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SummitTIMES

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Taxis on, private vehicles off!



CHANGES CONTINUE IN RELAXATION RULES

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 MAY:**

A day after allowing private vehicles to ply in the third phase of the lockdown, the State Government today issued fresh guidelines prohibiting the movement of private vehicles from 06 May onwards and allowing taxis starting 05 May, Tuesday. As things stand, private vehicles were allowed back only for two days.

With offices and shops reopening, the relaxation for taxis is being welcomed even as social-media was abuzz with confusion when word arrived that private vehicles were being disallowed.

The government explana-

tion of not allowing private vehicles [which were to follow a complicated schedule anyways] since taxis were now available, while it may address the problem of congestion, does not explain how it helps combat the [nonexistent] COVID-19 situation in Sikkim.

Those who own vehicles complain that the latest regulation forces a less safe mode of travel on them. And they have a point. That said, this is what the latest rules on vehicular travel look like:

TAXI MOVEMENT

In an order issued late Monday evening, the State Government announced its decision to allow taxis to ply in the state from 06 May. The order states that taxis bearing registration number ending with odd digit will ply on Monday, Wednesday and Friday while those ending with even digit will ply on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. No

taxis will ply on Sunday.

As per this rule, on Tuesday, all even numbered taxis can return to the roads.

Further, only 3 passengers will be allowed to travel in a

local taxi [vans and cars] at a time with one passenger in the front seat and two at the back.

In contract carriages and luxury vehicles, five passengers can travel at a time with

one in the front seat and two each in the back rows.

No passes will be required for commuters and taxis for movement within the district. All passengers and drivers

will have to wear masks and strictly follow social distancing. Taxis should ensure that hand sanitizers are available in the vehicle.

Taxi syndicates, agents and taxi stands will not be allowed to operate.

In terms of inter-district movement of taxis, if passengers have passes issued by the DM/ADM/SDM the taxi will be allowed to ply from one district to another provided the return journey is made on the same day or on the day when movement is allowed as per odd-even rule. The taxi does not need passes if the passengers have passes.

PRIVATE VEHICLES

On the other hand, the state government has decided to prohibit the movement of private vehicles "in view of availability of taxis".

All orders/Notifications/permissions/passes issued in this

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Nagaland in green zone: Chief Secretary

Kohima, May 4 (PTI): Nagaland Chief Secretary Temjen Toy on Monday said the whole state was in the green zone and as per revised guidelines taxis and auto-rickshaws are allowed to ply.

Taxis and auto-rickshaws have been permitted to ply with the condition that they carry not more than two and one passengers respectively, while both the driver and passengers should wear masks, he told reporters here.

The whole state of Nagaland falls under green zone as per the criteria laid down by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, he said, adding there will not be quarantining of persons entering a district or town or village from within anywhere in Nagaland.

Nagaland has so far not reported any COVID-19 case.

The consolidated revised guidelines for the lockdown has allowed inter-district movement of stranded persons in distress, but in a regulated manner for a specific period for which separate guidelines will be issued soon, he said.

The guidelines, however, said that inter-district movement of commercial passenger vehicles shall remain barred except vehicles carrying essential goods.

The chief secretary said that as a matter of abundant caution, sealing of inter-state borders will continue in toto in the 14 border administrative sub-divisions and subordinate administrative circles spread over seven districts of the state.

On the issue of bringing back people of Nagaland stranded in other

parts of the country, Toy said nothing has been finalized while the financial support extended to such persons is only a one time grant.

He, however, said that migrant workers willing to go to their respective states will be allowed. He said if the respective states are willing to receive their people, the government will work out measures, including the railways to send them.

The Health and Family Welfare department is already issuing health certificates to hundreds of migrant workers wanting to leave the state, he said.

On the reports of villages restricting entry of their people coming from other districts, Toy affirmed that action would be initiated against any such defaulters.

On the COVID-19 cess on petroleum products, he said it has named proving the extent of transparency the government is maintaining.

"We could have named it any other tax but we have intentionally called it COVID-19 cess because it will be specifically used in the fight against the virus," he said, adding that it will be discontinued once the pandemic is defeated.

He, said that despite appeals from various civil society organizations and political parties, besides the criticisms in the social media groups, there will be no rollback of the COVID-19 cess.

"If the people don't want COVID-19 cess on petroleum products, we can still give it other name and continue to impose it. It is the prerogative of the government to impose cess and there will be no rollback," said Toy.

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CM recommends return of taxis at STF meeting

GANGTOK, 04 MAY [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] chaired a meeting of the State Task Force at Samman Bhawan today.

The meeting had the presence of Health Minister Dr MK Sharma, Chief Secretary, DGP and members of the State Task Force.

The Chief Minister was briefed about the latest situation and the level of preparedness of the State Government to facilitate the return of stranded Sikkimese as well as the compliance of lock-down guidelines by people throughout the State.

The Chief Minister enquired about the number of registrations received on the online portal and the tentative number of people planning to return. He directed that all quarantine centres should be ade-



quately equipped with all necessary facilities.

Further, the Chief Minister called for a slight modification in the norms for movement of vehicles within the State. He suggested that taxi vehicles should be allowed to ply with odd-even formula and all permissions for private vehicles be cancelled for the time being.

He suggested that the movement of these taxi

vehicles be strictly restricted to the respective districts.

In case of any emergency and need for inter-district travel, special permit/pass can be sought by the individual.

Taxis bearing registration number ending with odd digit will be allowed to ply on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays while taxis with even numbered last digits will be allowed to ply

on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Taxi vehicles will not be allowed to ply on Sunday.

The odd-even formula will be implemented from 06 May, 2020.

The Chief Minister said that this decision has been taken to mitigate the economic hardships being faced by taxi drivers throughout the State during the lockdown period.

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Maskless outing to attract Rs 300 penalty

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 MAY:**

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Gupta today informed that the State Government was in the process of issuing orders which will make the wearing of facemasks compulsory in public and violations will attract a fine of Rs 300.

The CS has also directed Superintendents of Polices in the district to ensure that social distancing norms are followed in all shops and market places and all prescribed regulations are followed.

He also directed all DMs not to increase the number of Siliguri-bound trucks without consulting the Transport Secretary.

'I can't get motivated': the students struggling with online learning

RACHEL HALL & DAVID BATTY

LONDON, 04 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]: Loretta Charles-Cregan, an 18-year-old A-level student, considers herself lucky because her school gave her a laptop to help her do her GCSEs when she was made temporarily homeless after her house flooded. "It's the only reason I can do my work now," she says. "It was a blessing in disguise."

Many students from low-income families like Charles-Cregan's lack the basic technology they need to study online, including access to a laptop and a reliable broadband connection, along with a quiet place in which to work and complete assessments. But as universities rapidly gear up to deliver their courses online in September if social distancing measures continue, some students are worried about how they will cope.

The prospect is already influencing Charles-Cregan's decision-making. While she still plans to attend university in September, the coronavirus crisis has made her consider choosing her offer at a London university to stay closer to her home in Ilford. But this wouldn't solve the prob-

lem of how to actually do her work.

"It's made me a bit more anxious," she says. "We have the cheapest WiFi, it drops all the time. When I was doing A-levels I went to the library instead, but you can't do that now. And there's a lot of us in one house, my family's quite big, so it's not somewhere I can get motivated for work."

Social mobility experts are warning that the shift to online learning could severely hold back some students, including those from poorer backgrounds, care leavers, students with caring responsibilities and those with disabilities. A National Union of Students survey suggested that one fifth of students struggle with access, while over half of students who rely on assistive technology felt they lacked the support needed to continue learning.

The NUS is now pressuring universities to better accommodate struggling students through a national approach to exams and assessment. "The most impacted are already the most disadvantaged. This makes no sense when there are solutions available to help them and all students," says

Claire Sosienski-Smith, NUS vice-president for higher education.

"We've got to be really careful that digital provision doesn't compound the inequalities we already see in the educational system," agrees Anne-Marie Canning, chief executive of social mobility charity The Brilliant Club.

One solution, Canning says, would be for universities should redirect general bursaries aimed at low income students towards kitting them out with the devices they need for online learning.

Some universities are already starting to do this: York has set up a philanthropic fund to support students with online learning, Coventry is exploring making courses accessible by mobile phone, and one other university plans to provide all its disadvantaged students with WiFi dongles.

But Emma Hardy, the shadow universities minister, says that these hardship loans can be difficult for students to access. "They're limited, bureaucratic and very difficult to get paid out," she says.

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PRIVATE VEHICLES ALLOWED TO PLY TODAY,

TUESDAY 05 MAY

Vehicles with registration numbers ending in 2 and 3 can travel without travel passes.

**The above limitation does not apply to vehicles which are already exempted or have passes.*

Inter-state travel allowed only for 'distressed' people, Centre clarifies to states

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 MAY:**

The series of notifications and clarifications and course-corrections continued today with the Union Home Secretary writing to Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories explaining that relaxations for inter-state movement were only meant for those "distressed persons" stranded at different places amid the nationwide lockdown.

PRS Legislative Research, an organization which tracks the functioning of the Indian Parliament and records major notifications of the Central Government, has listed 594 "major notifications" related to COVID-19 in the past month and a half.

The latest letter explains that the MHA notifications dated 29 April and 01 May which extended these relaxations "are meant to facilitate movement of such stranded persons, who had moved from their native places/ workplaces, just before the lockdown period, but could not return... on account of restrictions placed on movement of persons and vehicles as part of lockdown measures."

"The facilitation envisaged in the aforesaid orders is meant for such distressed persons, but does not extend to those categories of persons, who are otherwise residing normally at places, other than the native places for purposes of work etc., and who wish to visit their native places in normal course."

The "service" is clearly not open for everyone, although how these differences are established are anyone's guess.

The lockdown, imposed first on 24 March, was to end on 03 May and was then extended by another two weeks till 17 May.

On Friday, the Centre started operating special trains, after first deciding that only road travel will be allowed, to move migrant workers, pilgrims and students stranded in various states.

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Chujachen Sports Academy provides relief to frontline workers

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 MAY:

Chujachen Sports Academy (CSA) has been serving around 120 plates of lunch and snacks daily to frontline workers fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic since 10 April, a press release informs.

General secretary of CSA, Biren Gurung informed that every member of CSA reaches food to Rongli PHC, Rongli Police Station, SDM, Food & Civil Supplies Department, Central Bank of India, SISCO and State Bank of Sikkim.

They also provide food to daily wage labourers and vegetable vendors, reads the press release. Chujachen Sports Academy was formed in 2014 and has been providing platform for young and budding players in different sporting fields.

ADC West inspects quarantine centres at Mangalbaria



GYALSHING, 04 MAY (IPR): ADC West, Tushar G. Nikhare, visited the Quarantine Centers at Mangalbaria Block along with Roshan Gurung, SDPO (Soreng); Robin Dong, BDO (Mangalbaria) and other Line officials.

Mr Nikhare visited the Livelihood School building at Mangalbaria where he along with the concerned officials inspected the infrastructure in detail and took stock of the situation at present. He also visited the Ashram Residential School building at Jushingthang GPU and meet with the public who were expressing concerns over the building being used as a Quarantine Facility.

