the way to show the world what can be done," Ryan said.

India led the world in eradicating two silent killers, small-pox and polio so India has a tremendous capacity," Ryan said.

"There are no easy answers. It is exceptionally important that countries like India show the way to the world as they have done before," he said.

His remarks came as the WHO said the number of deaths soared to 14,652, with more than 334,000 people infected worldwide.

India has reported 492 cases of coronavirus and nine deaths, according to Health Ministry data on Tuesday. The total number of active COVID-19 cases across the country now stands at 446, after over 22 fresh cases were reported, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Monday warned that the

coronavirus pandemic was clearly "accelerating" but said it was still possible to "change the trajectory" of the outbreak.

"The pandemic is accelerating," Tedros told journalists in a virtual news briefing.

He said it took 67 days from the beginning of the outbreak in China in late December for the virus to infect the first 100,000 people worldwide.

In comparison, it took 11 days for the second 100,000 cases and just four days for the third 100,000 cases, he said.

"The #COVID19 pandemic is accelerating. It took 67 days from the 1st reported case to reach the first 100K cases, 11 days for the second 100K cases & just 4 days for the third 100K cases. "These numbers matter, these are people, whose lives & families have been turned upside down," Tedros tweeted later.

"We are not helpless bystanders. We can change the trajectory of this pandemic," Tedros said.



# Fear in New York, but Trump says coronavirus restrictions could ease soon

**New York, Mar 24 (AFP):** Anxiety ratcheted up Monday across an eerily deserted New York, America's coronavirus epicenter, but President Donald Trump said he'd soon call for lifting the lockdown in some parts of the country.

Trump -- who faces reelection in November and is keen to avoid extended economic damage -- told reporters he would be "opening up our country to business because our country was meant to be open."

The relaxation could be announced early next week when a 15-day period recommending tight restrictions on social distancing expires, he said, stressing that governors would make final decisions in their own states.

Health officials and state governors dealing with the worst outbreaks have said they expect restrictions will have to continue for some time -- and New York's mayor called for a nationwide lockdown.

As the number of deaths in the United States from COVID-19 soared to 560, with almost 44,000 declared cases, the Big Apple found itself the US bulseye of the global pandemic.

With millions of residents ordered to stay home and non-essential businesses and schools closed, the city that never sleeps is bedding down for an uncertain slumber.

For Christian Hofer, and his wife and two young children, the hardest is not knowing how long the unprecedented measures are



going to last.

"It goes from a range of emotions, from feeling very nervous about the situation to feeling like how absurd it is," the 42-year-old Wall Street trader told AFP.

New York City has now seen more than 12,000 confirmed cases and almost 100 deaths in the outbreak, which first appeared in the United States in Washington state.

With only essential workers, such as pharmacists, grocery store workers, nurses and doctors, headed to work Monday, rush hour in the city was more like a trickle of traffic.

New York's yellow cabs were out but passengers appeared few and far between with sidewalks virtually deserted. Underground, normally packed subway cars trundled along close to empty.

"I'm scared for me and patients that this could go on" for months, said Lauren, a psychologist who declined to give her surname.

Anxiety and depression "all gets heightened at a

time like this," she added, one of the few souls out and about on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

On the New York Stock Exchange, the opening bell, usually greeted by cheering and clapping, was met with silence as the first day with no floor trading took place.

Only electronic trading occurred as stocks plunged deep into the red before recovering somewhat, with both the Dow and the S&P 500 closing down around three per cent.

In Congress, efforts to advance a nearly two-trillion-dollar rescue of the economy failed for a second straight day after Democrats said the Republican proposal insufficiently protected workers. Trump said he wanted to get restrictions on movement lifted where possible, so that people can get back to work. He acknowledged that medical advisors focused more on public health than the economy may not agree with his decision.

"The doctors, if it were

up to them, they may say 'let's keep it shut down, let's shut down the entire world,'" said Trump.

"We can't do that and you can't do that with the country especially the number one economy anywhere in the world by far."

Mayor Bill de Blasio warned New York was just at "the beginning" of dealing with the pandemic as soldiers from the National Guard began converting a convention center into a facility with hospital beds.

