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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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CM launches online portal to seek feedback from public

GANGTOK, 30 APR [IPR]: Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay], in the presence of IPR Minister, LN Sharma launched the State Portal www.sikkimgovtfeedback.org developed by Information & Public Relations Department here at Samman Bhawan today.

The launch programme had the presence of Secretary, IPR, Namrata Thapa and Director IPR, Benu Gurung.

Secretary IPR, Namrata Thapa explained about the

objective of the portal and the features available.

The Portal has been created with an intention to obtain feedback/suggestions/opinion from the public with regard to different Government schemes, functioning of the Government, general administration etc.

The inputs received from the public will be documented and screened by a team of officials in the Department,



which will then be forwarded to the respective departments for taking necessary action.

This mechanism is

aimed at understanding the opinions/ views / perspectives of the public on different Government schemes and programmes.

The Chief Minister congratulated the Department for coming up with this mechanism and said that this would ensure transparency in

the functioning of the Government. He added that the online portal would be an interface between the Government and the people.

Meghalaya declares 10 of 11 districts as 'green zones', allows inter-dist movement

SHILLONG, APR 30 (PTI): The Meghalaya government on Thursday declared 10 of the state's 11 districts as 'green zones' and allowed inter-district movement there, a top official said.

The decision was taken as no COVID-19 case was reported from these districts, he said.

All the 12 COVID-19 cases in the state, including one death, have been reported in the state capital that falls under East Khasi Hills district.

"Barring East Khasi Hills district, all other 10 districts in the state are in the green zone as they have not reported any COVID-19 cases. All deputy commissioners in the green zones may allow inter-district movement," Political Department secretary Cyril V D Diengdoh said in a letter to the district magistrates.

The inter-district movement has been allowed in the green zones on the condition that people do not transit through East Khasi Hills district, he said.

Meanwhile, the state government has identified over 10,200 people from the state stranded in various parts of the country, including around 2,500 in other northeastern states.

"They have been asked to register themselves online at www.meghalayaonline.gov.in/covid or with government helpline numbers 8132011037/84330 38716/9711544148 and 7338550288 if they want to return to their homes on May 4, a day after the lockdown is scheduled to be lifted," another senior official said.

Online Registration to facilitate Sikkimese returning home NODAL OFFICER APPOINTED TO COORDINATE RETURN OF STRANDED SIKKIMESE

GANGTOK, 30 APR [IPR]: Chief Secretary, SC Gupta chaired the State Level Task Force Meeting today to review the State Government's plan of action in line with the new guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, dated 29 Apr, 2020.

At the outset, the Chief Secretary informed the house that Secretary Coordination. Ringzing Bhutia (Covid-19) has been appointed as the State Nodal Officer

to liaison with nodal officers of all other states to facilitate the return of people from Sikkim stranded outside the State.

The Chief Secretary stressed on the need to finalise the arrangement to quarantine the people coming from outside the State.

A brief presentation on the newly prepared Online Registration Portal was made on the occasion. This portal, once approved, will facilitate the travel of Sikkimese people from

outside the State.

The District Collectors informed about the level of preparedness in each district, and provided their feedback on the online registration portal. They also informed about the quarantine facilities being arranged in each district.

It was informed that groups of frontline workers and stakeholders will be constituted to monitor people under quarantine.

Likewise, the Health Department shared their strategy for



testing of the persons entering the State.

It was decided that the

Medical Team will assess each individual, based

on which they would be

sent for quarantine in coordination with the District Collectors.

Rishi Kapoor dies after two-year battle with cancer

MUMBAI, APR 30 (PTI): Rishi Kapoor, the twinkled-toed actor who personified the Bollywood romantic hero for three decades before becoming a sought after character artiste, died here on Thursday after a two-year battle with leukaemia. He was 67.



Rishi, the third generation of the Kapoor dynasty that defined stardom, is survived by his wife Neetu, actor son Ranbir and daughter Riddhima.

Rishi, who acted in films ranging from the frothy Bobby in 1973 to the sharply political Mulk in 2018, was cremated at the Chandanwadi crematorium in the evening.

Close family and friends, including his wife and son, elder brother Randhir Kapoor, niece Kareena Kapoor Khan and her husband Saif Ali Khan as well as actor Abhishek Bachchan and Ranbir's girlfriend Alia Bhatt and Anil Ambani were present. It was a sombre, quiet affair with all of the country under lockdown and strict restrictions in place.

Daughter Riddhima, who is in Delhi, told PTI she will drive to Mumbai on Friday.

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People advised to use umbrella for social distancing

BHUBANESWAR, APR 30 (PTI): People of Odisha's Ganjam district have been advised to use the ubiquitous umbrella as a tool for maintaining social distancing, besides beating the heat.

Ganjam district Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange shared a cartoon picture in a twitter post, showing how a brolly enforces a distance of around 1.5 metres between two persons and thereby helps check the spread of coronavirus infection.

"I thought that an umbrella automatically creates social distancing for the user. If one uses an umbrella, it

will automatically create a distance of 1.5 metres from another person. This apart, use of umbrella will also help beat the heat," the 2013 batch Odisha cadre IAS officer told PTI over phone.

A panchayat of Kerala's Alappuzha district had earlier made carrying an umbrella mandatory for anyone going to a public place to enforce the social distancing norms

"Besides, people have to abide by norms such as wearing masks and washing hands frequently, as there is no medicine or vaccines for COVID-19 yet,"

the Ganjam collector said.

Kulange was the first officer in Odisha to make mask wearing mandatory after the outbreak of the disease. He also introduced the rule of "no mask, no grocery" in Ganjam district. Later, petrol pumps across the state followed it.

The Odisha government also issued a notification later imposing a fine of Rs 200 on people for not wearing masks in public places.

The Ganjam collector has also imposed a penalty for spitting in public places as a measure to contain the spread

of COVID-19 in the district.

Meanwhile, the state home department in a notification has empowered the Commissionerate of Police, Bhubaneswar- Cuttack, to impose a fine up to Rs 500 on those violating social distancing norms in the state capital and Cuttack city.

"Officers above the rank of ASI of Police are hereby empowered for compounding offences under these regulations which includes a fine that may extend to Rs 500," an official order of the home department said.

The Four Hard-Hit Areas that Sikkim Must Rebuild ASAP -Pt II

JIWAN RAI

Mankind continues to make desperate and hitherto unsuccessful attempts to wriggle out of the ever-intensifying vortex of the never before imagined Covid-19 pandemic. The hope of a cure appears at times, faintly, on the horizon. However, we are going to be reeling under it for a long time due to the unprecedented impact it will leave on different areas of our life.

Out of the four Es, that Sikkim has to ponder hard, I touched upon the first two – the Economy and Education in a previous article. As I prepare to write about the next two, I can't help mentioning the findings of the Buddy4Study.com student survey. Over 75% of students reported a severe impact on their education under the lockdown. Only 7% students said that their studies had not been adversely impacted. And the interplay between economic status and education is so striking. It is the students from the Economically Weaker Section who are at the receiving end of its adverse impact. The survey shows that they have been unable to take advantage of

online learning due to a lack of e-learning knowhow and a lack of laptops, tablets, smartphone and the internet.

Let me now move onto my next two Es. Entrepreneurship and Employment:

In recent times, the most and perhaps only promising income generating alternative for government-job-dependent Sikkim had been entrepreneurship. In the last number of decades, entrepreneurial activities were gathering force. Many local entrepreneurs were setting a new trend of preferring private business rather than treading the age-old-path of landing a government job. Many highly talented Sikkimese youth had returned to Sikkim from different parts of India and even abroad and had seen the opportunity to make a fortune. Sikkim's income landscape was changing slowly but surely. The number of bravehearts to take the less travelled path was on the rise. And then this pandemic happened.

The harsh reality is that these young ventures do not have the financial backup to survive this protracted lockdown. A

month long lockdown is brutal enough to strangle many of these entrepreneurship babies in the cradle. I am in touch with some agri-entrepreneurs who run fisheries, piggeries and poultry farms. To go through a month with zero sales is fatal for them. It is a big loss for farm-keepers to keep rearing their livestock beyond their "slaughter weight". A poultry farmer told me that his chickens had weighed nearly four kg each (an ideal selling weight) but are now losing weight due to a lack of feed. Pig and trout feed are also expensive. And there are other enterprises besides these agri-entrepreneurships. There is the employment of many workers associated with these enterprises. Also, the employment of many under private sectors are under tremendous threat as their employers may not (be able to) pay their salaries. Needless to mention, employment opportunities in general will be doomed for some years.

The Covid-19 pandemic may not touch human life in Sikkim but livelihoods have been severely impacted. I hope the

government will come up with a special relief package to inject new life into these dying enterprises. Top-notch economists globally say that one of the first things the governments must do to reboot a slumping economy is to lend their industry a hand.

Sikkim needs to do all it takes to keep them going. With these enterprises gone, entrepreneurial enthusiasm and vision may die which would be a colossal loss for us.

Emotional issues: Phobic reactions will be a new normal in our post-lockdown social interactions. Sneezing, coughing, handshaking, hugging apart, there will be some serious changes in our socializing caused by a general nervousness among some of us. The fear of contracting the virus will be ruling the roost in many a mind. The freedom and ease of movement which we previously enjoyed will degenerate into nervousness, more so in the case of seniors and people with co-morbidities. An escalated sense of insecurity and suspicion will restrict our tendencies to social engagement.

Here the government can hardly do

anything to change reality. However, putting in place a trustworthy mechanism to disseminate right and helpful information about infection and dispelling rumours will be key to fighting the possible paranoia that will grip us for some time. NGOs, media and educational institutes have a huge role to play here. Individual people have to be adequately 'educated' to re-orient themselves towards fostering a meaningful sense of social fellowship.

The healthcare department now must come up with a strategy to help those with pre-existing mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and OCD. Experts think that isolation (in the lockdown) could cause re-lapses of clinical depression. Some studies on the impacts of quarantine suggest that it could trigger confusion, stress, anger and even insomnia. Imagine the impact of constant 'health alerts, news of infection spreading, deaths, economic crisis' hitting people's minds 24x7.

Simply put, life will be different. We need to prepare ourselves to tackle a drastically changed reality.

SIKKIM PROGRESSIVE YOUTH FORUM’S MAY DAY APPEAL

“Workers’ movements should be freed from petty opportunism”

International Workers’ day, International Workers’ solidarity day, Labour day or simply May day carries a history of struggle of the workers for their basic rights and dignity. Last year, the workers of Sikkim had independently observed the May Day. This year, however, owing to the ongoing Corona virus pandemic, organization of such event is not possible.

WORKERS IN SIKKIM
Due of establishment of dozens of big companies in last one decade or so, the number of workers in Sikkim has increased by manifolds. However, the condition of workers in Sikkim is the worse in the entire country. Workers are subjected to ruthless exploitation by the management of the company. Even the most basic rights of the workers have been denied. The rights which a worker of other states like West Bengal, Assam, Uttar Pradesh etc ordinarily enjoys is denied to the workers in Sikkim. On such grim backdrop the May day gives an opportunity for the workers and the society at large to analyse, discuss, ponder the kind of treatment the workers are meted with. Do they have rights as a worker in the company? Are they working with dignity in their work place? The recent retrenchment of 1e workers by a pharmaceutical company Cipla provides the glimpse of the condition the workers are subject to in these private companies. Also it is an opportunity for us to talk about their condition, their rights, their wages etc.