He along with MO Mangalbaria PHC spoke with the public and

cleared their doubts regarding the COVID19 in regards to their questions on the transmission of the virus, the precautions needed by the public, the possibility of the people escaping the quarantine facility, their concerns regarding the garbage disposal amongst many others were answered by the ADC West and MO Mangalbaria PHC.

He also assured that every necessary measures regarding the safety of the public would be taken care of by the West District Administration and sought their cooperation during this time of need.

ADC West also visited the Kyongsa Girls Senior Secondary School and the OBC Hostel which are designated as Quarantine facilities.

Taxis on...

regard shall cease to be operative with effect from 06 am of 06 May 2020, the order reads.

However, private vehicles will be allowed to play in cases of exigencies, medical emergencies, etc on the basis of single day pass issued by DM, ADM or SDM.

GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

Movement of government vehicles of officers working in the Departmental Headquarters will be allowed only with passes issued by the Home Department, the order states. Movement of District/Field level officers will be permitted only on the basis of passes issued by the DMs.

The order also mentions that passes issued by the Health Department, Sikkim Police and Forest Department will continue to remain valid.

Inter-state...

On 29 April, the Ministry of Home Affairs asked state governments to appoint nodal authorities to register such stranded persons and facilitate their movement. With businesses upended and establishments shut down, vast numbers of daily wage labourers, many of whom lived where they worked, were suddenly left without any means of sustenance and shelter in large cities after the lockdown was first announced last month.

CM recommends...

The Chief Secretary briefed about arrangements being made by the State Government for return of labourers stranded in Sikkim to their respective home states.

The Chief Minister expressed satisfaction at the level of preparedness and called for utmost vigilance to ensure safe travel and quarantine of the returnees.

Mock drill at Melli checkpoint to prepare for returning Sikkimese

MELLI, 04 MAY [IPR]: A centre has been set up at Melli to screen stranded Sikkimese returning returning to the State via Melli Check-Post.

A mock drill to prepare better for the arrival of the stranded people was also conducted by DC (South) Ragul K, SP (South) Pravin Gurung, ADC (South) Satyan Pradhan, CMO (South) Dr DC Sharma and other officials at the Centre today.

Buses from Sikkim Nationalised Transport will be used to ferry people from Siliguri to Sikkim. The installation of Aarogya Setu Mobile application has been made mandatory to complete the registration process at the Centre.

Those returning to Sikkim will have to go through a medical



screening which includes thermal screening, medical assessment, and share their travel history and other related information.

After the assessment by the medical team, they will either be sent for home or facility quarantine. Those returning from red zones will automatically be sent to institutional quarantine.

For home quarantine, ASHA and Aaganwadi workers, health workers and medical officials will

be ensuring strict medical protocols supported by the concerned MLAs and ward panchayats.

There are a total of seven quarantine centers in South District out of which four are free facilities. The paid centres are Cherry Resort in Temi, Yatri Niwas and Hotel Pangolin in Namchi.

The free of cost quarantine centers are at SIRD and SICB at Karfector, IHCAE Chemchey and CCCT Chisopani.

'The biggest shock was fresh air': Italy begins cautious exit from virus lockdown

ANGELA GIUFFRIDA

ORVIETO, 04 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]:

There were feelings of relief and trepidation as people in Italy returned to the streets after almost two months indoors under a strict lockdown.

"I literally haven't been out of the house," said Rina Sondhi, who lives in the Umbrian town of Orvieto. "The biggest shock for me was the fresh air. Today I feel liberated, but with caution – that's the important thing, we can have the freedom but we must be really careful."

An estimated 4 million people returned to work on Monday as part of what the Italian government called the second phase of the country's coronavirus emergency, with the prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, appealing to the public in a Facebook post on Sunday night to "act responsibly".

Trenord, the company that manages train services in Lombardy, Italy's industrial hub and the region worst affected by the outbreak, said the commuter flow in the morning rush hour was about 30% of pre-outbreak levels.

The easing of restrictions is gradual, with factories geared towards exports and construction sites allowed to resume activity immediately. Bars and restaurants can offer takeaway services but will not fully reopen until 1 June. Retailers, museums and libraries will open from 18 May, hairdressers and gyms from 1 June and schools from September.

Usually buzzing with activity in the morning, people wearing face masks queued outside bars in Orvieto as they waited for their espresso. "This is a great step even if we have to remain

cautious – it gives you something else to smile about," said Slavik Cebanu.

Jaskaran Singh, who works in Caffè Barrique, said: "We are happy to be able to open even if things are still restricted, and to see some movement. I just hope everything goes well."

Although the infection rate has been steadily falling, fear of the virus lingers. The vast majority of daily new cases are being registered in the northern regions of Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna and Veneto. No new cases have been recorded in Umbria for the past few days.

"Certainly, the fact that there are zero cases is important for us, but at the same time it doesn't mean we're fully secure as the virus is still there," said Valentina Santanicchio, a chef whose restaurant in Orvieto, Capitano del Popolo, has been providing home deliveries. "In some ways, I'm more afraid than when we closed, as a lot will now depend on people managing the moment in a responsible way."

Maintaining physical distancing will be crucial to ensuring Covid-19, which has claimed almost 29,000 lives in Italy, is kept at bay. People can now visit relatives and partners within their regions and go for a walk or exercise in a park, but most civil liberties remain curtailed. Travelling between regions is still banned, unless it is for a valid reason.

Walter Ricciardi, the scientist advising the health ministry on its coronavirus measures, said the country would go straight back into lockdown if the infection rate rose again. "We're still in a risky phase," he told La Repubblica. "It will take two weeks to see how it's going."

Nagaland in...

He also said that the government is also considering the plight of drug users and also the HIV/AIDS patients needing ARV and other related support.

The chief secretary appealed to the general public to continue to strictly maintain social distancing and wearing of face masks.

The state will open up in a calibrated manner in the days to come, he said, adding that the services that have been relaxed and restricted by the Central government will be implemented in the state.

On the issue of the Dimapur patient,

'I can't get...

Challenges for disadvantaged students extend beyond access to technology. According to research from 2017, these students consistently perform worse through online learning than they do in face-to-face classrooms. "Taking online courses increases their likelihood of dropping out," the authors wrote.

Chris Skidmore, the former universities minister, warns that these students already struggle with feelings of belonging and are already more likely to drop out of university.

"Remote learning must not allow these groups of students to become ever more remote," he says. "We can't afford for care-leavers, estranged pupils, and those from vulnerable and deprived backgrounds to miss out on their potential."

Ian Dunn, deputy vice-chancellor at Coventry, says that his university plans to monitor the extent to which students are participating in their courses to give clues as to their wellbeing.

Martin Weller, professor of educational technology at the Open University, suggests that the mingling that happens naturally on campus can be partly reproduced through incorporating ice-breaker and discussion activities into online curriculums. "There's evidence that students who form social bonds tend to stick with a course and not drop out," he says.

Weller adds that universities need to provide far more structured pastoral care. "That might be problematic for lots of universities that [rely] on precarious staff to provide teaching. Are they going to give them appropriate time and payment for providing a half-hour catch up every week with every student?"

Lucy Gill-Simmen, a lecturer at Royal Holloway University, has offered Zoom catchups to all 70 of her personal tutees to make sure they are coping with the shift to online. "It has a huge impact on my workload," she says.

But she considers it essential to support her students' mental health. She's noticed that some are struggling with the lack of a designated study space and

who tested positive for COVID-19 in Guwahati, Assam on April 12 last and now has been cured, being restricted to return home, Principal Secretary for Health and Family Welfare, Menukhol John said there is no such restrictions and he is free to return.

Principal Secretary (Home), Abhijit Sinha giving details of the overall law and order during the last 40 days of COVID-19 lockdown, said an amount of Rs 1,18,700 has been collected as penalties from 995 people for violating the lockdown norms.

proper equipment. "That demotivates them, they don't feel they're able to get up and get working."

Disabled students are also finding support patchy. Piers Wilkinson, NUS disabled students officer, says that although the Disabled Student Allowance funds laptops, it doesn't cover everything.

"People like myself and others that did computer-based modelling or music and media can't run the fundamental pieces of software that are required by their degree. So they would have to use the specialist IT suites in their department or university library. With those being closed, they've lost access to that."

Wilkinson adds that although disabled students have been asking universities to roll out lecture capture for years, many have been slow to do this, and staff have not been trained on how to make video content accessible and inclusive.

Deaf students in particular find it difficult to lip-read on screens and understand seminars in which multiple people are speaking, and report that many universities do not yet supply subtitles or a British sign language interpreter. Autistic students say they are struggling with the anxiety caused by new systems.

One student from Kingston University, who has dyslexia and dyspraxia, says she is struggling to cope. "I have challenges with coordinating and I find using the online portals unfriendly. It takes me a long time to work it out, and this is not factored in when sessions start," she says. "I'm finding the entire ordeal very stressful and I have emailed lecturers, but I've received no reply."

A Kingston University spokesperson said: "Students are able to access learning materials through the university's easily accessible virtual learning environment, Canvas, which is functioning as normal, and we are making additional adjustment for students with statement of special needs, including making available assistive technology and human support during the assessment period."

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Allow taxis to ply, urges SPCC

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 MAY:**

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee has urged the State government to allow taxis to ply in the state since taxi owners and drivers have been severely affected by the lockdown. On the same, SPCC has urged the State government to work towards providing relief to owners and drivers of taxis in the State.

It may be mentioned that later in the evening the State Government issued fresh guidelines allowing taxis to ply from 06 May.

SPCC had said in the press release that like the relaxation given to private vehicles to ply, taxis should also be allowed to ply using the odd-even rule in order to provide relief to taxi drivers.

The party said that the one and a half month of lockdown has meant that the taxi owners and drivers have not been able to earn anything causing huge problems for those who have taken loans from banks.

SPCC has also welcomed the relief provided by the government in this third phase of the lockdown and further placed some suggestions.

There is fear among the people of Sikkim regarding the option for home quarantine to people coming from outside and the government should take this sensitive issue seriously by ensuring strict compliance of social distancing in their house during home quarantine, the party has suggested.

Governor hands face masks & sanitizers to PCS



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 MAY:**

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad handed over a consignment of face

mask and sanitisers to the general secretary and treasurer of Press Club of Sikkim, a Raj Bhavan press release informs.

The materials are meant for frontline press reporters who have been performing their duties diligently from various interiors of the

State alongside the frontline warriors in the State's fight against COVID 19.

"It is a small gesture on our part to acknowledge and express gratitude to the fourth pillar of democracy for its role and contribution during this hour of global crisis and a token of gratitude to entire press fraternity of the State on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day which falls on 03 May every year," said Governor.

Governor performed Hawan at Raj Bhavan seeking peace, harmony and well being of all on 03 May, 2020.

CM takes stock of COVID-preparedness at STNM Hospital

GANGTOK, 04 MAY [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] took stock of preparedness of the medical team for COVID-19 at STNM Hospital, Sochyangang, today. He was accompanied by Health Minister Dr MK Sharma.

During his visit, Principal Secretary [Health] briefed the CM about the plans and gave a tour of the facilities which have been specifically created for COVID-19 patients. The 8th and the 9th floor of the hospital are dedicated for COVID-19 cases with isolation wards for asymptomatic cases and the 8th floor for positive cases with ICUs and



separate entry points to these wards.