"It's going to be bad this week, it's going to be worse the following week," he said.

De Blasio added that the city's overwhelmed public hospitals have only enough medical supplies to last the week and pleaded with the federal government to speed up production.

"I literally want to see hundreds of ventilators, I want to see first hundreds of thousands and millions of masks."

"If that doesn't come in starting this week, we will get to a point where people

can't be saved who could have been saved," he said.

He said Trump should be calling a nationwide lockdown similar to those introduced locally in New York, California and Illinois. Trump has ruled that out.

Around a third of Americans are living under various phases of lockdown.

On Monday, Washington state, Michigan and New Mexico became the latest to sign a "shelter-in-place" order, as Ohio's and Louisiana's took effect.

In California, already under orders to stay home, Governor Gavin Newsom tightened the lockdown to shut parking lots at beaches and parks after tens of thousands flouted social distancing rules.

US Surgeon General Jerome Adams warned that case numbers across America were going to get worse before they get better. "We really need everyone to understand this is serious, to lean into what they can do to flatten the curve."

# Two Indians arrested for entering US illegally



**By Yoshita Singh**

**New York, Mar 24 (PTI):**

Two Indian nationals have been arrested and charged by the US border authorities for entering the country illegally and apprehended them during a failed smuggling attempt in upstate New York, officials said.

The US Border Patrol Agents from the Burke and Massena Border Patrol Stations arrested four individuals in connection with the failed smuggling attempt last week.

The agents attempted to stop a vehicle that was suspected of being involved with an alien

smuggling event. As the vehicle appeared to be stopping, three occupants exited the vehicle and then the driver sped up in an attempt to flee.

As the driver continued to flee, she crashed her vehicle into several Border Patrol vehicles and was ultimately apprehended by agents.

Agents apprehended the three occupants, two of whom were determined to be citizens of India and the third was a citizen of Italy. All three were found to be illegally present in the United States, the US Customs and Border

Protection said in a statement. The three occupants in the vehicle were found to have illegally entered the United States from Canada through the St. Regis Mohawk Indian Reservation and were charged with Improper Entry by an Alien, a misdemeanor.

The driver was charged with Alien Smuggling, a felony that carries a penalty of a fine and up to 5 years in prison.

The Swanton Sector is responsible for securing the land border between ports of entry in Vermont, New Hampshire and northeastern New York.

# Trump says unproven coronavirus drugs could be 'gift from God'



**Washington, Mar 24 (AFP):**

US President Donald Trump on Monday said antimalarial drugs that are under investigation to treat the new coronavirus could be a "gift from God" despite scientists warning against the dangers of overhyping unproven medicines.

Trump announced last week his administration was working to dramatically expand access to hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine, a related compound, following promising early studies in France and China that found the drugs helped patients suffering from the COVID-19 illness.

Many scientists including Anthony Fauci, the United States' leading infectious disease expert, have urged the public to remain cautious until larger clinical trials validate the smaller studies.

But Trump demonstrated no such restraint at a White House press briefing on Monday.

"The hydroxychloroquine and the Z-Pak, I think as a combination probably is

looking very, very good," he said.

"There's a real chance that it could have a tremendous impact, it would be a gift from God, if that worked it would be a big game changer," he added, quoting the example of a patient who was ill but recovered after taking the drug.

NBC reported that a woman in Arizona, who heard Trump talk about chloroquine, ended up in hospital and her husband died after they took a form of chloroquine she had used to treat her koi fish.

"I saw it sitting on the back shelf and thought, 'Hey, isn't that the stuff they're talking about on TV?'" NBC quoted the unnamed woman as saying.

Banner Health, a non-profit health care provider based in Phoenix, said on its website that "a man has died and his wife is under critical care after the couple, both in their 60s, ingested chloroquine phosphate, an additive commonly used at aquariums to clean fish tanks."

Banner Health warned against self-medicating to

treat or prevent the COVID-19 illness.

Trump has been criticised by some in the scientific community for overhyping the drugs — which could create shortages for Americans who need them to treat lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, diseases for which they are approved.