HISTORY OF MAY DAY
During the industrialization of America, most ruthless exploitation of the industrial workers caused tremendous discontentment among the workers of USA. On May 1, 1886, more than 3 lakh workers of USA went on an industrial strike and gathered at the Hay Market of Chicago, in demand of fixed 8 hour working day and humanly working conditions in industries. The US police opened fire on them killing

and injuring many. As a travesty of justice many workers had been arrested and four had been hanged to death in the allegation of causing riot! In memory of the martyrs of Hay Market workers’ movement, the 1st May is observed as ‘International Workers’ Solidarity Day’ throughout the world.

WEALTH IS THE FRUITS OF THE LABOUR OF THE WORKERS
The huge profit of the industrial owners is amassed by exploiting the labour of the workers. However large might be the capital, without labour production and profit is not possible. But the industrial owners refuse to give even the minimum wage and refuse to recognize the minimum rights of the workers to get their means of subsistence and other necessary working conditions like fixed 8 hour working day. Through a long and sustained struggle, by the middle of 20th century, the workers in different countries, all over the world, attained some labour rights like 8 hour working day, minimum wage, wage increment, job security, workers’ provident fund, gratuity, medical services (ESI) and such other employment benefits. Workers rights had been fully guaranteed in the erstwhile socialist states. The right of the workers to form trade unions, as their own instrument of struggle against the company management, was also a result of this struggle of the workers all over the world.

CONDITION OF WORKERS TODAY
The dismantling of the socialist states by the end of last century, was a setback to the international working class movement too. With this the phase of globalization was ushered in, in which the recognition of the labour rights started to decline. The concept of Special Economic Zone (SEZ) arose, in which, in a particular area, no laws defending and protecting the labour rights, should be operative. Apart from that, the policy of outsourcing,

the system of employing ‘contractual labourers’, who shall do the same work as permanent employees, but shall have no job security, virtually no employment benefits and much less salary compared to the permanent employees, arose. Now most of the big industries employ very few permanent employees and, side by side, a large number of contractual workers. The exploitation of the contractual or temporary workers has surpassed the pre-1886 days (i.e. May Day). The industrial owners are exploiting the best time of life of the workers, forcing them to work for 10/12 hours a day. Many vendors, employers are treating the contractual workers virtually as slaves. When there is overproduction, stagnation in market, or when a worker becomes sick, when workers refuse to submit to the whims of the management, the employers throw them away from jobs. Many workers, due to utter insecurity of jobs, drudgery of their works, unhealthy working environment, no increment of salary and extreme insecurity of life, have been becoming mental patients, drug addicts, or even committing suicides.

GOVT AND POLICE DO NOT ACT NEUTRAL
The workers must understand that this is a class divided society, and police and the bureaucratic administration, is not neutral rather inclined towards the capitalist owners, the industrial management. When the investors throw away employees to unemployment and starvation, the police never take any action against the management. But when employees fight for their just demand, the police, at the instance of the management, intervene to disrupt and frustrate the workers, as was done by the US police on 1st May 1886 in Chicago. The battle of 1st May has shown that against the onslaughts of the capitalist owners, the workers’ only

strength lies in their unity. When all the workers in any industry are united, solid as a rock, and when employees of other industries have their solidarity with them, they are strong, they can fight for and achieve their demands. The trade unions of workers is an essential instrument to develop this unity.

DANGER OF OPPORTUNIST LEADERS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Today opportunism in the trade union movement is a danger to workers’ unity and solidarity. In labour movement, many big political parties, funded by different big capitalists have launched their trade unions. These trade unions, left or right, talk of the interest of the workers, but act in the interest of the owners and management. Managements of different industries also recognize such trade unions, they use these unions as tool to disrupt the workers’ unity and inject opportunism in workers’ movement. The leaders of such trade unions are after name, fame, power and in spite of all slogans of workers’ benefits, they are hand and glove with the management. Thus they are ‘labour aristocrats’ and enemy of the workers. In many cases the governments are bringing about anti-working class legislations but the pro-government trade unions are remaining silent regarding that, while talking of workers benefits. The recent Labour Law Amendment Bills or Labour Code pending in Parliament is a most draconian anti-working class law. But the labour organisations linked with the ruling party at the Central Government remain silent about that. The workers at large should be conscious to keep working class movement free from opportunism, careerism, big party chauvinism and jugglery of ‘labour aristocrats’.

GRIM CONDITION OF WORKERS IN SIKKIM

In Sikkim, the Trade Union Act and Industrial Dispute Act had been notified

in 1986. But in the year 2006, it was withdrawn with the plea that, such laws protecting the right of the employees would be fetter to ‘industrialisation’ of the state. Thus virtually the entire state has been converted into a big Special Economic Zone[SEZ]. The Employees Provident Fund Act, Gratuity Act, Employees Service Insurance Act etc. have been operative in this state, but due to absence of any workers’ movement and lack of consciousness, most of the employees don’t get the benefit of these laws. It is positive sign that nowadays workers in different companies in this state have been bursting forth into movements against the whimsical steps of respective managements, time to time.

WORKERS NEED TO FORCE UNITY AND DEVELOPE CONSCIOUSNESS
In this backdrop the 1st May holds tremendous significance. But what is the teaching of this historic May Day? Is it a mere formality to observe this day? On the one hand the historic May Day urges upon us to build the unity of workers solid as a rock. On the other hand the historic day teaches that consciousness of the workers is the rock bottom foundation of this unity. The workers should not follow the trade union leaders, blinded by their name, fame, high connections in the administration etc. They must learn how the capitalist system is instrumental in ruthless exploitation of the workers. How different forces are befooling the workers to accept the present state of affairs as fait accompli. Workers’ movements should be freed from petty opportunism, jugglery for mere personal benefit, casteist, communal and regional approaches. It must be made conducive to the broad struggle against the exploitative capitalist system. Long live the martyrs of May Day movement. Workers of the world unite. Sikkim Progressive Youth Forum

Role of teaching fraternity in combating the corona virus pandemic

NAWNEET CHETTRI

Never before have we seen a lockdown of such scale and magnitude, at least in our lifetime. It is our only way to fight the virus and prevent its spread, at least for as long as we don't develop a vaccine for it. Until then, we have to find ways to carry on our work from the confines of our homes. Technology provides us the means to do that in a very successful manner.

Teaching profession has no doubt, been at the forefront in adapting to this change. We have seen so many innovative means followed by the teacher to reach out to the student. Be it the video lectures, video links online classes, tests and assignment submissions, the teaching fraternity hasn't shield

away from its responsibilities. This wouldn't have been possible if the students wouldn't have participated in this exercise. You indeed, cannot clap with one hand. We have to appreciate out students for their active participation. Moreover, online classes have given students an opportunity to justify their usage of phones and social media to their family. This puts them in a position they never were but were always aspiring to be in, and that probably drives them to take up online activities with more zeal and vigour as compared to their offline regular classes.

There is no doubt, a digital divide across the students of our region which has become more than evident, during this

lockdown. Almost all students from lower classes don't have access to phones. All those belonging to higher level don't have access to internet connection in their homes. I believe it is our duty as the guardians of the future of our nation, to acknowledge this fact and accept that there is nothing they can do about it. Regardless to say, they can easily be brought at par with the rest of the students with a little bit of extra effort by the faculty as and when the institute reopens. But, this realization by student that their teacher is aware of their situation and has taken it into account can go a long way in providing them with the required confidence and mindset to overcome the anxiety and stress caused due to this extraordinary

crisis.

Sadly, there are few from among the higher classes who have not participated till now despite having the means and the internet reception at their homes to do so. They are not to be left out at any costs. As such, we as faculty, have to make an extra effort to include them either by contacting their parents and guardians or by any other means possible.

Further, it is our duty to enlighten our students about the ongoing crisis with facts and verified information over and above the subject matter. We have to educate them on ways to avoid and prevent the spread of virus, keep reminding them every now and then. We are the ones continuously in touch with

most of them, if not all. We must motivate them to further spread it in their family and locality. Most importantly, we have to act as a filter that prevents the disinformation and fake news from creeping into their lives and polluting their minds at this crucial hour. For that, we ourselves have to be well-informed beyond the scope of our subject. This can tremendously help to flatten the curve of transmission of corona virus in our nation and thus, around the world.

A clichéd statement yet very wise in this extraordinary times-“an empty mind is a devils workshop”. We have to find ways to give students a purpose to achieve every two to three days, if not every day. It can be through

some assignment, online tests; self study topics of their interest so on and so forth. Innovation is the key. This will give them a sense of achievement which is important now, more than ever. A statement of acknowledgement for their hard work by the faculty can also help boost their confidence and keep them away from the perils of idle mind.

“Never let a good crisis go to waste”. This event has indeed, given us an opportunity and the push required to find ways to improve the overall standard of our teaching fraternity and learn to connect in a better, effective and efficient manner with our students. Remember, winning over this virus is not an option here, it is a must. This, I believe, is our contribution to achieving it.

Rishi Kapoor dies...

We are not waiting for her (for the cremation). They have not given her permission for flight so she will not be able to reach here, Randhir said before the last rites. Rishi, familiar to generations of film goers for his many films over five decades, was taken to the H N Reliance hospital on Wednesday. The end came at 8.45 am, the family said in a statement, requesting fans and friends to respect the restrictions in place in view of the lockdown. His death comes a day after after his “D-Day” co-star Irrfan Khan passed away, also of cancer, the two actors bookending the best of Bollywood.

Three months ago, the disease claimed Rishi’s sister Ritu Nanda. President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among the many people who condoled the death. The president said it was hard to believe that the actor, who was so full of life was no more. Rishi Kapoor’s untimely demise is shocking. An evergreen personality with an always smiling face, he was so full of life that it’s difficult to believe that he is no more. A huge loss for the entertainment industry... Kovind tweeted. “Multifaceted, endearing and lively...this was Rishi Kapoor ji. He was a powerhouse of talent. I will always recall our interactions, even on social media,” the prime minister wrote on Twitter. “This is a terrible week for Indian cinema, with the passing of another legend, actor Rishi Kapoor,” Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said, describing Rishi as a “wonderful actor, with a huge fan following across generations”.

The doctors and medical staff at the hospital said he kept them entertained till the last, the family disclosed in their statement. He remained jovial and determined to live to the fullest right through two years of treatment across two continents. Family, friends, food and films remained his focus and everyone who met him during this time was amazed at how he did not let his illness get the better of him, the family said in a statement. We would like to request all his fans and well-wishers and friends of the family to please respect the laws that are in force. He would not have it any other way, it added. Rishi returned to India last September after undergoing treatment for his cancer in the US for almost a year.

In February, he was hospitalised twice. He was first admitted to a hospital in Delhi where he was attending a family function. At the time, he said he was suffering from an “infection”. After his return to Mumbai, he was again admitted to a hospital with viral fever. He was discharged soon after. Rishi made his first screen appearance when he was just a toddler in his father Raj Kapoor’s film Shri 420 , where he appeared in the song Pyaar hua ikraar hua . This was followed by “Mera Naam Joker” in 1970. But it was in 1973, with the blockbuster Bobby , again directed by his father, that he really became a marquee name, making his debut as a romantic hero, a slot he made his very own as he danced and sang through three decades and scores of movies. His notable films as a romantic hero include “Laila Majnu”, “Rafoo Chakkar”, “Karz”, “Chandni”, “Henna” and “Saagar”. He was, however, more proud of his second innings as an actor, which he found more satisfying. His notable films as a character artiste are “Do Dooni Chaar” with wife Neetu, “Agneepath” and “Kapoor & Sons .