It was also informed that the nurses and staff are regularly trained to prepare them for any possibility of positive cases in the state.

Further, the hospital administration was strictly directed to step up efforts to maintain

cleanliness and hygiene in the complex at par with private hospitals.

The Chief Minister also interacted with the doctors and the staff of the hospital and requested them to continue with their efforts and dedication and assured that the government will provide all necessary help.

SU PhD scholar to donate body for COVID-19 drug and vaccine testing

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 APR:**

PhD Scholar from the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies and the Management of Sikkim University, Hemant Kumar Yadav is ready to donate his body with six other National Youth Awardees of Uttar Pradesh for COVID-19 drug and vaccine testing.

BJP MLA from Uttar Pradesh, Ram Naresh Rawat had tweeted on 03 May announcing the names of seven National Youth Award winners willing to donate their body for COVID-19 medicine and vaccine trials.

The list includes Hemant Kumar Yadav



from Varanasi. Hemant has two brothers, one of whom is serving as a constable in the Uttar Pradesh Police. Hemant's father had worked in Banaras Hindu University.

Hemant is a recipient of the National Youth

Award from the Government of India and Indira Gandhi NSS Award along with several awards from national and international agencies.

"Our doctors and scientists are constantly working to fight the novel coronavirus. In such a situation, it is our duty to cooperate with them. We cannot fight at the border for the country. But we can give our body to the coronavirus medicine and vaccine test. We want to give our body. The Government of India has given us the National Youth Award, so that we should always be ready for the country and society," said Hemant.



Public addressed on lockdown relaxations

SINGTAM, 04 MAY: SI Laxman Gajmer of Singtam Police Station along with his colleague making public announcements at Singtam Ba-

zaar regarding the conditional relaxations to the lockdown which came into effect today. [from YOGEN THATAL]

Except a hiccup in Namchi, shops reopen and shoppers return in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 MAY:**

The first day of phase-3 of the ongoing Lockdown began with several relaxations which included the opening of shops and saw a rush of people arriving at popular stores which have remained closed for 41 days now.

While the easing into some sense of normalcy was smooth at all places, Namchi saw some confusion when police personnel went around town

directing shops to shut down claiming that they had received no official communication directing that shops could reopen.

South Sikkim Police, it appears, was informed only about relaxations allowed for movement of private vehicles.

After much confusion, the required orders were reached to the police and shops were allowed to be open again.

Needless to add, the markets were crowded and this brought the cops back

on patrolling duty with even the SP [South] making the rounds, reminding shopkeepers of the need to ensure social distancing.

The cops also directed that people venturing out without masks be fined Rs 300 for the violation.

As things stand, bars, restaurants, hotels, shopping complexes and big showrooms are not allowed to open for business yet.

Shops can remain open only from 10AM to 04PM.

'Kathiri' sets in, scorching days in store in TN

CHENNAI APR 4 (PTI):

The harsh 'kathiri' period of summer set in over Tamil Nadu on Monday with the city and the rest of the state bracing for hot days as the Met office forecast mercury levels to be over 40 degrees Celsius next week.

Also known as 'agni nakshathiram', the over three-week long hottest period of the summer season, is expected to last till May 29.

The maximum temperature is likely to be in the range of 40 degrees C at isolated pockets in Dharmapuri, Salem, Karur, Tiruchirappalli and Madurai districts during the period, according to a forecast by the India Meteorological Centre.

On Monday, Karur district recorded the maximum temperature of 40 degrees Celsius, the highest in the state, while Chennai City and Airport recorded 35.3 and 37.2 degrees Celsius respectively.

The IMD has forecast temperatures could touch 40 degree Celsius in the city for a day or two but may generally be around 37 degree C during this month.

However, the state could get a respite if a system which is forming over the Andaman Sea moves towards Tamil Nadu by the end of next week as that is likely to bring widespread rainfall in many areas including this city.

Meanwhile, private weather forecaster S Ramachandran forecast early onset of southwest monsoon (June-September) from the second week of May.

"The temperature will change from second week of this month. Moderate pre-monsoon rainfall is forecast between the second week of May and the first week of June. The best rainfall benefits of southwest monsoon 2020 will be gained between first week of May and second week of August," he said.

He also said 2020 was also likely to become the first year to experience more cyclones in a calendar year.

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Stephenie Meyer announces new Twilight book Midnight Sun

ALISON FLOOD

NEW YORK, 04 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]: Twilight author Stephenie Meyer has announced she will finally publish Midnight Sun, a retelling of her bestselling series from vampire Edward Cullen's perspective, 12 years after she abandoned the manuscript following an online leak.

Meyer, one of the bestselling authors in the world, has been trailing an announcement on her website since last week, with a timer counting down to Monday's announcement. The website immediately crashed when the countdown ended, as her army of fans attempted to find out what was going on, with some speculating that the Volturi, the army of evil vampires from the Twilight saga, were to blame.

"I am very excited to finally, finally announce the release of Midnight Sun on 4 August," Meyer said, in a prerecorded video broadcast on Good Morning America. "It's a crazy time right now and I wasn't sure it was the right time to put this book out, but some of you have been waiting for just so long it

didn't seem right to make you wait any more." Publisher Little, Brown said the book would see Meyer draw "on the classic myth of Hades and Persephone" to revisit human teenager Bella Swan's romance with the vegetarian, sparkly vampire Edward, in "an epic novel about the profound pleasures and devastating consequences of immortal love".

"This unforgettable tale as told through Edward's eyes takes on a new and decidedly dark twist. Meeting beautiful, mysterious Bella is both the most intriguing and unnerving event he has experienced in his long life as a vampire," said the publisher. "As we learn more fascinating details about Edward's past and the complexity of his inner thoughts, we understand why this is the defining struggle of his life. How can he let himself fall in love with Bella when he knows that he is endangering her life?"

When the manuscript of Midnight Sun made its way illegally on to the internet in 2008, Meyer called it "a huge violation of my rights as an author, not to mention

me as a human being". She made a fragment available to read from her website, but put the project on hold indefinitely, saying that "if I tried to write Midnight Sun now, in my current frame of mind, James [a vampire tracking Bella] would probably win and all the Cullens would die, which wouldn't dovetail too well with the original story".

She began Midnight Sun as a writing exercise. "The more I wrote, the more I became convinced that Edward deserved to have his story told," she wrote on her website. "At first I was planning to post it all here on my website, but I changed my mind for two reasons, the most important being that Edward's version is much longer than Bella's - Edward over-thinks everything."

She later said that she would never write about the Twilight universe again, telling Variety in 2013 that she would only do so if it was "three paragraphs on my blog saying which of the characters died ... I get further away [from Twilight] every day. For me, it's not a happy place to be."

State units will work out modalities with rlys, chief secys to pay train fare of migrants: Cong

NEW DELHI, MAY 4 (PTI):


The Congress on Monday termed historic party president Sonia Gandhi's decision asking PCCs to bear the cost of the train fare of migrant workers returning home, and said its state units will work out the modalities of paying the Railways after coordinating with chief secretaries.

Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal said he has already talked to state Congress chiefs and they are working out the modalities to ensure that every worker and migrant stranded reaches home safely.

He said the state PCC in Karnataka has already made a beginning by depositing Rs 1 crore with the state chief secretary and would provide more in case required.

Congress leader Randeep Surjewala added that this was not the time to play politics. The government should wake up from its slumber and come to the aid of migrant workers, he said.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

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

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

Reporting, Not Repeating

Not just rights, we also need more professionalism

The freedom to speak, like any other freedom ends where someone else's space begins; quite like how the right to swing one's arms ends the moment someone's nose comes in the way. When it comes to speech, the volume needs to be turned down when someone else's eardrums begin hurting. Ditto for the freedom of expression enjoyed by newspapers, the right to write enters the domain of solid research and defensible evidence the moment someone's reputation is being inked over. Since one cannot really go ahead and start telling people to shut up or stop writing, a civilized way to handle the situation would be to clarify to those with a weakness for public outpourings that free speech does not come bundled with the right to be believed. For that one has to work much harder on the supporting arguments.

In Sikkim, the public domain which used to earlier be dominated by newspapers is now increasingly occupied by Facebook. The medium is not of significance so long as the information is pucca and provided news and opinion are clearly segregated. But now we are digressing into a journalism class, which is not what this is about. Returning to topic, a press release to publications and Facebook pages starved for news, and a report is guaranteed. No problems thus far, these are after all mediums for sharing information and opinions held by organizations, political parties and individuals. The problem starts when the fourth estate starts presenting news culled from press releases as reportage resulting from independent investigation. Here the reader tends to get misled. News media is expected not to slip in comment into news-reports and when reports start getting editorialized, they start confusing readers. When that happens, we, as newspaper people, end up defeating the very reason we are in business – to provide a clear picture of how events unfolded, opinions were expressed and drama played out. It is not just the readers who end up confused, even journalists, because they become part of the story themselves, lose focus and appropriate 'angles' to foist their individual beliefs, reaching a nadir from where the larger picture is no longer visible.

The demand on newspapers to work harder on their research and legwork is more amplified nowadays than ever before because there are too many voices in the air, too many claims and allegations, too much conscious ignoring of facts... News media because it is essentially in the business of reporting and not just repeating, has been shouldered an enormous workload even if it just reports all sides, and fleshes out all required details. And we are not even talking investigative reporting here, just background research and crosschecking. We also need to recognize that people can connect the dots, and as much as their observation will expose empty rhetoric of politicians and see through disguises and notice the politics, it will also recognize shoddy reporting. Politicians don't care much for such public exposure, but those in the business of news cannot afford such shaming, because their survival depends on accuracy and reliability.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/indecent language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com



Coronavirus: Why testing and contact tracing isn't a simple solution

JIMMY WHITWORTH
theconversation.com

Since mid-March, the World Health Organization has urged countries to scale up the testing, isolation and contact tracing of COVID-19 patients in order to combat the pandemic. The reason for this advice is that if you can find infected cases, isolate and treat them, and trace the close contacts who they might have infected, and isolate them too, then you can keep much of the infection out of the general population.

This stops its spread and slows down the speed of the epidemic. It seems a simple and obvious strategy. It has been used extensively in the past, for example to stop epidemics of smallpox and Ebola. So why hasn't every country done that? Well, it's not as simple as it appears.

The efficiency of contact tracing in any epidemic depends on the characteristics of the infection and the speed and coverage of the tracing process. So when a new disease such as COVID-19 first emerges it's not possible to know exactly how useful testing and tracing will be.

Testing and tracing is most feasible as an effective strategy at the start of an outbreak when there are just a few chains of transmission of the disease. But if this does not keep the epidemic under control, and there is widespread community transmission, there will quickly be many cases and contacts. This is especially the case with a disease such as COVID-19, which is easy to catch, is quickly passed on after an infection sets in, and can infect some

people without producing symptoms.

Many people will be getting infected from unknown cases and a large proportion of the population would need to be isolated. Testing and tracing soon becomes an unmanageable strategy and a lockdown to reduce physical contact then becomes a more efficient and effective means of controlling the epidemic. This achieves the same thing as testing and tracing, by keeping much of the infection out of the general population, but is a blunter instrument as it targets everybody.