New York is set to begin a clinical trial on Tuesday that would treat patients with hydroxychloroquine taken together with azithromycin, an antibiotic used to clear secondary bacterial infections. Separately, Vice President Mike Pence announced that self-administered nasal swab tests for the illness would be made available this week, thus reducing part of the burden on the overstretched health care system.

At present, the test is administered by health care workers wearing personal protective gear which is in short supply.

The US has almost 44,000 cases and 560 deaths, according to a tracker maintained by Johns Hopkins University.

# Coronavirus cases rise to 78 in China, spike in imported infections

**By K J M Varma**

**Beijing, Mar 24 (PTI):**

China reported 78 new confirmed cases, including 74 imported infections, while the death toll from the novel coronavirus increased to 3,277 after seven more fatalities were confirmed from the COVID-19, health officials said on Tuesday.

The overall confirmed cases on the Chinese mainland have reached 81,171 by the end of Monday. This included 3,277 people who died of the disease, 4,735 patients who were still being treated and 73,159 patients discharged after recovery, the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Tuesday.

The NHC said, 78 new confirmed COVID-19 cases were reported on the Chinese mainland on Monday, of which 74 were imported from abroad taking the number of overseas cases to 427.

Also on Monday, seven deaths and 35 new suspected cases were reported on the mainland with all the deaths in Hubei Province.

The total COVID-19 cases in Beijing climbed to 522 with eight deaths prompting local governments of Beijing as well as Shanghai to announce that all overseas arrivals will be subjected to nucleic acid tests to ensure proper detection.

Of the 74 newly imported cases, 31 were reported in Beijing, 14 in



Guangdong, nine in Shanghai, five in Fujian, four in Tianjin, three in Jiangsu, two in Zhejiang and Sichuan respectively, and one in Shanxi, Liaoning, Shandong and Chongqing respectively, the NHC said.

Beijing is already diverting all international flights to different cities where the passengers will be quarantined for 14 days before arriving in the city.

The NHC said 132 people were still suspected of being infected with the virus.

Coronavirus epicentre Wuhan has reported one confirmed case after a gap of five days prompting officials to begin to ease restrictions.

Wuhan also reported seven new deaths, bringing the total number of deaths in the city and Hubei province for which Wuhan is the capital to 3,160.

The province also saw 444 patients discharged from hospital after recovery on Monday. Among the 4,200 patients being treated in hospital, 1,203 were still in severe condition and another 336 in critical condition,

the local health commission said.

By the end of Monday, 356 confirmed cases, including four deaths have been reported in Hong Kong, which has restricted the entry of foreigners into the city. Also a total of 25 confirmed cases were reported in Macao and 195 in Taiwan including two deaths, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

After days of decline in coronavirus cases, China on Monday said that COVID-19 has effectively been "stemmed" in the country and it started easing severe restrictions imposed on Wuhan's 11 million people who were under lockdown since January 23.

The authorities began relaxing restrictions in Wuhan as it reported no new case for the fifth consecutive day on Monday.

Significantly, the Central Leading Group (CLP), headed by Premier Li Keqiang which is coordinating efforts to contain the virus since January 23, said the virus has been curtailed in the country as well as in Wuhan. "The meeting

noted that the spread of the virus nationwide, particularly in the epicentre of Wuhan, has been effectively stemmed," an official statement said on Monday.

The meeting, however, warned that the risks for sporadic infections and localised outbreaks have not gone away. With the pandemic rampaging across the world, the situation remains complex and challenging.

"Wuhan city and Hubei province should stay focused on medical treatment and community-level containment as the two key priorities. They should continue to treat the severe cases, promptly admit new cases, and advance epidemiological investigations," the meeting said.

In Wuhan, officials said people are allowed to go back to work while restrictions on the public transport are gradually being eased.

The Hubei province and its capital Wuhan with over 56 million people were under lockdown since January 23. The vicious virus broke out in city, reportedly at a live animal market in

December last year and became virulent inflicting thousands of people in the city and province catching the government off guard.

As the country saw a surge in imported infections, the Chinese government announced that all international flights scheduled to arrive in Beijing will be redirected to airports in 12 other Chinese cities from Monday.