The changes have come today, which weren’t there when I was a leading star. Unfortunately, (earlier) actors were slotted in their images, ‘action hero, romantic star, dancing hero.’ For 25 years, all throughout my career, I was slotted as a romantic hero, Rishi had told PTI in an interview last year. He had finally started getting roles that eluded him for the better part of his career. The actor had even signed to work on a remake of Hollywood movie The Intern with Deepika Padukone. As the film industry came to terms with the loss of the actor, who had a five-decade career in cinema and was in plans to do more films, the tributes poured in. Amitabh Bachchan, a close friend and frequent collaborator, broke the news on social media, but deleted the tweet seconds after posting it. “He’s GONE .. I Rishi Kapoor .. gone .. just passed away .. I am destroyed, he said. Bachchan had starred opposite Rishi Kapoor in films like Amar Akbar Anthony , Kabhi Kabhie , Naseeb , Coolie and Ajooba . Their last movie together was 2018’s 102 Not Out . South superstar Rajiinkanth, who worked with Rishi Kapoor in 1986’s Dosti Dushmani said he was heartbroken . Heartbroken ... Rest In Peace ... my dearest friend #RishiKapoor, the actor wrote. Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar said the actor’s passing away has created a huge void in the cinema industry. I don’t know what to say? I’m very sad with the news of Rishi ji’s demise. His passing away is an irreparable loss for the film industry. It’s really tough for me to bear this pain. May his soul rest in peace, Mangeshkar posted on Twitter.

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SDF demands better conditions for private sector employees

SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 30 APR:

Sikkim Democratic Front [SDF] party has expressed best wishes to all workers in the State and the world on the occasion of International Labour Day which falls on 01 May. The party has urged the State government to work in the interest of workers of the State to provide proper relief to them especially during this lockdown following COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing a press conference here today, SDF spokesperson, JB Darnal, who is also the general secretary [in-charge] of labour front of the party, stated that workers are the most affected section during his lockdown period but the State government has

totally failed in taking proper care of workers in the State during this pandemic. He stated that migrant workers and other workers in different private companies and hydel projects in Sikkim have also been facing lots of problems during this lockdown.

MrDarnal stated that SDF has been continuously raising various issues and problems faced by workers of the State during this lockdown period but the state government has completely failed to address issues and problems of workers.

M r D a r n a l h a s demanded that the state government fix salary of workers inprivate companies to

minimumRs 25,000 and fix pension of minimum Rs 15,000. He further demanded that the state government make it a rule to provide regular health check-up and treatment to workers in private companies in Sikkim. He demanded abolishing the labour contract system from the State.

SKM government should work in the interest of workers by fulfilling its promises made before the election, he said further adding that thestategovernment should make rules in the interest of workers in private companies and not just issue advisories to companies.

MrDarnal stated that the State administration should constantly check whether the private

companies are following social distancing, disinfection and other guidelines for the safety of their workers. He further asserted that the government should also provide house rent for workers and school fees of their children if required during this lockdown period.

He also urged management of different private companies to work in the interest and safety of workers. SDF labour front will raise strong voice for workers of Sikkim if required after the lockdown, said MrDarnal.

He alleged that SKM is still working like an opposition party instead of taking responsible steps that a party in government should.

Make proper arrangement to bring back Sikkimese: SDF

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 30 APR: Sikkim Democratic Front [SDF] spokesperson, JB Darnal has asserted that the State government should have proper programme and arrangement to bring back students and people of Sikkim stranded in different parts of the country after the lockdown. He demanded that the government should make public its programme to bring back stranded Sikkimese.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Darnal stated that SDF would extend its full support to the government to bring in stranded students and people in different parts of the country. However, he stated that the government should make proper arrangement before bringing them back to the State. He stated that an SKM functionary posted the picture and details of the Sikkimese woman who tested COVID-19 positive in New Delhi on social media. On the same, he demanded that the government take legal action against the person.

SMU contributes towards CM's Relief Fund

Gangtok 30 Apr [IPR]: Sikkim Manipal University contributed Rs 2.50 lakh towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to support the government's effort to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

SMU VC Dr MD

Venkatesh handed over the cheque to Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] at Samman Bhawan this afternoon.

The Chief Minister thanked the VC for his kind gesture and generous contribution.

Ranikhola FPO contributes Rs 10K towards CM Relief Fund

GANGTOK, 30 APR [IPR]: Setting an exemplary noble gesture of encouragement, farmers also started coming forward to extend financial support to the state government to fight COVID-19.

The Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), Ranikhola, East Sikkim, contributed Rs 10,000 to the Chief Minister Relief Fund today.

The cheque was presented by vice president of the Ranikhola FPO, AP Rai, and other representatives to the Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] in the presence

of the Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Lok Nath Sharma, Secretary Horticulture MT Sherpa and officials at Samman Bhawan.

The Chief Minister also acknowledged the unparalleled role of the farmers and their contribution to enhance production to meet the increasing demand and extended gratitude for their generosity and noble deed towards the fight against the COVID-19 crisis.

The Chief Minister assured that all support will be provided to the farmers and FPOs to boost their incomes in the near future.

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Frontline workers felicitated in Rangpo



SUMMIT REPORT
Gangtok, 30 Apr:

Six individuals came forward to felicitate COVID-19 warriors at Rangpo Check Post. They providedsnacks for the police personnel

and volunteers, a press release informs.

Kamala Gurung, P u s p a A g a r w a l , RukshalBiswakarma, Santosh Agarwal C h a n d r i k a T h a t a l andMeenu Gupta were behind the initiative.

Vihangam Yog Sanstha provides relief materials

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 30 APR: Volunteers from Vihangam Yog Sanstha of Singtam, East Sikkim, distributed relief materials to around 245 BPL households starting from Singtam Bazar and Shanti Nagar today.

The initiative was sponsored by Manoj Prasad of Singtam.

Relief materials included rice, pulses, cooking oil, potatoes, onions and sugar.

The materials were handed over by the Sanstha's volunteers in the presence of personnel from Singtam Police Station with



proper maintenance of hygiene and social distancing.

MLA and UDHD Secy inspect fire-ravaged Lal Bazar stalls

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 30 APR: Gangtok MLA YT Lepcha today visited and inspected stalls ravaged in a fire recently at the Kanchanjunga Shopping Complex here at Lal Bazaar and enquired about the incident.

Mr Lepcha was accompanied by the GMC Bazaar Officer, Yogan Syangden, and other officials from the Department.

Similarly, a team led by Secretary, Urban

Development & Housing Department, Sarala Rai, visited the spot to take stock of the incident.

Ms Rai assured all possible help from the Department to the affected stall-owners.

The Secretary was accompanied by the Gangtok Mayor, Chief Engineer (UD&HD), Commissioner (GMC), Superintendent Engineer and Divisional Engineer, Power Department, and Bazar Officer from GMC and UD&HD.

SKM students' front meets CM



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 30 APR: S i k k i m KrantikariMorcha students' front met Chief Minister, PS Tamang here at SammanBhawan on Thursday. The meeting discussed problems and issues faced by students during the lockdown, an SKM press release says.

The release informs that the students' front also offered support theStategovernment in bringing back stranded students in different parts of the country after the lockdown. Students' front office bearers placed various suggestions to the CM.

The CM mentioned that the State government has provided relief of Rs. 5,000 each to more than 1800 Sikkimese students stuck in different parts of the country and even ration in some states, the release mentions.

He directed the students' front to set up a helpdesk to listen to problems of students and to provide full support to the government. He informed that students coming from outside would be kept under strict quarantine and suggested that the students front could arrange counselling for these students.

Chief Minister's Labour Day message

Gangtok, 30 Apr (IPR): Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang has extended his warm greetings to the working class people of Sikkim on the occasion of Labour Day.

In his message the Chief Minister has expressed his indebtedness to all the workers who are rendering their invaluable service especially during this lockdown due to COVID-19 global pandemic. It is through their laborious effort and resolute courage that the lives of the public are made conveniently

smoother.

"We celebrate Labour Day and the achievements of our workers today. We commemorate the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice of all our workers, who continue to persevere for the prosperity of our state and creating a healthy environment for us to live in.

Our Government remains committed to improving the well-being of our workforce in Sikkim. We continue to work to protect and promote workers' rights in human resource management policies

and empower them to increase productivity levels. In this hour of need an announcement of Rs 300 per day as incentive was made along with essential commodities. Stranded migrant workers are provided with financial assistance of Rs 2000 each as relief during lockdown.

On this occasion, let us renew our dedication to work together in the service of our State. I am confident that we will secure a brighter future for ourselves and generations to come, overcoming challenges lying ahead.

I salute every hardworking citizen and their role in helping the nation to grow and thrive duly bringing about innovation and creativity in this fast changing world, transforming quality of life, infrastructure and services. In this, I seek your continued support and blessings.

Let us not simply observe the occasion for the sake of propriety. Let us vow to imbue the spirit of the day into our systems to safeguard the rights of the workers and labourers, who make a significant contribution to our lives," he stated.

APNS members fete Darj bankers for lockdown service



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 30 APR: Alpine Philatelic and Numismatic Society

(APNS), a Singamari, Darjeeling based hobby promoting organization, set out on the second

phase of appreciating Covid-19 warriors and met and felicitated bankers on 28 April.

APNS members visited the branches of UCO Bank, Bank of India and Allahabad Bank in Darjeeling, a press release informs, and thanked them for their services. The management and employees were handed out gloves, masks,

sanitizers, khadas and tokens of gratitude.

"The bankers have been risking their lives and serving the society equally as the other frontline warriors. The situation of our people would have been worse if they were not functioning but they had not been acknowledged so far," said Vivek Yonzon, the founder and Secretary of APNS.

West Sikkim Police: Public guardians during COVID19 Pandemic.

GANGTOK, 30 APR [IPR]:

West Sikkim shares its borders with neighboringstate of West Bengal and international border, Nepal. The West District Police force consists of 640 Police Personnel and 120 IRBN Jawans manning the 7 Police stations and 11 Police Outpost of West Sikkim. As informed by the Superintendent of Police, West Sikkim, TenzingLoden Lepcha, a total of 14 Static Picket Points along the borders with West Bengal and 2 Static Posts across India-Nepal Border namely Kiuwabhanjayang and Kumuk Village are well guarded by the Sikkim Police, IRBN Jawans and SSB.

The individual picket points have been manned by the Civil Police and IRBN Jawans who are doing their duties on rotation basis amidst rain, sun, wind and other natural occurrences. They are living in

tents and makeshift structures provided by the authorities without any complain. The responsibility they have on their shoulders to keep the Sikkimese citizens free from the deadly COVID-19 virus is the only fuel which is helping them to push through the hardships. When asked, a Head Constable at Sipsu, Karma T. Bhutia stated that they are stationed away from their homes and family to serve the state at all costs. He mentioned that the comforts are minimum, but the joy of serving the state in the moment of crisis is huge.