As the current pandemic developed, some countries, including South Korea, were able to use testing and tracing to control the disease and avoid mandatory lockdown measures. But more widely, identifying cases of the disease with testing did not keep pace with the geographical spread of infection around the world. So in other countries, such as the UK, case finding and contact tracing capacity became overwhelmed early on and lockdowns were introduced instead.

In hindsight, those countries which persisted with expanded and rigorous testing and tracing programmes, such as Germany, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and New Zealand, have fared better with lower deaths rates than those which did not, such as Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, UK and the USA. This is probably because contact tracing and testing can identify asymptomatic infections and isolate them faster than systems relying on the development of symptoms.

Lockdowns aren't sustainable in the long term because of the social, economic, and physical and mental

health effects. They should reduce the spread of the disease so the number of cases starts falling. But if restrictions are relaxed even cautiously then transmission will go up again.

However, with a testing, tracking and tracing strategy in place as well, it will still be possible to keep the epidemic under control. To make this feasible, the numbers of cases needs to come down to a more manageable number, say a few hundred active cases. This is because of the sheer numbers of cases and contacts involved, each of whom would need quarantining until shown to be uninfected. As examples, the average number of tests required per case was 52 in South Korea, and 64 in Australia.

Building testing and tracing capacity is not easy. To start with there are two main types of test you can perform, one that tells you if someone is currently infected (a PCR test) and another that tells you if someone has had the disease in the past (an antibody test). You need the organisational capacity, the labs, equipment and chemical reagents to be able to conduct these on a massive scale.

Contact tracing also requires significant resources. You need thousands of people to interview patients, identify everyone they may have come into contact with since being infected, and track down these contacts. Many countries are also using or planning to introduce contact tracing apps that track your location or identify contacts using Bluetooth in order to automatically gather this data and inform people if they need to self-isolate.

DIGITAL TRACING

It is generally agreed in public

health circles that these apps are useful as a supplement, but cannot replace manual checking. However, some evidence suggests that COVID-19 spreads too quickly for manual tracing alone, and that an app could help stop the pandemic if 60% of the population downloads it. On the other hand, there are also privacy concerns over how these apps allow governments to track citizens' movements

In South Korea the testing was conducted on a base of well-funded and efficient public services and an effective infrastructure, including widespread digital surveillance. For other countries to emulate this success, much still needs to be done in terms of planning, organisation and logistics.

In the UK there are plans to recruit and train 18,000 tracing staff to reintroduce contact tracing. The government aims to conduct 100,000 tests per day, which is about 0.15% of the population.

For the future, it is likely that some form of physical distancing will be required to prevent future waves of infection until an effective vaccine is widely available. These measures, which may need to be periodically tightened and relaxed, should be supported by testing and tracing to keep the number of new infections under control. This is likely to include the testing and quarantining of all new arrivals in a country, to prevent the infection being reintroduced from abroad.

[the writer is Professor of International Public Health, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine]

Creating New Social Divides: How coronavirus is reshaping how we see ourselves and the world around us

BEN WALKER, REBECCA BEDNAREK, TODD BRIDGMAN & URS DAELLENBACH
theconversation.com

The COVID-19 pandemic is a massive public health and economic crisis, but it is also reshaping how we see ourselves and the social world around us.

As borders have tightened around most countries, we may see further surges in nationalist attitudes and political regimes. And countries' ongoing efforts to limit the spread of infection could mean that people with immunity gain privileged access to things like insurance, work, travel and leisure.

At worst, COVID-19 may carve new (and deepen existing) social divides and inequalities. At best, it could fast-track us to a better world – one where, for instance, workers' pay and employment conditions better reflect their contribution to society.

This makes it imperative that we think critically about the identity changes induced by COVID-19, and consider their social, political and ethical ramifications.

MAPPING OUT IDENTITY

When it comes to defining our identity and figuring out our place in the world, we all draw on groups and categories that our culture and society deems most significant.

In this way, we build an "identity map", which generally evolves slowly in response to gradual shifts in society. But COVID-19 is transforming many parts of our map at pace, while also forcing us to reckon with aspects of our identities that have always been with us.

Debates about locking down versus reopening countries have thrust political identities centre stage, especially in already politically divided nations such as the United States. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has argued that pitting the

economy against saving lives is a "false dichotomy", yet certain commentators continue to do just that.

The crisis has also reawakened us to our national identities. The idea of "global citizenship" has gained popularity in recent decades, but COVID-19 highlights its limits, putting us all in our geopolitical places.

This year's Olympic Games may

as low skill (cleaners, supermarket workers, bus drivers) and subject to poor pay and working conditions, have been recast as heroic.

While the rest of us stay home, essential workers head to their jobs each day knowing they are at higher risk of infection, abuse and even death.

Essential work is both important and perilous, and its emergence as a

political, legal and ethical questions.

How can immunity be proven in a way that mitigates the risk of immunity forgery? Is there not an inherent contradiction in publicly promoting avoidance of the virus (via social distancing) while simultaneously conferring advantages (the ability to work, travel and socialise) on those exposed to it? How might old identities, such as nationality and social



have been postponed, but another competition of national identities is playing out online as countries' coronavirus "curves" are compared in real time.

Tight border restrictions will likely remain for a significant time, making deeper reflection on our national identities inevitable. Considering the identity politics already associated with place and ethnicity, as evident in Brexit and the US election, the effects of COVID-19 bear careful consideration.

CHARTING NEW TERRITORIES

The pandemic is also putting new forms of identity on the map. In New Zealand, after five weeks in lockdown, the notion of "essential work" has become part of everyday language. As a result, workers previously classed

new identity source presents politicians and industry leaders with an opportunity to make long-overdue improvements to pay and working conditions.

Immunity to COVID-19 also looms as a crucial identity issue. Those who develop immunity naturally (through infection and recovery) or attain it through vaccination may end up leading different lifestyles to those who don't.

The idea that a person's immunity status would be part of their identity would have been unthinkable a few months ago, but it is now a real possibility. The World Health Organization has cautioned against the introduction of "immunity passports" on medical grounds, but the idea of immunity-as-identity also raises tricky

class, bear on the distribution of immunity on a global scale?

The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to redraw our maps of identity in unprecedented ways, leading us into unfamiliar social terrain. As it does, it is incumbent on us all to be thoughtful about these changes and alert to their consequences.

[Ben Walker is Lecturer (Management), Te Herenga Waka — Victoria University of Wellington; Rebecca Bednarek is Te Herenga Waka — Victoria University of Wellington; Todd Bridgman is Associate Professor, Te Herenga Waka — Victoria University of Wellington; Urs Daellenbach is Te Herenga Waka — Victoria University of Wellington]

Indian women's hockey team raises Rs 20 lakh to help people affected by COVID-19

BENGALURU, MAY 4 (PTI): The Indian women's hockey team has raised funds to the tune of Rs 20 lakh to help in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Indian team raised the money through an 18-day fitness challenge, which concluded on May 3 and resulted in raising Rs 20, 01,130. The funds have been donated to Delhi-based NGO Uday Foundation.

The funds will be used to provide basic necessities for patients at various locations, migrant workers and slum dwellers. "The response



we have received was really overwhelming. People, especially Indian hockey lovers from across the globe took part in the challenge and contributed to the cause.

"On behalf of the Indian Women Team, I would like to thank everyone who took part in this initiative to help the poor," India skipper Rani Rampal said. The chal-

lenge involved the team members who came up with different fitness tasks that ranged from burpees, lunges, squats to spider-man pushups, pogo hops and more.

Each day a player gave a new challenge and tagged 10 people on their social media handles to take up the challenge and donate Rs 100 to the fundraiser.

Senate set to re-open as virus risk divides Congress Senate

WASHINGTON, MAY 4 (AP): The Senate will gavel in Monday as the coronavirus rages, returning to an uncertain agenda and deepening national debate over how best to confront the deadly pandemic and its economic devastation.

With the House staying away due to the health risks, and the 100 senators convening for the first time since March, the conflicted Congress reflects an uneasy nation. The Washington area remains a virus hot-spot under stay-home rules.

Tops on the Senate agenda is not necessarily the next virus aid package, despite a nationwide jobless rate that's approaching Great Depression-level heights and pleas from the governors for more money.

There's kind of a pause period right now, said White House's Larry Kudlow, director of the national economic counsel, on CNN.

"Let's see how it's doing as we gradually reopen the economy. Senate Republicans are trying to set the terms of debate, frustrated that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was able to fill up earlier aid bills with Democratic priorities. They're reluctant to unleash federal funds beyond the nearly 3 trillion Congress already approved in virus relief.

We are going to need more help, Republican Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland, the chairman of the National Governors Association, said on CNN.

Instead, Senate Republicans are counting on the country's reopening to kick-start the economy as their best hope to limit a new round of big spending on virus aid.

President Donald Trump, on the eve of the Senate's return, held a town hall encouraging Americans to get back to work.

We have to reopen our country, Trump said, even as he revised upward his projection for the total U.S. death total to 80,000 or 90,000.

The COVID-19 crisis has all but closed Congress since late March, a longer absence than during the 1918 Spanish Flu or the 2001 terror attacks.

In making a snap decision to return, Senate Majority Mitch McCon-

nell said the Senate cannot sit on the sidelines. He compared the senators to the essential work force of grocery clerks, truck drivers and others keeping Americans fed during the crisis.

Yet re-opening part of Capitol Hill poses health risks not just for the lawmakers but the cooks, cleaners, police officers and other workers who keep the lights on at the Capitol complex.

Capitol Hill erupted late last week after the attending physician informed top GOP officials the health office did not have the means to perform instant virus tests on returning lawmakers or staff.

Over the weekend, Trump himself offered Congress access to the instant virus test system used to screen visitors to the White House.

But in an extraordinary rebuff, McConnell and Pelosi said in a rare joint statement Saturday that they would respectfully decline the offer and instead direct resources to the front lines where they can do the most good.

Senators will instead return to a partially reopened Capitol Hill with new guidelines, including the recommendation that senators wear masks blue face coverings will be available for free keep their distance and leave most staff at home.

Hand sanitizer is back in stock. But public access will be limited, including at public hearings. The Capitol itself remains closed to visitors and tours.

Democrats complain the risks of reopening the Capitol complex is not worth the noticeably light agenda, which is focused on confirming Trump's judicial and executive nominees rather than the virus pandemic.

With more than 65,000 U.S. deaths due to the virus and 30 million Americans suddenly unemployed, Democratic senators say the focus needs to be singular to ease this crisis and prevent a second wave of infections.

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West Bengal emerging as police state: Governor Dhankhar



KOLKATA, MAY 4 (PTI): West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday slammed Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee "for running a police state" and said her "misplaced" stance about constitutional norms reflects "authoritarianism" which has no place in a democracy.

"West Bengal is, unfortunately, emerging as a

'police state' with anyone posting on social media, to the distaste of the ruling dispensation, gets a police knock at his door," the governor said in a letter to the chief minister.

He said it is time for the chief minister's "tryst with reality" and to get down to provide relief to the people suffering from the coronavirus pandemic. "The bitter truth is -

People in the state only know only too well 'Who in the State is a usurper and extra-Constitutional fountain of power!' Who runs government and syndicates! Who is this ABCD! An open secret! Surely I am not the one, I can assure you that I am reasonably updated about affairs of state," Dhankhar wrote in the letter to Banerjee.