International passengers flying to Beijing will instead land at airports in 12 cities including Shanghai, Tianjin, Nanjing and Shenyang as their first points of entry, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) said in a statement.

On Monday, China said international travellers should "think twice" about choosing Beijing for flight transfer in view of the restrictions.

Starting from Monday, all international flights scheduled to arrive in Beijing will be redirected to airports in 12 other Chinese cities, Liu Haitao, an official with China's National Immigration Administration said.

Passengers would go through entry procedures and quarantine measures at the designated cities' airports before they continue their flights to Beijing, Liu said, urging travellers to reserve enough time for their next flights to make sure that they do not miss their outbound flights.





**INVIGORATING!** The Real host, Jeannie Mai enjoys some fresh air and blue sky while in Los Angeles.

## Woody Allen's memoir released by new publisher

**Los Angeles, Mar 24 (PTI):** Weeks after Hachette Book Group decided not to publish embattled filmmaker Woody Allen's memoir "Apropos of Nothing" following a massive backlash, Arcade Publishing has released the book in the US.

Arcade, which is an imprint of the independent publisher Skyhorse, released Apropos of Nothing on Monday in hardcover and e-book editions. "We as publishers prefer to give voice to a respected writer and filmmaker, rather than bow to the politically correct pressures of the modern world.

While we respect Hachette's decision to choose not to publish Woody Allen's book, we choose not to take



sides but rather, firmly believe in upholding the right to Freedom of Speech," said Arcade editor Jeannette

Seaver in a statement to NPR.com.

Grand Central Publishing, a division of Hachette Book Group (HBG), had acquired the memoir a year ago and was scheduled to release it on April 7 but dropped the deal after its employees walked-out in protest.

Allen has become a subject of discussion over the resurfacing of the sexual assault allegations levelled against him by his step-daughter Dylan Farrow, journalist Ronan Farrow's sister, which caught steam in the wake of the #MeToo uprising. He has repeatedly denied the accusations.

The walk-out followed criticism of the memoir from Ronan and Dylan.

## Bachchan's tweet on 'clapping vibrations destroy virus potency' draws ire, actor later deletes it

**Mumbai, Mar 23 (PTI):** Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Monday was heavily criticised for one of his tweets, which claimed vibrations from clapping, blowing conch shells as part of Sunday's Janata Curfew would have reduced or destroyed coronavirus potency as it was 'amavasya', the darkest day of the month.

Bachchan's tweet comes in the wake of several similar fake news stories misinterpreting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal of clapping and clanging plates to express gratitude to those providing essential services during this global health crisis.

The 77-year-old actor took to Twitter and, in a tweet that has now been deleted, wrote, "An opinion given: 5 PM, 22nd Mar, 'amavasya', darkest day of month; virus, bacteria evil force at max potential & power! Clapping shankh vibrations reduce/ destroy virus potency Moon passing to new 'nakshatra' Revati. cumulative vibration betters blood circulation."

Bachchan posted the tweet along with his picture, which had three question marks scribbled on it, leading many to wonder if the actor was sharing his opinion or questioning the theory floating on social media. However, his tweet was



met with criticism as netizens slammed him for tweeting something which was not factual.

On Sunday, even the Press Information Bureau busted the viral fake claim, writing, "NO! The vibration generated by clapping together will NOT destroy #Coronavirus infection."

Lyricist Varun Grover was among the first ones to slam Bachchan, writing that the actor should've been more responsible at a time like this.

"Shameful superstitions propaganda coming from a person with such huge reach. And we have learned to let go of 'besharmi' (shamelessness) of many of our celebs but this is DANGEROUS too. Indian

lives are at stake here and you need to be more responsible," Grover tweeted.

Bachchan is one of the most active and followed celebrities on social media. His followers count on Twitter alone stands at a staggering 40.5 million.

A Twitter user wrote that it's painful when a respected opinion leader like him resorts to forwarding such opinions.

"I feel intense pain. Please only spread very scientific and medical views - people will promptly abide by you. They have so much faith in you. Please," the user wrote.