The Police and IRBN Jawans are indeed working day and night to make sure the borders are safe from intruders. Their contributions are huge and their dedication can be seen when one visits the police picket points and stations



near the river dividing Sikkim and West Bengal. The places where they are camped, are not luxuriously filled but they are on duty 24x7 to ensure the safety of all. The picket points are well manned and all borders are sealed as humanly as possible.

The Police Department in West Sikkim have also been actively involved in the dissemination of information regarding theCOVID19lockdown to the public. The majority of the enforcement of proper lockdown have

been due to the efforts of the Police around the clock with cooperation from the public. They play the major role in the implementations of District orders at all times. These abled men perform their duties despite hindrances and discomfort which a normal person might feel during such times.

The present deployment along the West Bengal border as informed are at 17 points namely:

A. Under the Sombaria Police Station headed by SHO Thendup

Bhutia:

1. Gorkhey;
2. Ribdi;
- 3.Nagdhara;
- 4.Slangdang;
- 5.Taketar;
- 6.Batasay;
- 7.Lower Tikpur (Orange Village)
- and 8.JasaiGaon.

B. Under the Nayabazar Police station headed by SHO Jigme W. Bhutia:

1. Budang OP;
2. Shipshu;
- 3.Rammam CP;
- 4.GoskhanDara;
- 5.ZoomFatak;
6. ChaarCharey which is manned by Police and Forest personnel.

C. Under the Soreng Police Station headed by SHO NirajKhatiwada:

1. Ambeytar;
2. Lower Budang Picnic Spot and 3.Singtam Tar (Tharpu) manned by Forest Department.

The above mentioned points are situated at difficult terrains and are mostly accessible by walking on foot to reach the points. These points are also close to the West Bengal border hence

24x7 patrolling and vigilance is done by the respective personnel at their designated places.

They are indeed the 'frontline warriors' whose roles exceed the working hours and service to the community is exuberant since the day one of state-wide lockdown. The Police personnel deployed in the border areas of West Sikkim are doing their jobs constantly keeping the rest safe, inside their own homes, under the comfort and warmth of their families so that there are no intrusions from outside the state.

Sikkim, till date has had no COVID19 cases inside its boundaries, hence the entire Sikkim is in debt to the 'frontline warriors', the first line of defense and the guardian of every Sikkimese during these critical times, the Sikkim Police whose motto is 'To Protect and Serve'.

The Better Half

Mothers are special, but you did not need to be reminded. Or did you?

It was Mata Teertha Aunsi recenety, and WhatsApp group were crowded with Mother's Day wishes. Less than a fortnight away is Mother's Day, coming this year on Sunday, 10 May. Greeting cards may have gone out of fashion and even personal visits made difficult because of the lockdown [which will hopefully have been lifted by then, but no one's betting on it yet], so one can expect several gigabytes of e-greetings and memes to more than provide for the need to convey greetings. Schools, WhatsApp classrooms nowadays, especially those with kindergarten kids will also be spending the coming weeks focused on crafts classes as toddlers put together cards for their mothers. With so many lockdown bakers on social media, expect an explosion of mothers treating themselves to Mother's Day cakes, and hey, there are cut-flower home deliveries to make the day for mothers as well. It is not often that we thank mothers even though we all have gained from their Mamta, hence, even for those who have reservations about the plethora of Days devoted to different causes and issues, Mother's Day is a welcome one – formalizing an opportunity to greet and thank them. One can expect the bent-right mindsets complain about the westernization of this devotion to mothers, which they will insist is a uniquely Bharatiya emotion. When they do that, let's just point them towards the abandoned widows of Vrindavan and their destitution.

This is not to get all sappy and sentimental, but days like Mother's Day bring home the need to remember mothers for reasons which extend beyond our individual needs. We are all very attached and obedient growing up, getting pampered and being ourselves very expressive about our adoration of our mothers. But then we grow up, and grow apart. The doting mother is a stereotype that's never incorrect, and the other cliché that we continue to reinforce is of cast away mothers. Not necessarily abandoned, but left unanchored after the children have become adults and found lives of their own. There are too many mothers around who invested their youth on their children at the cost of their careers and even social lives only to find themselves returned their lives once the kids have grown up, but not knowing what to do with it anymore. Their ambitions have subsided and the opportunities long since moved on. Many continue the cycle of caring with their grandchildren, and while it is wonderful that at least one gender understands and delivers care, it is perhaps time that more conscious efforts were made to share the responsibilities and recognize the responsibility towards the mothers.

Walk into any village home, and chances are that the mother of house is known as so-and-so's Aama. Chances are that if the "so-and-so" has grown up, s/he is not around on a regular basis to be the required chora or chori. Sikkim needs to devise social engagements which involve more mothers and/or senior citizens as much to benefit from their empathy and wisdom as also to bolster their self-esteem and end up saving the society. Again, this had not started with the intention of becoming a moralizing sermon, but that is where we find ourselves too often. Guess we are allowed these moments at least once a year...

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India's Initial Coronavirus Response Carried Echoes of the Colonial Era

SHINJINI DAS

THECONVERSATION.COM

Initial responses to the coronavirus outbreak in India were marked by a spate of racist attacks towards citizens from the north-east of the country, which is adjacent to China.

North-eastern residents living in different cities around India have been subjected to racial abuse. Some have been publicly heckled, asked to show their proof of citizenship, and others even spat upon. Many north-easterners have taken to social media, appealing to Indians to stop the mindless racism.

Then, a national lockdown on March 24, announced with only four hours notice, showed the government's indifference towards the plight of poor people who work in India's vast informal employment sector. Jobless and stranded, millions of migrant workers were forced to undertake long, perilous journeys on foot from cities to various rural hinterlands. Many reportedly died of hunger and exhaustion.

In enforcing a strict lockdown, Indian police reportedly beat up, teargassed, and locked up the migrant poor. Meanwhile, leading economists are pointing out that the Indian government's relief package to the poor is thoroughly inadequate, with many falling through the cracks.

There are lessons here to be learnt from India's colonial past. My own research on the history of colonial medicine looks at how prejudices relating to race and class were among the many wrongs that characterised British imperial public health policies. Attempts by British colonialists to contain mass outbreaks of malaria, leprosy, yellow fever and plague in the 19th and 20th centuries had clear racist and classist undertones.

'UNCIVILISED NATIVES' BLAMED FOR DISEASE

British officials routinely identified the colonised as vectors of disease. In the first decades of the 1800s, while episodes of malarial fever epidemics hit many parts of India, James Ranald Martin, the presidency surgeon of Bengal, lamented:

"The natives have yet to learn that ... cleanly habits, pure air, are among the most precious gifts of civilisation."

In 1913, almost a century later, notes from the third meeting of the General Malaria Committee in Madras reported that malarial parasites were "as natural amongst primitive races as flea infestation is to a dog". British officials in India were considered vulnerable from this predominantly "Anglo-Indian" disease, as "almost everyone who has resided in the East has imbibed the malarial poison".

British fears of malarial contamination from "natives" around the colonised world also shaped norms of racial segregation in places such as West Africa. In 1901, the malaria committee of the Royal Society

concluded that mosquitoes exist in "native dwellings" in large numbers and recommended segregation – the isolation of Europeans in towns away from "native quarters or camps".

Likewise, despite widespread prevalence of leprosy in medieval Europe, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Leonard Rogers of the Indian Medical Service linked colonial leprosy to tropical regions, which were "mainly inhabited by coloured people in low stages of civilisation living in primitive, generally one-roomed, overcrowded houses". Rogers also explained the spread of leprosy by linking the disease to "sexual promiscuity" evident among "poor tropical races".

POVERTY OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Leprosy provides another glaring example of the class discrimination inherent in colonial public health policies. The 1898 Indian Lepers Act provided for the compulsory segregation of "pauper lepers", entrusting the police with powers to arrest them without a warrant. The imperial administration lacked the infrastructure needed to segregate all lepers and targeted only the poor lepers, who were identified as the most dangerous vectors of the disease.

Colonial class discrimination was also evident in cases of other diseases. The 1842 report of the Madras Medical Board attributed widespread malarial fever in India to the vices of the "lower orders", including the smoking of tobacco and hashish, and drunkenness. During a yellow fever scare in 1916, government officials recommended that of all passengers returning to India in ships from affected countries, strict quarantine should apply only to the "illiterate third-class passengers".

In March 2020, sanitary officials sprayed migrant workers returning to Uttar Pradesh with chemical disinfectants. The image, which went viral, bore striking similarities to the treatment of the colonised who were forcibly disinfected in tubs in quarantine camps during an outbreak of plague in Karachi in 1897. Such practices were widespread in contemporary India. In 1898, the British Medical Journal reported that railway officials in Bombay had disinfected the clothes of all third-class passengers with "steam under pressure" and forced "the native ... to bathe himself thoroughly in a disinfectant solution".

The shadow of India's imperial past looms large over the coronavirus crisis. Unlike the virus, the social issues it has raked up in India are hardly novel. As long-term policies are being devised to address the hardships of those hit hardest by the pandemic, the government and the people must ensure that this health crisis does not further escalate into a graver humanitarian tragedy.

[the writer is Lecturer in Modern Extra-European History, University of East Anglia]

Coronavirus: Why is it so hard to aid small businesses hurt by a disaster?

MARIA K. WATSON

THECONVERSATION.COM

The U.S. government has committed hundreds of billions of dollars to help small businesses weather the coronavirus pandemic. But early reports suggest larger companies are gobbling up much of the aid, while many of the neediest ones – particularly those with only a few dozen employees – aren't benefiting.

For example, large, generally profitable companies like Shake Shack, Potbelly and even the Los Angeles Lakers, with access to other lines of credit, have received millions of dollars in loans, even as mom-and-pop stores across the U.S. say they are still waiting to hear back about their applications.

Very small businesses, particularly those operating on small profit margins, are especially vulnerable, since they may not have the cash reserves to weather periods of economic uncertainty and typically have fewer ways to access financing. A recent poll by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce found that one in four U.S. businesses is two months away from permanently shutting down.

My research on efforts to help businesses recover from hurricanes and other disasters shows why smaller organizations have long struggled to get aid after a crisis.

OBSTACLES TO AID

Hurricane Ike, at the time of its impact in 2008, was the third-costliest storm in the nation's history.

It caused approximately US\$30 billion in damages and devastated thousands of businesses in southeastern Texas. My colleagues and I focused our study in Galveston County, Texas, where Ike made its initial landfall and more than 3,800 businesses were interrupted and 53,000 employees were put out of work.

The Small Business Administration has a designated disaster relief program intended to help small companies recover through low-interest loans. Despite the devastation, we found that most small businesses in Galveston that applied for federal assistance were unable to get aid. In fact, the approval rate for low-interest disaster loans was only around 22%.

The trouble is, even though this is intended as aid, it's still a loan – and the SBA needs to make sure borrowers will pay it back. One of the main ways any lender determines whether a borrower will do so is through its credit history, which many very small businesses lack.

As you might expect, we found that the most common reasons the SBA denied loans were unsatisfactory credit and lack of repayment ability.

Older businesses, corporations and companies with more employees received the highest loan amounts after Hurricane Ike, even when controlling for damage. These types of companies were already in a much better position to survive a disaster like a hurricane – which is likely why the SBA deemed them less financially risky and worthy of a disaster loan.