Mushtaq Ahmed advises Chahal to use crease more



BHARAT SHARMA NEW DELHI, MAY 4 (PTI): Yuzvendra Chahal is among the leading leg spinners in world cricket but he can be more effective with better use of the crease, says former Pakistan spinner Mushtaq Ahmed.

Ahmed, who has coached all around the world and is currently a consultant for his native team, said India's ability to take wickets in the middle-overs in the limited overs format through Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav has been a game-changer for them.

Both the wrist-spinners were brought into India's limited overs set-up following the 2017 Champions Trophy. Though, of late, both Chahal and Kuldeep haven't been playing together.

"Chahal is a very good bowler but can use the crease much better. He can go wide of the crease at times. You got to be smart enough to understand pitches. If it is a flat pitch, you can bowl

stump to stump," Ahmed, one of the best leg-spinners Pakistan has produced, told PTI.

"If the ball is gripping, you can go wide of the crease because you can trouble even the best of batsmen with that angle. That way your googly also doesn't turn as much as the batsman expects and you end up taking a wicket."

Chahal has taken 91 wickets in 52 ODIs at 25.83 and 55 wickets in 42 T20s at 24.34. He is not a huge turner of the ball but uses his variations very effectively.

Ahmed also feels the likes of Chahal and Kuldeep have benefitted immensely from former captain M S Dhoni's advice from behind the stumps.

"You have got to be one step ahead of the batsman. You should know your field position as per the batsman's strength. I always say attack with fielders not with the ball. If you understand that theory,

you will always be successful," the 49-year-old, who played 52 Tests and 144 ODIs, said. "India has become a force to reckon with in all three formats as it uses its bowlers really well. Dhoni was a master at getting the best out of his bowlers in limited overs cricket and now you have Virat Kohli."

Ahmed picked Chahal, Australia's Adam Zampa and Pakistan's Shadab Khan among the top leg-spinners in white-ball cricket.

He also said the art of leg-spin remains relevant more than ever.

"You need leg-spinners and mystery spinners in your team as they have the ability to take wickets at any stage of the game. I see a lot of them coming through in the next 10-15 years."

"Most batsmen now like playing express pace but with a good leg-spinner in the team, you are always in the game," added member of the 1992 World Cup-winning squad.

Bengal has highest COVID-19 mortality rate, central team tells chief secy



KOLKATA, MAY 4 (PTI): West Bengal has the highest mortality rate in the country at 12.8 per cent, Inter Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) leader Apoorva Chandra wrote in his final observations to state Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha, before leav-

ing for Delhi on Monday. "This extremely high mortality rate is a clear indication of low testing, weak surveillance and tracking," Chandra said in the letter. A discrepancy has been brought to the fore in the number of COVID-19 cases reported

by the state in its medical bulletins and its communication with the Union government, Chandra noted in the letter.

The team, led by Chandra, returned to the national capital after having completed two weeks of stay in the city.

Migrant workers clash with police in Gujarat

SURAT, MAY 4 (PTI): Hundreds of migrant workers seeking to return home clashed with police and pelted stones at them near a village in Gujarat's Surat district on Monday, following which the security personnel lobbed teargas shells and baton-charged the agitated workers, an official said.

Besides, several labourers also came out on a road in Rajkot demanding that they be sent back to their hometowns, while some migrant workers got their heads tonsured in an area of Surat after being unable to go back home.

Hundreds of migrant workers clashed with police near Vareli village on the outskirts of Surat while demanding that arrangements be made to send them back to their native places in the wake of the coronavirus-enforced lockdown, a police official said. They threw stones at the police, following which the security personnel retaliated and lobbed teargas shells and lathi-charged the agitated workers, he said.

The labourers also damaged some vehicles parked on Surat-Kadodara road, he said.

The situation was later brought under control and security was stepped up in the area, he added.

Besides, 50 migrant labourers got their heads tonsured in Surat's Pandesara locality on Monday after being unable to leave for their native places in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand.

They claimed that two days back their buses were given permission to leave Gujarat. But, later they were stopped at Kosamba in Surat by local administration officials due to lack of "valid permission" and asked to go back. The workers said they have been waiting endlessly for the administra-

tion to clear their journey back home.

One of them said the money they arranged for the bus fare after lot of hardships has not been returned to them, and demanded that governments of Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat co-ordinate their travel back home without delay.

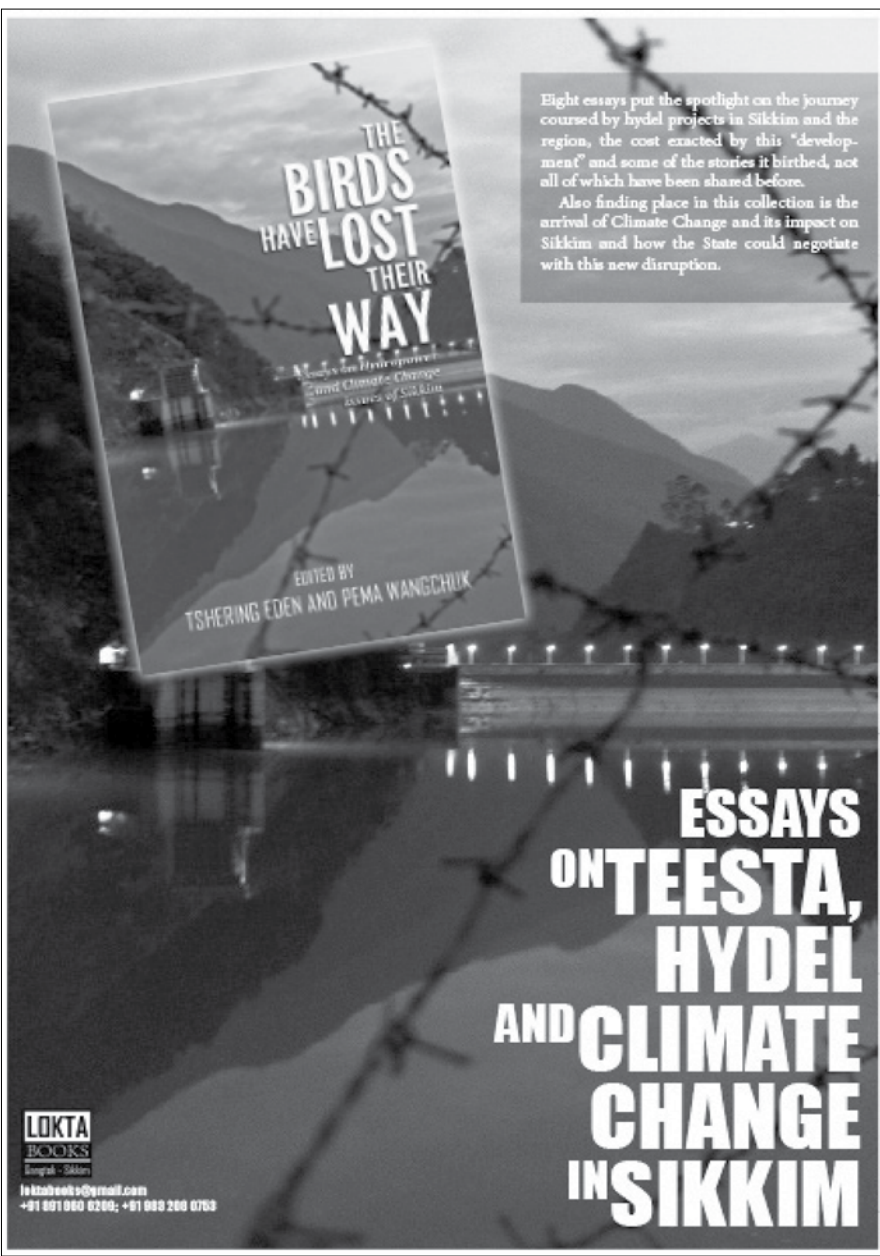
"Many of us sold off our watches and mobile phones to arrange for the bus fare. Now we are still at the same place, with no permission given to our buses to move. We are stranded here with no help from officials. We demand the governments of the two states to coordinate fast for our return back home," he said.

In Rajkot, hundreds of migrant workers came out on road in Shapar-Vervaval industrial area on the city outskirts, demanding that they be sent back home. Police said they managed to persuade the workers to call off the protest, and brought the situation under control.

"We have proactively reached out to migrants in their residential localities and have explained to them that they will be allowed to leave in vehicles that they themselves arrange after getting a medical checkup done and completing other formalities," Rajkot Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone-1) Ravi Mohan Saini said. "In some areas, we have received complaints regarding landlords demanding rent and factory owners not paying salary."

We will take action on such complaints. So far, the migrants have understood and are peaceful," he said.

Some migrant workers also gathered outside the Rajkot collector's office to fill forms for returning home, saying they had no food and money to sustain their livelihood.



Players fixed before me, even after me, should've got a second chance: Asif

New Delhi, May 4 (PTI): Tainted former Pakistan pacer Mohammad Asif says he wasn't the first nor would be the last to have indulged in spot-fixing and should have been treated better by his country's Cricket Board, which gave "everyone a second chance" except for him.

Asif was banned for seven years for his role in the 2010 spot-fixing scandal during Pakistan's tour of England, where he bowled deliberate no balls for money. He also served jail time in the UK after being found guilty along with Mohammad Amir and Salman Butt.

Asif said he should have got a second chance like many others, whom he did not name.

"Everyone makes mistakes and I did too. Players had been indulging in fixing before me and even after me. But those before me are working with PCB and there are few after me still playing," Asif told 'ESPNCricinfo'.

"Everyone was given a second chance and there are few who never got the same treatment (as me). PCB never tried to save me regardless of the fact that I am the kind of bowler who was highly regarded by everyone in the world.

"But anyway I'm not sitting around brooding about the past or hung up on it."

Asif said he takes pride in the performances he dished out in his limited career.

"However much I played in my career, I made it count, duniya hila ke rakh di thi (I shook up the world). That is more important for me to think about. Even today, so many years later, the best batsmen in the world still remember me and they talk about me.

"Just think how big the impact was that I had on the world. So this is what makes me proud - that there is a reason KP, AB de Villiers, Hashim Amla talk highly about me. That is what makes me happy."

The 37-year-old, who also failed a dope test in 2006 and served a one year suspension for it, admitted that he "should have behaved better off the field". "That is where I had issues. I want to give the kids this message that when you cross the boundary line into the field, your ambition should be to do well for yourself and for your team."

"I was selfish as a bowler because I wanted to take wickets, and that was to help the team win. Being selfish isn't bad if you're playing your part for the team," he said.

Asif remembered the days when he made the ball talk and created a lasting impression on players like Wasim Akram and Mudassar Naazar.

"I proved myself not just once but repeatedly. I got the same batsmen out more than once, and it's not like I bowled one fluke great delivery and never did it again.