Bachchan's tweet was also slammed by many journalists, lawyers and activists, who asked people to "mass report

the tweet" so that it's taken down by the microblogging site for spreading misinformation.

Recently, Twitter removed a video uploaded by actor-turned-politician Rajinikanth who claimed the 14-hour window of total social distancing as advised by the PM was necessary to curb the spread of virus.

The video was reportedly pulled down as it violated Twitter's rules on misinformation.

According to the Union Health Ministry, the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the country rose to 415 on Monday. Seven people had died till Saturday evening due to the virus.

## Broadway star Aaron Tveit tests positive for coronavirus



**Los Angeles, Mar 24 (PTI):** Broadway actor Aaron Tveit has tested positive for COVID-19.

The 36-year-old actor, who took to social media to share his diagnosis, said he is feeling much better now.

"I'm feeling much better. I consider myself extremely lucky that my symptoms have been very mild — cold like with no fever — as so many are experiencing much more serious symptoms, because this is a very dangerous virus, Tveit wrote on Instagram.

The actor said he had been quarantined since Broadway shows shut down on March 12 amid the pandemic.

One thing I have been experiencing is the loss of taste and smell, which I think is a big sign for people who are otherwise asymptotic, he added.

Tveit said he was tested earlier last week

and found out the results this Monday, but had quarantined himself even before he went through the medical procedure.

This can affect anyone and even if you aren't feeling sick or showing drastic symptoms please take heed, stay safe, stay healthy and I hope to see everyone at the theater again soon, he said.

Tveit joins a growing list of celebrities that have tested positive for coronavirus, including Idris Elba, Tom Hanks and his wife Rita Wilson, Kevin Durant, former Bond girl Olga Kurylenko, "Frozen 2" actor Rachel Matthews, Daniel Dae Kim, "Game of Thrones" star Kristofer Hivju, veteran Opera singer Plácido Domingo and celebrated TV host Andy Cohen.

The coronavirus outbreak, that first emerged in Wuhan, China, has killed more than 16,000 people worldwide.

## COVID-19 is a great equalizer: Madonna from her bathtub

**Los Angeles, Mar 23 (PTI):** In a bizarre video shot from her rose petal filled bathtub, pop star Madonna has called the coronavirus pandemic "a great equaliser".

The music icon said the virus doesn't discriminate between rich and poor.

That's the thing about COVID-1. It doesn't care about how rich you are, how famous you are, how funny you are, how smart you are, where you live, how old you are, what amazing stories you can tell.

It's the great equaliser and what's terrible about it is what's great about it. What's terrible about it is that it's made us all equal in many ways, and what's wonderful about it, is that it's made us all equal in many ways, Madonna said in the video while having a milky bath in tub full of roses.

The 61-year-old singer, who had to cancel two of her concerts in Paris due to coronavirus outbreak, also referenced her 1995 song.

### THE DAY AHEAD

#### Aries:

Hello and welcome to Aries season! The new moon is lighting up your sign and making you feel like the most invincible version of yourself. In the mood to take over the world? We'd expect nothing less from the ram. Remember, your energy is precious. Be mindful of who you are sharing it with. If you find yourself saying 'yes' when your heart and mind are screaming 'no', you will eventually become resentful.

Tip: Set boundaries wherever necessary.

#### Taurus:

Your typical day: wake up, eat your oatmeal, put on your fancy suit, go to school, out for drinks, back home, and then repeat. But your time away from the matrix right now is making you realise that you have been functioning on autopilot mode, and there is only so much fuel left for the things you genuinely feel passionate about. So what is it that you are truly meant to do, and how do you feel inspired to awaken those around you? It's time for some major soul-searching, Taurus. Remember, it's no coincidence that you decided to be born in the earthly realm at a time like this.

Tip: Awaken to your divine purpose.

#### Gemini:

You've always had a sense that you are in this world but not of it, and this sense is becoming stronger with each passing day. Your time away from the matrix is enabling you to look beyond the illusion or the 'maya', and question the false structures around which you have built your life. But don't give yourself grief over what's gone. It was all a part of the unfolding; the becoming. These experiences shaped you and made you who you are today. But now that you have awakened, there is no reason for you to not break past the illusion.