Getting those loans made a big difference in survival rates. My research found that companies that secured an SBA loan were significantly more likely to be around nine years later.

PAPERWORK AND FUZZY GUIDELINES

But the approval rate tells only a part of the story, since it doesn't capture businesses who never made it through the application process.

Many businesses in Galveston described applying for federal funds as "difficult" and "cumbersome," leading many to simply withdraw

their applications.

This is again where larger businesses have an advantage because they are more likely to have the necessary documents digitized – vital when a disaster destroyed the physical copies. They also have specialized staff that are familiar with financial paperwork and know how to navigate the loan process without having to take away from the day-to-day operational needs of the business. This also helps them capitalize on fuzzy guidelines about who is eligible.

A report to Congress from the House Committee on Small Business suggests that some businesses actually refused loans after they had been approved due to lengthy delays. As one Galveston business owner told us, "by the time you get the money your small business may be broke." Average wait times for Hurricane Ike were 11 months after landfall.

The city of Galveston offered local companies a bridge loan intended to tide them over until the disaster loan came through, but my interviews indicated that though helpful, this mostly benefited businesses with an existing relationship with affiliated banks.

SIMILAR THEMES IN CORONAVIRUS AID

To combat the economic impact of the coronavirus, in late March Congress passed the \$349 billion Paycheck Protection Program in addition to replenishing the coffers of the SBA's disaster loan fund.

The idea with the new program is that small businesses, especially those that have had to close during the crisis, can get very low-interest loans that turn into grants as long as they meet certain conditions, like not laying off staff.

After the money was drained

in two weeks – and reports surfaced of larger companies getting some of the aid – Congress topped it off with \$310 billion and tightened its restrictions on which businesses can use it.

But so far, smaller companies seem to be encountering the same problems I uncovered following Hurricane Ike.

For example, businesses are still finding it difficult to apply for assistance. Unclear guidelines led to confusion in how the process would be rolled out and executed, even in the second round.

Like after Hurricane Ike, businesses with existing relationships with banks, such as having open lines of credit, seem to be benefiting. The assistance is grounded in a loan program, which favors larger businesses. This has the potential to be exacerbated by the high competition for funds and the need for businesses to apply quickly.

And although COVID-19 assistance is different from previous disasters in that the loans are potentially forgivable, they are still loans that – if not turned into grants – must be paid back and could compound the issues businesses are already facing from a likely sharp drop in revenue.

The Treasury Department's vow to audit who took out loans to ensure recipients adhere to the rules will help, as will Congress' decision to direct 10% of the new funds to community banks. Local lenders have been quicker to lend and motivated to help their communities.

Unfortunately, if history is any guide, it may not be enough to ensure these small businesses are getting the help they desperately need.

[the writer is Research Assistant Professor in Urban Planning, Texas A&M University]

Legendary footballer Chuni Goswami no more

KOLKATA, APR 30 (PTI): Iconic former India footballer Chuni Goswami, who captained the 1962 Asian Games gold-winning team and also played first-class cricket, died here on Thursday after suffering a cardiac arrest.

The versatile sports veteran was 82 and breathed his last at a hospital here. He is survived by his wife Basanti and son Sudipto.

“He suffered a cardiac arrest and died in the hospital at around 5pm,” a family source told PTI.

Goswami was also battling underlying ailments, including sugar, and prostrate and nerve problems.

Born in Kishoreganj District of undivided Bengal, which is now in Bangladesh, the striker, whose actual name was



Subimal but was best known by his nickname, played 50 international matches between 1956 and 1964, including the 1960 Olympics in Rome.

Besides captaining India to the Asian

Games gold medal in 1962, he was also a part of the silver-winning team in the 1964 Asia Cup in Israel, which remains the country's best performance in the continental showpiece

till date. As a cricketer, he represented Bengal in 46 first-class games between 1962 and 1973.

Goswami, PK Banerjee, who also died recently, and Tulsidas

Balaram formed a deadly forward-line during the ‘Golden Era’ of Indian football when the country was considered one of the Asian powerhouses.

Goswami won the Best Striker of Asia Award in 1962.

For his service to Indian football, he was conferred with Arjuna Award (1963) and Padma Shri (1983).

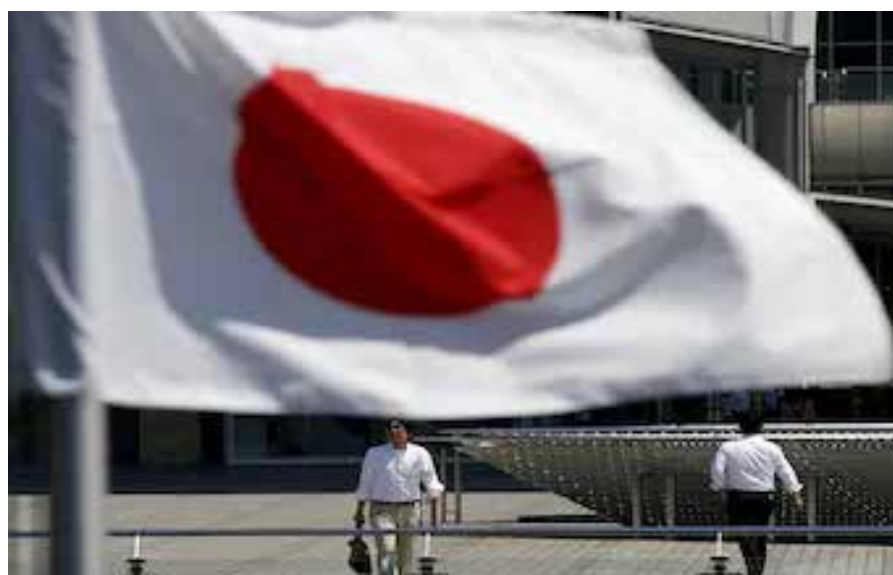
The Indian Postal Department issued a commemorative stamp on his 82nd birthday in January to recognise his contribution to the game in the country.

Goswami played for a single club, Mohun Bagan, throughout his career before his retirement in 1968. He captained the club in five seasons from 1960 to 1964. He was conferred with Mohun Bagan Ratna in 2005.

Manipuri doctor conferred ‘Order of Rising Sun’ by Japan

IMPHAL, APR 30 (PTI): A doctor from Manipur has been conferred the ‘Order of Rising Sun’ by the Japan government for promoting a better understanding of Japan in India and deepening ties between the two countries, a release said. The ‘Order of the Rising Sun’ is conferred on persons with achievements in international relations, promotion of Japanese culture, environmental preservation, welfare or achievements in their fields. It was constituted by Japanese Emperor Meiji in 1875.

Thangjam Dhabali Singh, an allopathic doctor by profession and founder of the Manipur Tourism Forum (MTF),



was conferred the ‘Order of Rising Sun - Gold and Silver Rays’ by the Japan government on Wednesday, the release issued by the forum said.

The Japan government conferred

the decoration on Singh while announcing the names of the foreign recipients of the Spring Decoration, 2020, the release said, quoting a letter sent to the doctor by the

Embassy of Japan in India.

Singh had organised the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Imphal of the Second World War. Several Japanese citizens, including officials from

the Embassy of Japan in India, had participated in the event, it said.

“With support from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Nippon Foundation of Japan, the Imphal Peace Foundation was launched on June 22 last year. The MTF played an important role in giving shape to it during Th Dhabali Singh's tenure as president of the forum,” the release said.

The Embassy of Japan in India has paid tributes to Singh's long years of service in consolidating Japan-India relationship, it added.

New book to revisit Maharashtra's glorious past

NEW DELHI, APR 30 (PTI): A new book will dwell on Maharashtra's history and evolution from a rich past to the modern times and list its enormous contribution to the tapestry of the country's culture and thought.

In “Shivaji in South Block: The Unwritten History of a Proud People”, journalist Girish Kuber talks about Maharashtra's politics, history and society.

From the time of the Satavahanas down to the present day, he chronicles many lesser-known tales: the empire that brought the mighty Mughals to their knees to the woman who took the issue of consent in

marital sex right up to Queen Victoria.

The book also discusses the evolution of movements of the right and left as well as for Dalit pride, the leader who mentored Gandhi and the man who killed him, the best prime minister India never had, and the uncertain tryst of Shivaji's metaphorical descendants with the seat of national power, publishers HarperCollins India said.

The book, whose announcement was made on the eve of 60th Maharashtra Day, is scheduled for release in October.

Kuber said his book delves into where the Marathi Manooos stands

today and why he is where he is.

“As Maharashtra celebrates the 60th year of its formation, it is an opportune time to revisit the state's glorious past. Maharashtra has made several significant contributions to Indian society that are not widely known and has firsts in a number of fields to its credit,” he said.

According to Krishan Chopra, publisher, HarperCollins India, Maharashtra is much more than Bollywood and industry and Kuber has given an exciting account of why the intriguing Marathi Manooos is such an important element in understanding the state.

Arunachal gets its first COVID-19 testing lab

ITANAGAR, APR 30 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh Health Minister Alo Libang on Thursday inaugurated the state's first laboratory at a hospital near hear for conducting COVID-19 tests, making it the third state after Assam and Mizoram in the north-east region to have such facility.

The laboratory was inaugurated at the state-run Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIMHS) in Naharlagun, which was designated as a dedicated centre for treating coronavirus-infected patients.

The new facility can conduct 100-120 COVID-19 tests per day, and now there is no need to send samples to Guwahati

or Dibrugarh, the minister said.

A similar laboratory will also be set up at Pasighat General Hospital, he said, adding that the government is building infrastructure to set up a temporary healthcare centre at Midpu, about 20 km from here, for treating COVID-19 patients.

Libang said the work for strengthening infrastructure at 10 hospitals across the state has been going on.

The state government led by Chief Minister Pema Khandu are making all the initiatives to improve infrastructure of the health sector and leaving no stone unturned to tackle the coronavirus outbreak,

he said.

TRIMHS director Dr Moji Jini said the number of tests in the laboratory can be increased to 200 per day by engaging more technicians.

Health secretary P Pratibhan applauded the authorities of the institute to set up the laboratory in a record time.

The health minister paid tribute to former Chief Minister Dorjee Khandu on his death anniversary on Thursday and said the TRIMHS, the only medical college and hospital of the state, was the outcome of his personal initiative.

Dorjee Khandu died in a helicopter crash near Luguthang in Tawang district in 2011.

Not considering withdrawal of lockdown now: Tripura CM

AGARTALA, APR 30 (PTI): Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has said the state government is not considering withdrawal of the ongoing lockdown in near future but will weigh options to relax some restrictions in a phased manner. He said it is impossible to “resume inter-state bus, train or air services immediately after May 3”, the date till which the nationwide lockdown has been extended.

“We do not find any way to withdraw the lockdown as it is the only viable means to break the chain of the coronavirus outbreak. It seems we have to

continue with the lockdown and we have to withdraw some restrictions in a phased manner,” Deb said on Wednesday evening after an all-party meeting convened by the state government.

Eighteen political parties including the ruling BJP, its ally the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), the CPI(M), the Congress and the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Twipra (INPT) had participated in the meeting.

“It is impossible to resume inter-state bus, train or air services after May 3. People have to accept the lockdown.