Fast and furious: Carlsen and Nakamura transform chess into an adrenaline sport

SEAN INGLE

LONDON, 04 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]: Strange times these. In a parallel universe, middle-aged men with middle-aged bellies are still frothing over Arsenal's controversial Premier League winner against Liverpool. Saracens have somehow snuck into another Champions Cup final. And Pinatubo, or "Pina-turbo" as the tabloids are calling him, has just been christened the greatest horse since Frankel after his 2,000 Guineas triumph.

In the real world, meanwhile, the biggest and richest sporting event over the weekend – with all due respect to Belarus's premier league – took place on the internet in a chess match dubbed el clásico.

On one side of the virtual board sat the Norwegian world champion, Magnus Carlsen, who had created a \$250,000 online tournament which also carried his name, the Magnus Carlsen Invitational. Facing him was the American Hikaru Nakamura, the world's top-rated blitz player, who once likened his opponent to Sauron, the dark ruler of Mordor in the Lord of the Rings. The pair, unsurprisingly, do not exchange Christmas cards.

The action was fast, frenetic and tense. When Carlsen defended his world title against Fabiano Caruana in London in 2018, each tussle lasted up to seven hours. But in rapidplay games are done and dusted in under an hour. The format has proved a revelation: pressure is intensified, mistakes magnified. Often the computer evaluation resembles cardiac oscillations, swinging wildly from one side to the other. Never has chess looked more like an adrenaline sport. No wonder Nakamura was once sponsored by Red Bull.



It took a fortnight for eight players to be whittled down to two for Sunday's final. But the sober conventions of normal chess – polite handshakes and poker-faced silence – were discarded far more quickly. During his semi-final against the Chinese player Ding Liren, Carlsen swore and scowled after blundering into checkmate – but less than an hour later he was doing double fist-pumps after coming back to win the next game.

"I haven't felt this kind of tension in a long while," he admitted after his victory in the series. "It is not pleasant for the players at all."

The final was just as tense and Carlsen was understandably shattered after holding off Nakamura to win a seesawing thriller to claim the \$70,000 first prize – a decent return for a few hours' work by anyone's

standards. But there was another silent battle raging behind the scenes: the one for hearts and minds. According to the organiser chess24.com, more than 10 million people have watched the tournament. Meanwhile its biggest rival, chess.com, has in excess of 35 million members who play more than five million games a day. Another popular website, lichess.org, has around 60,000 people playing at any given time.

These are serious numbers and for all three the lockdown represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity – alongside the cold war by proxy contest between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky in 1972 and Nigel Short's doomed attempt to wrest the title from Garry Kasparov in 1993 – for chess to lurch towards the mainstream. It helps that the commentary has been so punchy.

One Carlsen blunder was described as "a howler of unbelievable proportions" by the Russian grandmaster Peter Svidler – a comment matched by the English international master Lawrence Trent, who suggested Ding might be a "choker". On the Spanish broadcast, meanwhile, Pepe Cuenca's machine-gun delivery made every stunning combination sound like a Lionel Messi golazo.

Things have, it is fair to say, moved on from the coverage of Kasparov v Short. Writing in the New Yorker, Julian Barnes noted that one TV analyst, the grandmaster Raymond Keene, is "nicknamed the penguin for his well-lunched stomach and rather Antarctic set of his head on his shoulders", while the much-loved grandmaster Jon Speelman was described as "the ultimate boffin, a sports marketer's worst

nightmare" and "an emblematic bar to the populariser's dreams". "For all his great savvy on the board and the affectionate respect in which he is held," Barnes concluded, "Speelman is never going to be the [Andre] Agassi of the 64 squares."

Carlsen has been the Federer, Djokovic and Nadal of chess since becoming world No 1 in 2010. Even now he is the game's great white shark, with an unnerving ability to detect weaknesses. There was relish, too, when he admitted he had "wanted to crush" the 16-year-old prodigy Alireza Firouzja in the preliminary rounds.

But, impressively, Carlsen has been brutally honest about his failings, too. On one occasion he described his play as "terribly bad". On another he admitted: "I got away with something akin to murder." In a world where big-name sportspeople rarely stray from the anodyne or the bland, the Norwegian has been a revelation.

And that is not the only preconception he has shattered. Martin Amis once wrote that chess genius lives, or windmills its arm, on the outer rims of sanity. Inevitably, he invoked Fischer's descent into madness. The American, who used to get a discount at his local antisemitic bookstore so valued was his custom, was also so paranoid he had his fillings removed because he did not want anything metallic in his head in case he picked up radio transmissions.

But the more we see chess players up close, the more it is obvious Fischer was a gargantuan outlier. Over the course of the past fortnight the world's best have never seemed more human, including Carlsen himself.

Hafthor Bjornsson, Game of Thrones' 'Mountain', breaks world deadlift record

REYKJAVÍK, 04 MAY [AFP]: Icelandic actor and strongman Hafthor Bjornsson set a world record for the deadlift on Saturday when he lifted 1,104 lb (501 kg) at Thor's Power Gym in Iceland.

Bjornsson, best known for his portrayal of Ser Gregor "The Mountain" Clegane on Game of

Thrones, broke the record previously held by Briton Eddie Hall who in 2016 became the first man to lift 500kg.

Bjornsson, 31, completed the lift as the barbell bent and strained under the weights. He held the lift for two seconds before letting go and roaring in delight.

"I believe today I

could've done more, but what's the point?" Bjornsson said. "I'm happy with this. My family and friends, they were happy with this, and I've decided to call it."

Bjornsson, who is 6ft 9in and weighs 452 lb (205 kg), won the World's Strongest Man competition in 2018.

Makes sense to postpone World T20 if there isn't enough preparation time: Jason Roy



LONDON, MAY 4 (PTI): Feeling like a kid again, England batsman Jason Roy can't wait to get back on the cricket field but says it would make sense to postpone the T20 World Cup in October-November if teams don't get enough time to prepare for the mega event.

All cricketing activities have come to a halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the future of T20 World Cup in Australia is also in doubt.

"If players aren't able to prepare in the right way and are not able to get over to Australia, then it makes sense to postpone it," Roy was quoted as saying by ESPNCricinfo.

"But if it goes ahead, it's our job to play cricket - and if we're told we have three weeks to prepare to go and play in the

World T20, all the boys will be putting the yards in to make sure we're ready for that.

"I think all the boys are on edge, waiting for the call saying, 'Right, we have a month turnaround or a six-week turnaround. Get in the nets and go hit some balls.' I think the boys will be as ready as they can be," said the 29-year-old opener. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) too has suspended activities until July 1.

While Roy is eager to be playing again, he said safety is paramount.

"I've got a huge amount of trust in the ECB. I think they will look into every single avenue of all the positives, all the negatives. So, I guess I would trust in what they say, probably have a chat with Morgs (Morgan) and see where

his head's at and go with that. "I don't think I'll have too many questions, especially when it got to the stage of 'Right, we're going to play', because there'll be a lot of people in those meetings discussing whether it's the right thing to do or not."

Roy also has no issues in playing in front of empty stadiums.

"I just want to play some cricket to be honest. I think for us to be able to go out there and play some cricket would be an incredible feeling. I feel like a kid again.

"I guess we're governed by the government here, we don't really know what is going on or what the safety measures are. There's way bigger things out there. I'm more than happy to play behind closed doors, it would just be nice to get out there," he added.

USWNT may have lost the battle over equal pay but they will win the war

CAITLIN MURRAY

LOS ANGELES, 04 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]: This isn't how the fight for equal pay is supposed to end for the US women's national team.

On Friday a US district court judge rejected the USWNT's allegations of gender discrimination and ruled in favor of the US Soccer Federation, declaring that the team have not been underpaid.

The decision stunned just about everyone who had been following the lawsuit, which the USWNT filed last year. The judge was widely expected to prompt a settlement, but instead he ruled in US Soccer's favor and gave the USWNT little to work with. Only the team's complaints that they are subject to inferior travel and accommodation compared to their male counterparts will go to trial, which is now scheduled for June.

The battle isn't over yet though. The USWNT have vowed to appeal the decision on equal pay, and that could force the matter to drag on for another year or more, especially as the Covid-19 pandemic delays everyday life. That's plenty of time for some sort of settlement to be hashed out.

Yet, regardless of what happens with this particular lawsuit, the USWNT players are poised to emerge as the ultimate victors in the war against their own bosses at US Soccer.

After all, the USWNT's legal argument was always going to have a harder time in a court of law than the court of public opinion. The players collectively bargained

for their contract – it included the compensation structure they wanted – and, as it turns out, they had the bad luck of actually being paid more by US Soccer because the men's team have been so bad in recent years, which the judge cited as a reason to toss out the lawsuit. The dispute seemed destined for an out of court settlement anyway, and that's still likely.

But outside of the court proceedings, the USWNT have been winning nonstop – and will likely win again.

Just ask the former US Soccer president, Carlos Cordeiro. He was forced to resign in March when US Soccer's legal team got overzealous (or, in plainer terms, sexist) in their defence against the USWNT's lawsuit, and sponsors became alarmed. While the USWNT were selling protest t-shirts with a blank US Soccer crest, the governing body's board members were busy issuing apologies.

That ordeal was the perfect encapsulation of the dynamic this lawsuit has created. It has buoyed the USWNT and made them more captivating than ever while, for US Soccer, it has been a public relations nightmare. The federation has been desperate to make the controversy go away – no court rulings needed.

The USWNT needed US Soccer on issues such as playing surfaces and charter flights – two other factors that were folded into the equal pay lawsuit – and US Soccer voluntarily addressed them. The USWNT have finally joined the USMNT

in playing all their games on natural grass, and in the last couple of years the women have been traveling on more charter flights than their male counterparts. The women didn't need to win their lawsuit to gain these concessions – they just needed to make their objections known.

While the USWNT's lawyers might say otherwise, the ongoing war between the team and the federation never hinged on winning a lawsuit. The USWNT's legacy in this fight won't be defined by one judge's ruling. The players have sparked a conversation, and are now role models in an age where it's OK for women and girls to expect more and demand more for themselves, the way their male counterparts have for so long.

When the USWNT won the World Cup in France last summer, the stadium broke out in a chant: "Equal pay! Equal pay!" Those words have carried over to other women's sporting events, and it has become a routine occurrence at NWSL games. It's probably not going away anytime soon.

It all harkens back to the early days of the USWNT's success in the 1990s, when players such as Mia Hamm and Julie Foudy decided they weren't going to simply shut up and do whatever US Soccer told them.

The team's first big showdown with their boss came after the 1999 World Cup, when the federation wanted the players to fade away into relative obscurity. Instead, the players organized their own exhibition tour across the United States.

The federation threatened to sue the team, and Hamm and Foudy vowed to never put on a US Soccer kit again. The players, who smartly stayed unified and didn't scare easily, won that fight. The post-World Cup victory tour the players created on their own in 1999 still exists to this day – and it helps them earn money for their success. But more importantly, the incident set a culture for the USWNT: the team refused to settle, and that has carried on for the past two decades.

Many of the team's disputes with US Soccer have happened out of public view, like when they threatened boycotts in 2013 and in 2015, or when they reported allegations of sexist behavior to the US Olympic Committee in 2005. But in all those cases, the team pushed US Soccer to invest more and care more.

Things have become more public lately, and critics of the USWNT's lawsuit have pointed out that no federation financially supports its women's national team the way US Soccer does – and that investment, in turn, has helped the USWNT win World Cups. That is true, but it's also the result of relentless off-the-field work by the players.