Tip: Re-examine the structures on which you have built your life.

#### Cancer:

Being a kid is so much fun. You run around the house screaming and when you get down to doing something 'serious', you end up scribbling on the surface of your walls or leaving your handprints on unsuspecting surfaces. Remember the time you were convinced you have created a masterpiece or when you clapped your hands with glee at the sight of your badly drawn lines? Quarantine season requires the same amount of enthusiasm. So, put yourself in a time machine until you find that sense of joy and playfulness you parted ways with a long time ago. Get creative, have fun with your hands, and don't be afraid to make a mess as you do.

#### Leo:

Daily affirmation courtesy Rebecca Campbell: "I am open to receiving a whole new level of support for my life and my work and I call it in now. Thank you, thank you, thank you." Leo, the cards are urging you to look beyond the limitations of your three dimensional reality. You may feel like things are falling apart; that you don't have the resources required to care for yourself or keep your business afloat. But this is just a projection of your mind. Release the fear and the self-doubt as you open yourself to help from earth angels in this realm and the one above. PS: A prayer of gratitude is the secret to magnifying the power of your intention.

Tip: Open yourself to help and support.

#### Virgo:

Given what's happening in the world right now, you could be losing hope. But we're all in this together, Virgo, and it is no coincidence that we've chosen to be born in this time and space dimension. But, the change is not happening outside of you. You are the change. As we transition towards the new age, become aware of every action you take and intention you make. Be a light unto yourself and the world. You're being asked to spread good juju like never before.

Tip: You are the light. You are the change.

#### Libra:

Think about every time you held yourself back from taking action or paying heed to your calling. Where was this limitation arising from? Were you operating from the vibration of fear? It is said that we carry emotional trauma in our luminous fields for up to seven generations back. So make a conscious effort to observe and release the ancestral patterns that are keeping you from being a light unto yourself. Learning to differentiate between what's yours and what has been handed down to you will assist you in this evolution.

Tip: Release the ancestral traumas that are keeping you stuck.

#### Scorpio:

Once again, the cards are reminding you that you are a part of The Whole. What's happening on the collective level is bound to affect every cell in your body. Know that you're not in a funk. You're taking time off from routine to process your emotions, heal the old wounds that are calling for your attention, and upgrade on an energetic level. So take each step with a deep inner awareness. You will soon look back at this period of transformation with awe and appreciation.

Tip: This is a period of deep, inner transformation.

#### Sagittarius:

Given the chaos that's unfolding, we are looking within more than ever before. We're both confronting our shadows, and understanding the value of life. This moment is truly all we have, Sagittarius. So, how would you like to make it count? Start by looking at your fears in the eye. They are not holding you hostage. They are in fact providing you with an opening; an opportunity to move in a brand new direction. Become a warrior of light. Now is not the time to hold yourself back.

Tip: Look your fears in the eye.

#### Capricorn:

What happens when our sense of routine goes for a toss? We are forced to re-examine the foundation on which we have built our lives. Can these old structures sustain the new life you are creating for yourself? Meditate upon the parts you want to keep and the parts you need to let go of. Remember to find a sense of grounding within yourself so as to be able to view your circumstances from a neutral perspective. But that doesn't mean the change is going to be easy or that there won't be moments when you'll be tempted to give up. It's okay to be vulnerable, Capricorn.

#### Aquarius:

It's easy to feel like those who are in the front and centre of the revolution are the ones who are putting in the most effort. The truth is, no contribution is big or small. We're all doing our bit for the collective consciousness. Some are contributing by nurturing their children and holding space for their communities to be safe in this time of uncertainty. Others are doing it by educating those around and using their platforms to spread the light. You matter, Aquarius. Tip: You matter and so does your contribution.

#### Pisces:

"What if I fall?" "Oh, but my darling, what if you fly?" Erin Hanson's immortal words are stirring up a storm within you like never before. That's the thing about uncertainty. It makes us value the present moment in a way we never have. So what do you want to make of your precious life, Pisces? What are the plans that you want set into motion? Enough with the soul-searching. It's time to get into action mode!

Tip: Have courage, wild one.