All the political parties in the state were briefed about the COVID-19 situation in the state,” Deb said, adding that “no political party” has stressed on immediate withdrawal of the lockdown.

CPI(M) politburo member and leader of the Opposition Manik Sarkar and Tripura Pradesh Congress president Pijush Kanti Biswas among others had attended the meeting.

“Almost all poor people of the state have received financial benefits ranging from Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 along with free ration during the lockdown,”

the chief minister said.

Deb said the state government has taken several initiatives to revive the economy, which has been hit by the ongoing lockdown.

“Fifty out of 75 industrial units here have started operations. Primary sectors like agriculture are also working,” he said.

Last week, Deb had said the state became coronavirus-free after its second COVID-19 patient tested negative.

Senior minister Ratan Lal Nath said the state has adequate stock of essential commodities like rice, wheat and sugar.

Four persons test positive for COVID-19 in Assam

GUWAHATI, APR 30 (PTI): Four persons, including two women, tested positive for COVID-19 in Assam's Bongaigaon district on Thursday, taking the total number of such cases in the state to 41, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

In a first in the state, the patients -- three from Bongaigaon town and one from Chaprakat -- were found to have no contact history. Their samples were sent for

COVID-19 examination as they had fever.

Of the total cases reported in the state so far, 29 have recovered and one person has succumbed to the disease.

“Four more coronavirus positive cases reported from Bongaigaon district. The number of COVID-19 patients in Assam now stands at 41. Twenty-nine discharged, one death. So active hospital cases 11,” Sarma tweeted.

Bongaigaon has

emerged as the new ‘red zone’ in the state with five cases in a week, including that of a 16-year-old girl who tested positive for the disease on Tuesday, Sarma told reporters, adding the deputy commissioner will declare areas within three-km radius of the residences of those affected as containment zone.

“Patients are being taken to Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital in Guwahati,” he said.

Altogether six persons have tested positive for COVID-19 this week. A 61-year-old person from Goalpara was found to have contracted the disease on Tuesday.

Apart from Bongaigaon, Assam has five other districts in the ‘red zone’ -- Golaghat, Nalbari, Dhubri, Goalpara and Morigaon.

Sarma said that Golaghat and Nalbari districts are expected to come out of the Red Zone over the next few days.

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Part of Umar’s ban could be suspended: PCB source

KARACHI, APR 30 (PTI): Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal could have a part of his three-year anti-corruption ban suspended when the judge heading the Cricket Board’s disciplinary Panel gives out his detailed judgement soon, a source in the PCB has said.

After the hour-long hearing of the panel held on April Monday in Lahore, where Umar appeared himself to plead his case, Justice (retd) Miran Chohan announced a three-year ban on the batsman for failing to report corrupt approaches.

“People are jumping to conclusions about the three-year ban but the detailed order is yet to

come out. Umar might eventually get a three-year ban with two years suspended or something like that,” the source told PTI.

He said there are chances the judge will suspend most part of the three-year ban given the clauses under which Umar has been charged by the Anti-Corruption Unit and also given his past track record.

“Umar could get a suspended sentence in his three-year ban because this will also test him as an individual to see how he behaves and conducts himself in future,” the source said.

“When majority part of a ban is suspended, the player has to be careful with his behaviour or



he could end up being banned for the entire duration of the ban, he explained.

Umar has the right to appeal against the panel decision 14 days after he gets a copy of the detailed judgement. His appeal will be heard by an

independent adjudicator to be appointed by the board.

Two years ago, the Anti-Corruption Tribunal of the PCB, headed by Lt. General (retd) Tauqir Zia, had also banned Sharjeel Khan for five years with half of the

sentence suspended, which allowed him to make a comeback in the Pakistan Super League 5 in February.

Umar was suspended from playing in the PSL 5 on February 20 by the PCB in the spot-fixing approach case.

Sania Mirza nominated for Fed Cup Heart award

NEW DELHI, APR 30 (PTI): Indian tennis star Sania Mirza on Thursday became the first Indian to be nominated for the Fed Cup Heart Award from the Asia/Oceania zone along with Indonesia’s Priska Medelyn Nugrorho.

Sania had recently made a comeback to Fed Cup after four years.

With her 18-month son Izhaan present in the stands, Sania had helped India qualify for the Play-offs for the first time.

“Stepping on to the court for the first time in India colours was a moment of pride for me, back in 2003. It has been an eighteen year long journey since then and I feel extremely proud and privileged to have contributed to the success of Indian tennis,” Sania was



quoted as saying in an AITA release.

“The Fed Cup result at the Asia/Oceania tournament last month is one of the greatest achievements of my playing career. These are the moments an

athlete plays for and I am grateful to the Fed Cup Heart Awards selection panel for this recognition,” added the 33-year-old.

The winners of the Heart Awards will be determined by online

voting by fans which will go live on May 1 and will go on until May 8.

In Fed Cup Heart Award’s 11th edition this year, Anett Kontaveit (Estonia) and Eleonora Molinaro

(Luxembourg) have been nominated from Europe/Africa zone while Fernanda Contreras Gomez of Mexico and Paraguay’s Veronica Cepede Royg have been nominated from the Americas.

UK government warns sport not to expect quick return to action

SEAN INGLE & JAMIE JACKSON LONDON, 30 APR [THEGUARDIAN]:The prospects of sport being given approval on Friday to restart behind closed doors when it meets the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Public Health England have been heavily played down – with those involved in the talks saying any such move is at least a week away.

It is understood that any potential relaxations for the Premier League, horse racing, cricket and rugby – all of whose representatives will be involved in the conference call on Friday – will not come until the government has announced on 7 May its broader plans to ease Britain’s lockdown status.

Instead the meeting is likely to focus on

proposals from two working groups, which have separately looked at when it might be safe for sport to return to full training, and the rules that need to be in place for competitions to be played behind closed doors.

The Premier League, which is holding a separate conference call with its clubs on Friday morning, also does not expect to hold a vote on its next formal move regarding the response to coronavirus before 7 May. However, clubs will be briefed on aspects of its Project Restart, including plans for testing and the possibility of games being played on neutral territory.

While the best-case scenario of the football season being resumed in June has been modelled, the Premier League’s cautious stance reflects a reluctance to rush back.



The Bundesliga intends to resume its 2019-20 season on 9 May, but it has been noted by the Premier League that the date is no longer certain given Germany’s chancellor, Angela Merkel, has suggested

tighter restrictions may have to be implemented because of concerns that cases of the virus could multiply again.

Meanwhile Uefa’s medical chief professor, Tim Meyer, has said it is “definitely possible”

to plan for the 2019-20 season to restart, despite France’s Ligue 1 becoming the second major European league to be cancelled after the Dutch Eredivisie.

Speaking a day after Fifa’s medical chief, Michel D’Hooghe, warned it would not be possible to play football before social contact was permitted – and that September was a realistic target – Meyer sounded a more optimistic note.

“All football organisations which are planning the restart of their competitions will produce comprehensive protocols to ensure that the health of those involved in the games is protected,” he said. “Under these conditions, it is definitely possible to plan the restart of competitions suspended during the 2019-20 season.”

Usman Khawaja overlooked as Cricket Australia reveal 2020-21 contract list

SYDNEY, 30 APR [THE GUARDIAN]: Marnus Labuschagne and Joe Burns have been included in Cricket Australia’s contract list, with out-of-favour veteran Usman Khawaja headlining six expected omissions, while teenage star Annabel Sutherland is one of three new faces on the women’s list.

There were few surprises in the 20-strong men’s group that national selectors picked to steer Australia through a challenging stretch that includes a Twenty20 World Cup and much-anticipated Test series against India.

Khawaja and Marcus Harris both have not played for Australia since last year’s Ashes tour and lost their national contracts. Nathan Coulter-Nile, Peter Handscomb, Shaun Marsh and Marcus Stoinis were also axed from the list, having been overlooked by selectors since featuring in last year’s one-day World Cup.

Burns, who was recalled at the start of the previous home summer, has been elevated to the list alongside fellow Test batsmen Labuschagne and Matthew Wade. Allrounder Mitch Marsh, paceman Kane Richardson and spinner Ashton Agar have also been given deals after being left off the original 2019-20 list.

The 33-year-old Khawaja, who was Australia’s most important batsman during Warner and Steve Smith’s suspension, hasn’t come close to national selection since being dropped and is seemingly unlikely to add to his 44 Tests and

40 ODIs. “As Mitch Marsh and Matthew Wade have proven there are always plenty of opportunities for those who have missed out to be re-selected by performing consistently at domestic level,” chairman of selectors Trevor Hohns said.

“And importantly to make the most of any opportunity that comes their way at international level. As is always the case there are unlucky omissions but, however, because you are not on the list does not mean you cannot be selected to represent Australia.”

Glenn Maxwell hasn’t played for Australia since a T20 last October, having taken a mental-health break then undergone elbow surgery that forced him to miss a recent tour of South Africa. Selectors have retained Maxwell on the national list, confirming he remains part of their plans for 2020-21.

On the women’s side, Sutherland and 21-year-old quick Tayla Vlaeminck were both named in the 15-strong squad, alongside South Australian Tahlia McGrath. Opening bat Nicole Bolton and middle-order player Elyse Villani have dropped off ahead of this summer’s scheduled one-day World Cup.

Sutherland had been upgraded to a contract during the summer after making her debut before the Twenty20 World Cup, but this selection marks her first in the initial squad. The young sensation, who is the daughter of former CA chief James Sutherland and sister of Victorian all-rounder Will Sutherland,

made her debut for the Melbourne Renegades as a 15-year-old.

Meanwhile McGrath’s call up is notable given she has not represented Australia since the 2016-17 Ashes.

“With Tayla and Ellyse Perry coming back from long-term injuries, Tahlia will add extra depth to our all-rounders, especially with her bowling,” chief selector Shaun Flegler said.

“We saw that depth come into play during the recent World Cup and we know that will be important with another World Cup scheduled this summer.”

Bolton last played for Australia in the 50-over component of the Ashes last year, and was the leading run-scorer in the domestic one-day competition last summer.

But Australia have shown a willingness to forge ahead with Rachael Haynes and Alyssa Healy as their openers in the one-day format.

Men: Ashton Agar, Joe Burns, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Aaron Finch, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitch Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Tim Paine, James Pattinson, Jhye Richardson, Kane Richardson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa.

Women: Nicola Carey, Ashleigh Gardner, Rachael Haynes, Alyssa Healy, Jess Jonassen, Delissa Kimmince, Meg Lanning, Tahlia McGrath, Sophie Molineux, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Tayla Vlaeminck, Georgia Wareham.

Williamson named ODI player of the Year in New Zealand Cricket’s virtual awards

AUCKLAND, APR 30 (PTI): Skipper Kane Williamson was on Thursday named the men’s ODI Player of the Year at the annual New Zealand Cricket awards for his stellar performance throughout the year.

Ross Taylor and White Ferns skipper Sophie Devine took home the men’s and women’s T20 Player of the Year award respectively, while Suzie Bates was rewarded for her consistency with the bat as she claimed the women’s ODI player of the year.

The awards were presented online for the first time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Williamson had a hugely successful year, both individually and with the New Zealand team, which he led to the World Cup final.

At the World Cup, the 29-year-old amassed 578 runs at an average of 82, including two centuries, which culminated in him being named player of the tournament.