As for this latest fight, even with less leverage than before, the USWNT will probably force a settlement so both sides can walk away from this saga declaring victory. The players sought \$67m in back pay, and sources tell the Guardian that US Soccer had previously offered \$9m in settlement talks. But the money is secondary.

Australia, New Zealand weigh trans-Tasman virus 'bubble'

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern will join an Australian leaders' meeting on Tuesday to discuss establishing a "trans-Tasman bubble" that allows the neighbours to lift bilateral coronavirus travel bans.

With both nations seeing significant drops in new infections, Ardern accepted Australian counterpart Scott Morrison's invitation to join a virtual meeting of the National Cabinet, which brings together Australia's regional and federal leaders.

"The meeting will discuss a number of matters relating to the COVID response on both sides of the Tasman (Sea), including the creation of a trans-Tasman travel bubble," she told reporters, describing her presence at the meeting as unprecedented.

"Both our countries' strong record on fighting the virus has placed us in the enviable position of being able to plan the next stage in our economic rebuild."

Ardern said the two-week quarantine periods both Australia and New Zealand currently im-



pose on international arrivals would be mutually waived under the proposal.

She was reluctant to speculate on when it could take effect but warned: "Don't expect this to happen in a couple of weeks time."

"We need to ensure that we're locking in the gains that all New Zealanders have helped us achieve and make sure we have health precautions in place to make sure we do this safely," she said.

Ardern confirmed the meeting will discuss the countries' respective

approaches to battling the novel coronavirus, including contact tracing apps such as Australia's COVIDSafe.

"We continue to do work in this space, but we are not relying on it because there is simply no silver bullet here," she said.

- Integrated economies - New Zealand, which eased a strict five-week lockdown last week allowing people to return to work, has confirmed 1,137 cases and 20 deaths.

Parts of Australia also began relaxing lockdown rules over the weekend, with some regions allowing more outdoor activi-

ties and small gatherings as the country inched past 6,800 cases and recorded 96 deaths.

Most Australian states have gone several consecutive days with few or no new cases, while New Zealand confirmed just one new case on Monday.

New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters said a travel exemption granted to rugby league side Warriors, who arrived in Australia on Sunday ahead of a resumed NRL competition, showed a trans-Tasman bubble could work. "Australia and New

Zealand are two of the most integrated economies in the world," he said. "The idea of a bubble with Australia was floated two weeks ago, and this is an example of the sort of action that could happen within it, while always ensuring the protection of public health."

Morrison had said last week that the "only exception" to an international travel ban was "potentially with New Zealand, and we have had some good discussions about that".

However, some state borders still closed in Australia would likely need to be reopened before the two countries could allow free movement.

Ardern was cautious about the prospect of allowing Pacific island nations which are free of COVID-19 into the bubble due to the inability of their health systems to deal with even a minor outbreak of the virus.

"That's a conversation we'd need to have directly with them," she said. "There's a huge risk if COVID finds its way into Pacific island nations that are currently untouched."

Over 500 migrant workers gather in Pune, dispersed

PUNE, MAY 4 (PTI): More than 500 migrant workers from other states gathered in Warje area of Pune in Maharashtra on Monday, forcing the police to use mild force to disperse the crowd, an officer said.

He blamed the sudden gathering to the misunderstanding among workers that police had opened a counter to fill online forms which are mandatory to facilitate their return to home states.

"Workers generally gather at a specific location, 'majur adda', under the flyover in Warje area from where they get hired," the Warje police station officer said.

Explaining the sequence of events, he said police had put up boards informing about online links available to fill forms for the convenience of labourers.

A police checkpost is located adjacent to the boards which was occupied by some police personnel on duty, he said.

"Some labourers staying in a shelter home thought that police have opened a counter under the flyover (to fill the forms) and started thronging the spot in afternoon," the officer said.

He said at least 500 people gathered at the spot even as police personnel struggled to clear the confusion. "We explained to them that it was a not a kiosk for filling forms but they were not ready to go away, which forced us to use mild force on them," the officer said.

Police have now installed four computers at the shelter home and the work to fill the forms is going on, he said, adding that most of the workers hailed from Uttar Pradesh.

DHS report: China hid virus' severity to hoard supplies

WASHINGTON, MAY 4 (AP): US officials believe China covered up the extent of the coronavirus outbreak and how contagious the disease is to stock up on medical supplies needed to respond to it, intelligence documents show.

Chinese leaders intentionally concealed the severity of the pandemic from the world in early January, according to a four-page Department of Homeland Security intelligence report dated May 1 and obtained by The Associated Press.

The revelation comes as the Trump administration has intensified its criticism of China, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo saying Sunday that that country was responsible for the spread of disease and must be held accountable.

The sharper rhetoric coincides with administration critics saying the government's response to the virus was slow and inadequate. President Donald Trump's political opponents have accused him of lashing out at China, a geopolitical foe but critical U.S. trade partner, in an attempt to deflect criticism at home.

Not classified but marked for official use only, the DHS analysis states that, while downplaying the severity of the coronavirus, China increased imports and decreased exports of medical supplies. It attempted to cover up doing so by denying there were export restrictions and obfuscating and delaying provision of its trade data, the analysis states.

The report also says China held off informing the World Health Organization that the coronavirus was a contagion for much of January so it could order medical supplies from abroad and that its imports of face masks and surgical gowns and gloves increased sharply.

Those conclusions are based on the 95% probability that China's changes in imports and export behavior were not within normal range, according to the report.

China informed the WHO of the outbreak on Dec. 31. It contacted the U.S. Centers for Disease Control on Jan. 3 and publicly identified the pathogen as a novel coro-



navirus on January 8.

Chinese officials muffled doctors who warned about the virus early on and repeatedly downplayed the threat of the outbreak. However, many of the Chinese government's missteps appear to have been due to bureaucratic hurdles, tight controls on information, and officials hesitant to report bad news.

There is no public evidence to suggest it was an intentional plot to buy up the world's medical supplies.

In a tweet on Sunday, the president appeared to blame US intelligence officials for not making clearer sooner just how dangerous a potential coronavirus outbreak could be. Trump has been defensive over whether he failed to act after receiving early warnings from intelligence officials and others about the coronavirus and its potential impact. Intelligence has just reported to me that I was correct, and that they did NOT bring up the CoronaVirus subject matter until late into January, just prior to my banning China from the US, Trump wrote without citing specifics.

Also, they only spoke of the Virus in a very non-threatening, or matter of fact, manner.

Trump had previously speculated that China may have unleashed the coronavirus due to some kind of horrible mistake. His intelligence agencies say they are still examining a notion put forward by the president and aides that the pandemic may have resulted from an accident at a Chi-

nese lab.

Speaking Sunday on ABC's This Week, Pompeo said he had no reason to believe that the virus was deliberately spread. But he added, Remember, China has a history of infecting the world, and they have a history of running substandard laboratories.

These are not the first times that we've had a world exposed to viruses as a result of failures in a Chinese lab, Pompeo said.

And so, while the intelligence community continues to do its work, they should continue to do that, and verify so that we are certain, I can tell you that there is a significant amount of evidence that this came from that laboratory in Wuhan.

The secretary of state appeared to be referring to previous outbreaks of respiratory viruses, like SARS, which started in China. His remark may be seen as offensive in China. Still, Pompeo repeated the same assertion hours later, via a tweet Sunday afternoon.

Experts say the virus arose naturally in bats, and make it clear that they believe it wasn't man-made. Many virologists say the chance that the outbreak was caused by a lab accident is very low, though scientists are still working to determine a point at which it may have jumped from animals to humans.

Beijing has repeatedly pushed back on US accusations that the outbreak was China's fault, pointing to many missteps made by American officials in their own fight against the outbreak.

Equities tumble as Trump revives trade war fears

Stock markets suffered steep losses Monday, tracking a selloff in New York after Donald Trump sparked fears of a renewed trade war with China over its role in the coronavirus pandemic.

Claims by the US president and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that the disease started in a lab in Wuhan, and that those responsible would be held to account, overshadowed a further slowing of infections and deaths from COVID-19.

The losses across Asia come as investors returned from an extended weekend break and after all three main indexes on Wall Street tanked between 2.6 and 3.2 percent, having enjoyed their best month in decades in April.

Trump suggested he could lump new tariffs on China over its handling of the virus outbreak, claiming he had seen evidence linking a Chinese lab to the contagion.

The warning fanned worries of a return to the trade standoff between the world's top two economies that battered global markets last year until a partial agreement was reached in December.

It also comes as Trump faces a tough fight to be re-elected in November with the economy tanking and millions of Americans losing their jobs because of the virus crisis.

"President Trump is back beating the trade war drums... and increasing the odds of a significant volatility risk event as all roads lead back to trade and tariff," said AxiCorp's Stephen Innes.

He added that "while the market is already factoring in a less globalised world during the initial phase of the post-pandemic recovery as economies internalise, rekindling a dormant US-China trade war will likely make any economic improvement exponentially more difficult. And ripping up the trade agreement will trigger a global equity market rout."

- Dollar on the rise -

Hong Kong fell nearly four percent, while Mumbai was off five percent. Seoul, Taipei, Singapore, Manila and Jakarta were all down more than two percent, but Sydney added more than one percent and Wellington was also in positive territory as Australia and New Zealand begin easing measures to con-

tain COVID-19. In early trade, London slipped 0.9 percent, while there were also big losses in Paris and Frankfurt.

Tokyo and Shanghai were closed for holidays.

Analysts warned that after a strong April -- fuelled by optimism the worst of the disease has passed -- equities could suffer a tumultuous May as corporate earnings and other indicators reveal the extent of the damage inflicted.

"For several weeks now the prospect of significant monetary, as well as fiscal stimulus, has prompted a decent rebound in equity markets, largely on the basis that any policy missteps on the part of politicians might be kept to a minimum," said CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson.

"This seems much less likely now, given recent comments, while the sharp deterioration seen in recent March economic data prompted a sharp reassessment of the likelihood of a V-shaped recovery."

The downbeat mood sent the dollar rallying against higher-yielding, riskier currencies including the Australian dollar, South Korea's won and the Mexican peso.

Oil prices dropped after surging last week as top producers began to ease up on the pumps as part of a deal agreed last month to slash output by 10 million barrels a day.

- Key figures around 0720 GMT -
Hong Kong - Hang Seng: DOWN 3.8 percent at 23,698.63
Shanghai - Composite: Closed for a holiday
Tokyo - Nikkei 225: Closed for a holiday
London - FTSE 100: DOWN 0.9 percent at 5,709.14
West Texas Intermediate: DOWN 6.1 percent at \$18.57 per barrel
Brent North Sea crude: DOWN 1.1 at \$26.15 per barrel
Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0945 from \$1.0978 at 2040 GMT
Dollar/yen: DOWN at 106.81 yen from 106.93 yen
Pound/dollar: DOWN at \$1.2467 from \$1.2494
Euro/pound: DOWN at 87.79 pence from 87.86 pence
New York - Dow: DOWN 2.6 percent at 23,723.69 (close)

For Haitians, die of hunger today or coronavirus tomorrow?