“Kane was simply exceptional at the ICC Cricket World Cup last year,” New Zealand head coach, Gary Stead said.

“Kane fully deserved his selection. He builds great partnerships with our well-established middle order and when he bats deep in an ODI innings, we’ll invariably

be in a good position to win most of those matches.

“He leads the team well, he has his own style and certainly the respect of his peers. His calm, purposeful demeanour flows through his leadership and, in turn, the team,” he added.

Veteran Blackcaps batsman Taylor scored 330 runs at a strike-rate of 130 to take home the honour in the shortest format of the game.

“A man of Ross’ international experience is very valuable in the fast and furious nature of T20 cricket,” Stead said.

“He has the ability to sum up batting conditions quickly and accurately in a variety of venues and countries. This is a skill which serves the team well and helps us adapt plans quickly in the shortest form of the game.”

In women’s cricket, Bates was named the ODI player of the year after making two half-centuries in three matches against South Africa - the team’s only games in the format in the past year.

Despite only having one ODI series against South Africa at home this summer, Bates showed her class scoring 142 runs at an average of 42.

“Suzie has been a world class performer

for many years,” White Ferns head coach, Bob Carter said.

“She paces an ODI innings really well and has the ability to read fields and pre-empt what opposition captains are trying to do and how they are looking to contain or restrict her game.”

In women’s T20, Devine enjoyed an unprecedented year, scoring her maiden T20 century while also becoming the first player, male or female, to reach 50 in five, and then six, consecutive T20 Internationals.

“Sophie had an exceptional season with the bat in T20 cricket,” Carter said.

Devine scored 429 runs at an average of 71 and at a strike-rate of 132 employing a power game that rivals the best female players in the world.

“Our T20 side is at its best when Sophie is scoring runs at the top. She gives others around her the freedom to play their natural game.

“Sophie’s ability with the ball in T20 cricket goes under the radar at times. She will often step up and bowl the hard overs and uses changes of pace to her advantage. She is a top quality all-rounder and an exceptional T20 talent,” Carter said.

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China's battle against coronavirus major strategic achievement: Xi Jinping

By K J M VARMA

BEIJING, APR 30 (PTI): Chinese President Xi Jinping has termed China's battle against COVID-19 as a major strategic achievement, as the ruling Communist Party is all set to hold the postponed Parliament session on May 22 amid a steady decline in the coronavirus cases.

China's National Health Commission (NHC) on Thursday said the country reported only four new confirmed COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, taking the total number to 82,862, while no death due to the disease was registered. The virus has claimed 4,633 lives in the country.

China's arduous efforts to contain the coronavirus have brought a decisive outcome to the fight of defending Hubei and its capital city Wuhan, Xi told a high-powered Central Committee meeting of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) on Wednesday.

The nationwide battle against the epidemic has gained major strategic achievements, the state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Xi as saying.

Xi said Hubei, including Wuhan, should continue strengthening community-level epidemic prevention and control.

He asked officials

to make efforts to contain the virus case at Heilongjiang Province bordering Russia, where a large number of Chinese returning from Russian cities were tested positive for coronavirus.

The meeting emphasised the need to accelerate work resumption and business reopening, help companies especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises address difficulties, and promote the recovery of pillar industries such as auto manufacturing, electronic information, new materials and biomedicine, the report said.

The meeting stressed accelerating farm production and expanding sales channels for agricultural products to boost income for farmers.

The Hubei province and its capital Wuhan -- where the COVID-19 first emerged in December last year -- were the epicentres of the deadly virus, which later turned into a pandemic, bringing the world to a standstill.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues its explosive growth overseas, Xi said, noting the mounting pressure to prevent imported

infections and the growing complexity of stemming domestic epidemic resurgence.

Xi demanded no relaxation in epidemic control to safeguard the hard-earned achievements, the report said.

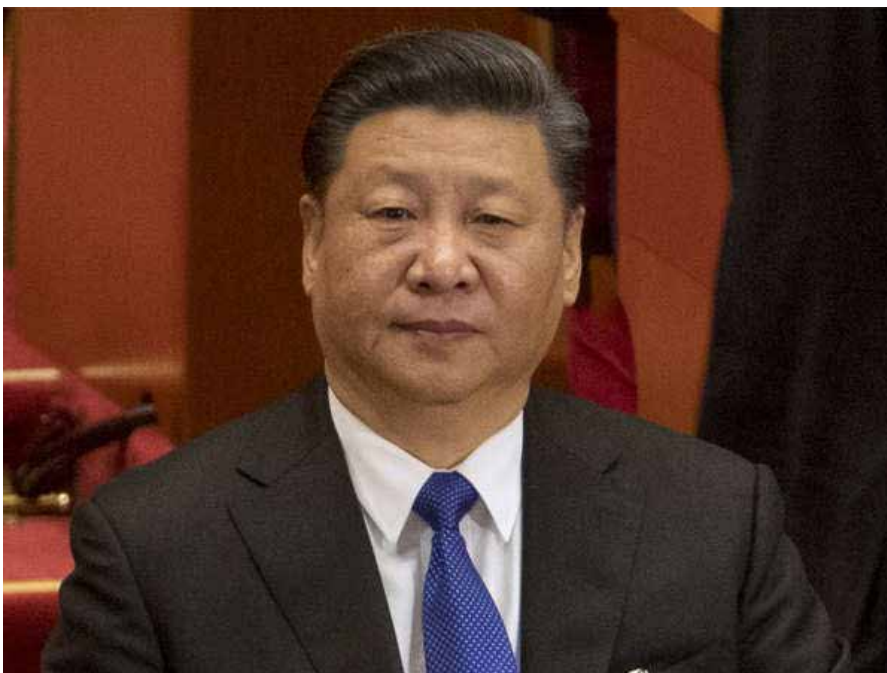
According to the NHC, all the four COVID-19 patients reported on Wednesday were imported cases.

The number of imported cases rose to 1,664, including 13 patients in severe condition, it said.

The CPC Central Committee meet was held amid mounting pressure for an international inquiry into the origin of coronavirus and the allegations that the deadly virus was originated from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) before it spread across the world and wreaked havoc.

China has come under increasing global pressure over lack of transparency in its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, which has so far infected over 3,193,960 people and claimed more than 227,640 lives across the world.

State-run CGTN TV on Wednesday reported that American scientists are working with their Chinese counterparts to



investigate the origin of the novel coronavirus, a prime demand of US President Donald Trump and several other countries.

The report said the China Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CCDCP) is facilitating the cooperation between Dr Ian Lipkin, Director for Centre for Infection and Immunity of Columbia University, and Prof Lu Jinhai of Sun-Yat-Sen University of Guangzhou to conduct the probe.

"The two are working together to determine whether the virus emerged elsewhere in China before Wuhan in December" last year, the report said.

It is not yet clear whether the investigation has been

official consent of the US government, it said.

Besides the US, the UK, Australia and Germany have also called for more transparency from Beijing on the COVID-19 origin.

China on Wednesday announced to hold the annual meeting of its Parliament -- National People's Congress (NPC), which was postponed in March due to COVID-19, from May 22, signalling that the pandemic which paralysed the country for over three months is finally under control.

Official media said the meeting period of the NPC, which has over 3,000 deputies, could be shortened and held through video link. However, no official announcement has been

made so far.

The annual session of the national advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), is also expected to be held in Beijing on May 21, official media reported.

Dubbed as the annual political season, the NPC and CPPCC sessions -- which together have over 5,000 members, are held every year in early March during which the CPC unveils its national agenda for the year, including the annual budget and formulates new laws.

According to the National Health Commission, 77,610 coronavirus patients have been recovered so far.

China's manufacturing weaker in April as virus hurts exports

BEIJING, APR 30 (AP) China's manufacturing activity weakened in April as the coronavirus pandemic clobbered global consumer demand, hampering Beijing's efforts to revive the world's second-largest economy, two surveys showed on Thursday.

China became the first major economy to reopen factories in March after the ruling Communist Party declared victory over the outbreak. But the United States, Europe and other major markets have yet to lift controls that are keeping consumers from spending.

A monthly purchasing managers' index issued by business magazine Caixin slipped to 49.4 from March's 50.1 on a 100-point scale on which scores below 50 indicate activity is contracting. A separate survey by the Chinese statistics bureau and an official industry group sank to

50.8 from the previous month's 52.

The official survey's sub-index for export orders plunged by 12.9 points to 33.5.

Both surveys showed employment weakening. It is still too early to conclude that the Chinese economy is growing again, said Iris Pang of ING in a report.

Manufacturing activity contracted at its fastest pace on record in February after Beijing shut down much of the economy to fight the virus, which emerged in December in central China.

Activity rebounded in March but forecasters warn manufacturers might face a second dip due to a possible second wave of the outbreak, plunging global economic growth and a financial shock due to falling oil prices.

There is still a lot of uncertainty in the coming months from weak global demand, said Pang.

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Many Japanese defy appeals to stay home to curb virus

TOKYO, APR 30

(AP): Under Japan's coronavirus state of emergency, people have been asked to stay home. Many are not. Some still have to commute to their jobs despite risks of infection, while others continue to dine out, picnic in parks and crowd into grocery stores with scant regard for social distancing.

On Wednesday, the first day of the Golden Week holidays that run through May 5, Tokyo's leafy Shiba Park was packed with families with small children, day camping in tents.

The lure of heading out for Golden Week holidays is testing the public's will to unite against a common enemy as health workers warn rising coronavirus cases are overwhelming the medical system in some places. Experts say a sense of urgency is missing, thanks to mixed messaging from the government and a lack of incentives to stay home.

In distant, tropical Okinawa, locals have resorted to posting social media appeals to tourists not to visit, to protect our grannies and grandpas. Please cancel your trip to Okinawa and wait until we can welcome you, Okinawa's governor Denny Tamaki tweeted.

Unfortunately Okinawa can provide no hospitality and our medical systems, including on remote islands, are in a state of emergency. In this country driven by conformity and consensus, the pandemic is pitting

those willing to follow the rules against a sizable minority who are resisting the calls to stay home.

To get better compliance, the government needs stronger messaging, said Naoya Sekiya, a University of Tokyo professor and expert of social psychology and risk communications.

A tougher lockdown would also help.

While the halfhearted adherence to the calls to stay home has dismayed Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike, none of those spurning the advice are breaking the law. Legally, the state of emergency can only involve requests for compliance. Violators face no penalties. There are few incentives to close shops.

The main message has been economy first, safety second: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has insisted Japan will not adopt European-style hard lockdowns that would paralyze the economy. His economy minister heads the government's coronavirus task force meetings.

The message coming from the government is rather mild, apparently trying to convey the need to stay home while prioritizing the economy, Sekiya said. Since people lack a shared sense of crisis, instead of staying home they're hoping for the best and assuming they won't get infected, he said.

Three-quarters of people responding to a recent survey by the

Asahi newspaper said they are going out less than usual. But just over half felt they could comply with Abe's call to reduce their social interactions by 80%.

People of all ages are shrugging off the stay-at-home request. The popular scramble intersection in downtown Tokyo's Shibuya looked uncrowded, but eateries and pubs on backstreets were still busy. In the western suburb of Kichijoji, narrow shopping streets were jammed during the weekend with families strolling and heading to lunch.

Pachinko pinball parlors have drawn ire for staying open despite name-and-shame announcements and other pressure to close. Bars and restaurants are ignoring a requested 8 p.m. closing time.

It's ridiculous," said an 80-year-old man drinking Wednesday at a downtown bar. What am I supposed to do at home? I'd only be watching TV."

Officials are trying to fight back. In Kichijoji, they patrolled shopping arcades carrying banners saying Please, do not go out. Local mayors appealed to the government to close the crowded Shonan beach, popular with surfers and families, south of Tokyo. Some prefectures have set up border checkpoints to spot non-local license plates.

It seems not everyone shares the sense of crisis, said

Kazunobu Nishikawa, a disaster prevention official in Musashino city, which oversees Kichijoji.

Many people understand the risks of this infectious disease, he said, but others seem to think COVID-19 is nothing more than a common cold and don't care as long as they don't catch it.

Abe declared the state of emergency on April 7, as virus cases surged. It initially covered only Tokyo and six other areas but later expanded to include the whole country.

Abe did not ask non-essential businesses to close. But Koike, the Tokyo governor, fought and prevailed in requesting that schools, movie theaters, athletic clubs, hostess bars and other such businesses in the city be asked to close.

Most restaurants and pubs still can operate from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., and grocery and convenience stores and public transport remain open as usual.

The government has rolled out an unprecedentedly huge economic package of 108 trillion yen (1 trillion) that included loans for small businesses and other coronavirus measures. Responding to criticism he was neglecting individuals and families in dire need of cash to survive, Abe belatedly announced cash payouts of 100,000 yen each to all residents of Japan.

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HOPPING HEIDI! Actress, Heidi Pratt jumped rope near her home in Los Angeles during the coronavirus pandemic.

Sounds Like Kristin Cavallari And Jay Cutler's Divorce Might Be More Troubled Than Originally Stated

Now, on the heels of the latest divorce proceedings, there are allegations that the circumstances which led to the divorce are more troubled than what was originally stated. In Touch reported that while the situation was presented as two people merely growing apart, a source has said that there are some other factors which led to this split.

"They say they're splitting on good terms now, but trust me, it's not going to last. There's some dirt and drama there that we don't know about it yet, but it will eventually come out."

As far as what dirt and drama there may be can only be speculated on, as the source did not divulge details. It was reported that Kristen Cavallari noted that Cutler was guilty of "Inappropriate Marital Conduct" in their divorce filings, which could be an indicator of the drama

that has yet to come to light. Others have pointed out that Tennessee (where the couple live) is a "fault" state, which means a reason must be filed for a couple to be able to apply for divorce, and that the reason listed in the filing could just be a formality.

Very Cavallari viewers are aware the couple were plagued with marital issues when rumors surfaced that Jay Cutler had an affair with Kristin Cavallari's friend Kelly Henderson. All parties involved denied those allegations at the time, but, obviously, the recent situation has led some fans to call everything previously reported about the couple's drama into question. It's worth noting that the same insider who implied there's more to the split than the public knows added that Cavallari is determined not to let the divorce affect her overall brand.

A determination like that would convince most

couples to keep messy situations out of the public limelight, not to mention that most people wouldn't like seeing their dirty laundry aired out for tabloids. It's completely understandable that Kristin Cavallari and Jay Cutler wouldn't want intimate details of what led to their failed marriage out in the universe, but those details may come to light in the coming weeks as the two push for primary custody of their children.

Amidst all of this, there have been no announcements on whether or not Very Cavallari Season 4 will happen. One would think the series wouldn't be hard to pick back up without Jay Cutler, or even a version that follows both as they lead their separate lives. Reality couples have not let divorce come in the way of their shows in the past, so fans shouldn't assume the show's cancellation is a foregone conclusion.

Disney Rumored to Be Looking at Jon Favreau and the Russo Brothers for Live-Action Hercules Remake



Disney is rumored to be looking at Jon Favreau and the Russo Brothers for a live-action Hercules remake. It would only make sense that the company would continue to adapt live-action versions of their animated classics and that's what The Disinsider is reporting. Their piece mentions the rumors that the mouse could bring in Favreau or the Russos to steer the live-action version of the 1997 favorite. Jefferey Silver and Karen Gilchrist who worked on The Lion King are on-board to produce. This live-action remake will be headed to theaters unlike the Disney+ original version of Lady and the Tramp that launched last year. The studio also has Robin Hood and Lilo & Stitch in pre-production.

The move to bring in these directors would make a ton of sense for Disney as Favreau already helmed both The

Lion King and The Jungle Book for the company. Over on the other side, The Russo Brothers have only been behind the camera for some of the most beloved entries in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. One of those being a little film called Avengers: Endgame, which now stands as the highest-grossing movie of all time. Either choice would be fascinating to watch unfold and lots of fans are already hoping the rumors are true on social media.

Hercules also came up last week as pop diva Ariana Grande seemed to be lobbying for the part of Megara in the film on social media. She's got quite the voice, so that would take care of that pretty handily. It is basically an added bonus that her fanbase was 110% behind the idea. That long ponytail isn't going to wear itself, you know?

You can find the official description for Hercules below.

"Taken from the gods as a newborn and adopted on earth, Hercules is just an awkward pillar of strength trying to fit in. What he wants most is to impress his father Zeus. When Hercules discovers Hades' sinister plot to take over Mount Olympus, he goes from zero to hero and, with the help of his pals Pegasus and Phil, discovers that real strength comes from the heart! With the voices of Tate Donovan, Danny DeVito, James Woods, Susan Egan, Bobcat Goldthwait, Charlton Heston, Rip Torn and Samantha Eggar. Music by Alan Menken. Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker (The Little Mermaid, Aladdin)."

Who would you like to play the main role in the live-action version of Hercules? Let us know down in the comments!

Top actor and Bollywood scion Rishi Kapoor dies of leukemia

NEW DELHI (AP) — Top Indian actor Rishi Kapoor, a scion of Bollywood's most famous Kapoor family, has died. He was 67 and had leukemia.

India's Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan tweeted on Thursday "Rishi Kapoor gone....Just passed away... I am destroyed."

Kapoor was hospitalized in Mumbai on Wednesday and died on Thursday, according to a family statement.

He returned to India last September after undergoing treatment in the United States for almost a year. He was hospitalized twice in February.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Kapoor was a powerhouse of talent. "I will always recall our interactions, even on social media. He was passionate about films and India's progress."

His father Raj Kapoor and grandfather Prithviraj Kapoor were doyens of Bollywood, the vast Hindi-language film industry based in the western coastal city of Mumbai.

He received the National Film Award for his debut role as a child artist in his father's 1970 film "Mera Naam Joker."

He acted in more than 90 films.

His wife, Nitu Singh, co-starred in several of his films. His son Ranbir Kapoor is a current top Bollywood actor.

He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter. Rahul Gandhi, a Congress party leader, said this was a terrible week for Indian cinema as another top actor Irrfan Khan died on Wednesday, also of cancer. He said Kapoor had a huge fan following across generations.

Film star Priyanka Chopra said Kapoor's death was the end of an era. "#Rishisir your candid heart and immeasurable talent will never be encountered again."



Kapoor's popular hits included "Laila Majnu," a story of legendary Indian lovers, "Debt," "Moonlight," "Sometimes," "Sea" and "Lightning." In 1999, he directed "Let's Go Back."

He switched to supporting roles in the 2000s and popular movies included "Namaste London" and "Love Aj Kal" or "Love Today and Tomorrow." He acted until recently and his last movie "The Body" was released in 2019.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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ARIES:

The astral energy is encouraging you to open up more to your world, culture, and ways of thinking, Aries. You don't have to go off alone in the desert to reinvent everything. For you, this would be the easy way out, because it would allow you to hide! Develop your curiosity about what exists in this society. Your opinion will carry weight later on.

TAURUS:

How focused you are, Taurus! You're so calm and collected. Of course, the mood is especially hospitable to sobriety, cooperation, and hard work. The horizon is clear, and you have all the information you require to navigate the seas of life. All you need is a little more faith and courage. You've got this!

GEMINI:

Today, Gemini, you can at last express the secrets that have been troubling you. You may have previously been seething with anger inside and afraid to let it show for fear of permanently damaging a relationship. Now that you've cooled off, you may be in a position to better express yourself to this person without harming

your connection. Or you may be nursing a massive case of "the feels" for some lucky special someone. Much emotion and intention can be lost in translation via text, so if you feel the time is right to express your feelings to someone important, consider booking a video-chat or even a good old fashioned phone call.

CANCER:

Your mind is in great turmoil right now, Cancer, so it isn't surprising that you can't pay much attention to anything. Due to recent events, it's entirely possible that your concept of the world has been inexorably changed and you see your love life and career with new eyes. Even so, you feel compelled to pick up the pieces of the past and save them. Figure out what is salvageable and what is best left behind.

LEO:

The day will be fairly quiet for you, Leo. You're likely to yoke yourself to a task and continue working on it until evening. If someone tries to entice you into procrastination or distraction, you'll brush them off as easily as a mosquito buzzing in your ear. This is one day when you should follow your instincts, keep

your head down, and focus on the task at hand.

VIRGO:

You should use the day to ponder your professional future, Virgo. Many forces seem to be working together to clarify your ideas on the subject. Rather than rebelling at the slightest provocation, as you've been known to do in the past, refocusing your energy to concentrate on the basic material needs of you and your family will be a much more productive use of your time.

LIBRA:

Today is no time for dreaming, Libra! Quite the contrary. You can expect to have to settle several minor technical problems involving communications or transmissions. On the whole, it will be a somewhat trying day, but at least your mind will be occupied, leaving no room for the difficult internal questions that have been bothering you so much lately. Your mind will enjoy being engaged with practical tasks it can solve, instead of fretting over a future it cannot predict but tries so desperately to.

SCORPIO:

Are you getting hit with obstacles, Scorpio? Could it be that you simply need to factor in more time to complete the monumental tasks you take on? This might be difficult for you to tolerate. You don't know how to deal with times like these when you must continue doing the same thing over and over until you get results. There's a lesson here for you. It can't Remember that patience is a virtue.**SAGITTARIUS:** Are you having some problems with authority, Sagittarius? Are you having a hard time making yourself understood? If so, have you thought about explaining your projects in detail to the people that you hope will follow you in your adventure? You can't expect others to follow you blindly. They, too, have their lives to live, as well as their own objectives and priorities to tend to.

CAPRICORN:

Yes, Capricorn, your projects have taken some time to get set up. This is because you haven't been concentrating hard enough. You are doing several things at once, with the result that things have been

moving more slowly than you expected. Your change in orientation requires you to focus your energy in a single direction. However, the question remains - what direction?

AQUARIUS:

You don't have to create everything alone, Aquarius. Life isn't a one-person show. To live life fully, you must participate, help others, and when needed, ask for their help in return. That's what being part of a team, and indeed, being a human being is all about. There are things about ourselves we can only learn when interacting with others.

PISCES:

When we think we have found our path, we naturally want to start to walk down it, Pisces. Don't be afraid if you haven't fully mastered your craft yet, or aren't a top expert in your field. Mastery and expertise come with taking things one step and one day at a time. Stay your course! If you keep your head down and keep working, instead of constantly looking at your far off destination, you will be surprised at how far you get. Desire is what creates aptitude, not the reverse.