When the novel coronavirus first appeared in Haiti authorities and humanitarian experts panicked, worried about the country's decrepit health system -- but the pandemic's economic consequences could prove yet deadlier for the nation's poor.

With just eight official virus fatalities as of Saturday, the COVID-19 pandemic is still in its infancy in Haiti, where staying at home and social distancing are unattainable luxuries for many who make their living in the informal economy.

In an attempt to stem the spread of the virus the government of Haiti -- the poorest country in the Americas -- announced that wearing a mask would be compulsory in all public places beginning May 11.

Masks aside, for many Haitians the main question remains: Die of hunger today or coronavirus tomorrow?

On the hilltops east of Port-au-Prince, in the Petionville suburb, merchants took a stand for the latter option, protesting in the streets against a rule limiting their commercial activities to three days a week -- a town hall directive mainly issued in vain.

Consumer panic that followed the March 19 announcement that COVID-19 had arrived on Haitian shores has subsided, and custom-

ers are now making more measured purchases, particularly considering their often limited means.

Cereals constitute two-thirds of the daily caloric intake of the average poor Haitians. However the price of one such staple -- rice -- has more than doubled in some markets compared with 2019.

Inflation has accelerated since March, and the sharp rise in prices linked to the coronavirus pandemic will only worsen a recession which began about 1.5 years ago.

"With the looming crisis, we expect a decline of almost four percent," of gross domestic product, Prime Minister Joseph Jouthe said during an annual finance summit held online this year.

- Risk of famine -

Half of all Haitian jobs are in agriculture, even though the sector accounts for only 21 percent of the country's GDP, according to Haitian economist Etzer Emile.

Poor workers who own tiny farms watch their incomes melt away in the lean season between harvests, making preparations for the next harvest ever more difficult, especially in certain regions already threatened by drought.

Long before the coronavirus pandemic crip-

pled the global economy, the United Nations warned that 40 percent of Haitians would need emergency humanitarian assistance in 2020.

The estimate projected that starting in March nearly three million Haitians would be facing "severe food insecurity," a UN classification just below famine.

Haiti's diaspora has long kept the country from plunging into even deeper poverty by sending money home: More than \$3 billion is transferred back to Haiti each year by those living abroad, totaling about a third of the nation's GDP, official figures show.

"Haitians depend on remittances for food, education and even funerals," Haitian economist Kesner Pharel said.

However the diaspora, mainly based in the United States, is now facing a wave of massive unemployment sweeping the world's largest economy.

Haiti's Ministry of Economy and Finance predicts that the financial aid will drop by almost a quarter in the coming months.

"We like to say that when the American economy suffers from the flu, Haiti suffers from pneumonia: The millions of jobs lost in the United States will cause worsening extreme poverty for sure," Pharel said.

Impossible to speak of Irrfan Khan in past tense: Mira Nair

MUMBAI, MAY 4 (PTI): Filmmaker Mira Nair on Sunday said it's "virtually impossible" to talk about Irrfan Khan in past tense as the actor was alive for everything in life.

Irrfan, 54, died in a Mumbai hospital on Wednesday after a two year fight with a rare form of cancer. He was buried at the Versova graveyard.

During the digital home-to-home fundraiser concert, 'I For India' which streamed on Facebook, Nair, who had helmed Irrfan's debut "Salaam Bombay" and "The Namesake", paid tribute to the actor.

"To speak of Irrfan Khan in the past tense is virtually impossible, because Irrfan was always alive. He was alive to life, whimsy, friendship, alive to the street child. Irrfan was one of the most beautiful listeners I have ever known. He listened beautifully and harnessed it into his art," she said.

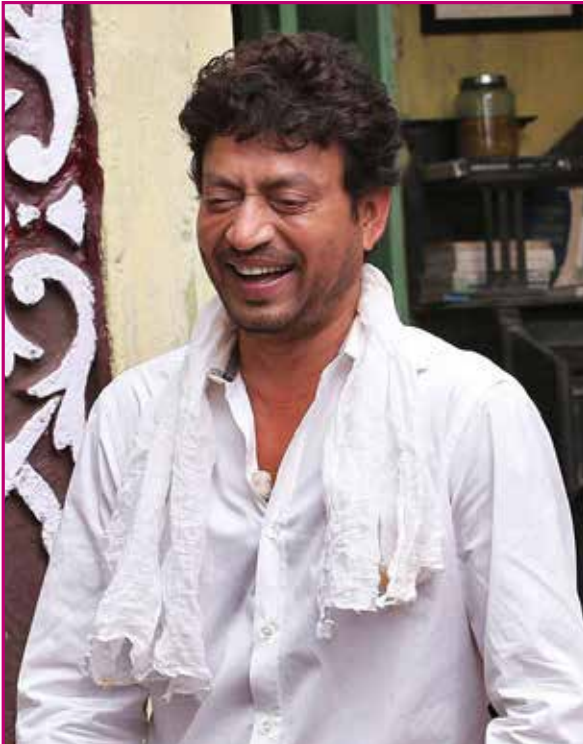
The filmmaker said the best part about Irrfan was that in his work, there was never a repetition, "never something that you had seen before."

"There was always this inimitable honesty and this twinkle, this knowing sense that he had seen through it. He was bringing it to you with nothing that covered the purity of the intent.

"I will miss you so much Irrfan but you have left an extraordinary legacy of work because you always knew that you were special, that you had something that must be cherished, nourished and not fritted away. That's what you gave us, in each of your roles." Nair said with

Irrfan's passing away, all that she will look forward to now is everything and everyone who were influenced by him.

"You have left an inspired group of extraordinary actors across the subcontinent, who looked to you, your flame is still in them. That is my only sucker, as I



keep going in a world without Irrfan, in a cinema without Irrfan, but thank you. There are no words for what you have given us," she added. Personalities from the field of entertainment and sports came together for the digital concert to raise funds for the frontline workers, who are working round the clock to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

All the proceeds from the fundraiser concert, in collaboration with Facebook, will go to the India COVID Response Fund managed by GiveIndia, to support on-ground relief efforts.

Cady Groves, Singer-Songwriter, Dies at 30

Her brother says that she died of natural causes



Cady Groves has passed away at the age of 30, SPIN has confirmed.

Groves' brother Cody broke the news on social media. In his original post, Cody said her cause of death was unknown; however, has since given an update.

"I hate that I even have to do this, but apparently the world and internet is a cluster of twisted misinformation," he wrote on Twitter. "In my original post I had stated we had no information to try and prevent that, but to expel rumors I will provide an update. The medical examiner has completed autopsy and there was no indication of foul play or self harm. Simply put, Cady Groves died of natural causes. She had some medical problems last fall and our best guess at this point until further testing is complete is that they had resurfaced. Please respect her name and family before sharing information that did not come

directly from here."

"Cady was really looking forward to the next few months and release of her new album," he added. "Our latest in depth conversation (since most were witty banter) was her sending me songs to critique and give feedback on."

Cody and his mother, Carol Pettitt, are currently driving to Nashville, where Cady was living.

Cady is the third Groves child to die young. Her brothers Casey and Kelly died in 2007 and 2014, respectively. They were both 28 years old.

The singer-songwriter had not begun promoting music at the time of her death. Her last single was 2017's "Oil and Water." She released "This Little Girl" in 2012 and has been streamed 12 million times on Spotify. In 2009, Groves appeared on a holiday single "The Blizzard of '89" with The Ready Set and Never Shout Never's Christofer Drew.

Ryan Reynolds delivers virtual commencement, free pizza to graduating students of alma mater

LOS ANGELES, MAY 4 (PTI): Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds delivered a virtual commencement speech to the class of 2020 from his alma mater, Kitsilano Secondary School in Vancouver, and gifted every student a pizza from his favourite local pizza place, as the novel coronavirus prevented graduating students from donning their cap.

The Vancouver-born actor, who graduated from the West Side secondary school in 1994, uploaded an inspiring speech on YouTube over the weekend for the class of 2020.

If I can pass on this one little chestnut of wisdom, it's something that you might want to start if you're not already doing it. Totally up to you, no pressure but one thing that's worked for me is practicing some form of compassion every day whether it's for yourself or someone, especially for someone else, is good, Reynolds said in the video. The actor encouraged students to be empathetic. "Some of you may consider me successful. I don't know, some of you may have seen Green Lantern'. But I'll tell you this -- empathy has gotten me so much farther in not only in my life but in my career To my surprise, (empathy) has made me money, friends, priceless memories.

It's allowed me to fully accept and provide love. It's helped me recognise the mistakes I've made and learn from them. And above all, it made me happy. And it's something I'll probably be working on my whole life," he added.

The video ended with congratulatory message for the graduating class, as Reynolds announced that "every grad gets one large pizza on me from his favourite local pizza shop, Nat's Pizzeria.

Neetu thanks medical staff for taking care of Rishi Kapoor: They treated my husband like he was their own

MUMBAI, MAY 4 (PTI): Neetu Kapoor on Monday expressed her gratitude to the medical staff for taking care of her husband, veteran actor Rishi Kapoor, during his battle with leukemia.

Rishi Kapoor died at the age of 67 on April 30 at H N Reliance hospital in south Mumbai, after a two year long battle with leukaemia.

As a family we have a deep sense of loss When we sit together and look back at the past few months what we also feel is immense gratitude - gratitude towards the doctors at HN reliance hospital!

The whole team of doctors, brothers and nurses headed by Dr Tarang Gianchandani treated my husband like he was their own - they advised us like we were their own. And for all that and more I thank them from the bottom of my heart, she posted on Instagram alongside two photographs of the late actor.

Rishi Kapoor's ashes were immersed in Banganga tank here on Sunday in presence of his family members, including Neetu, son Ranbir Kapoor and daughter Ridhima Kapoor Sahani.



BIKING BEAUTY! Actress, Reese Witherspoon and a shirtless, Jim Toth enjoyed a bike ride in Malibu.

Batwoman Fans Are Freaking out About Hush

During Batwoman's presentation last year at San Diego Comic-Con, The CW show revealed that Tommy Elliot would appear with the Batman villain getting his own origin story over the course of the first season. On Sunday night, the Arrowverse series made good on that reveal when a preview for next week's "A Secret Kept From All the Rest" as well as two new photos for the upcoming episode gave fans their first look at the villain's official Arrowverse debut. The reveal didn't take long to send the show trending on Twitter and fans have a lot to say about it.

In comics, Dr. Thomas "Tommy" Elliot was a childhood friend of Bruce Wayne's who comes to resent Bruce after he inherited his family's fortune following the murder of his parents while Tommy's efforts to kill his own parents and gain their fortune failed. After discovering that Bruce was Batman, Tommy took on the persona of Hush and set out to take Batman down.

Batwoman's take on Tommy is a little different than the comics, but no less chilling. Batwoman's Tommy grew up to be a real estate mogul obsessed with Bruce Wayne -- who he knows is Batman. Tommy blames Bat-

man for ruining his life by saving his mother prompting Tommy to want revenge while he also remains obsessive over Bruce who speaks about endlessly while locked up in Arkham -- which just so happens to be where Alice (Rachel Skarsten) is locked up as well who has her own motives involving Tommy. Sunday night's episode revealed that it's Alice who is responsible for Tommy's bandaged



appearance, though how he makes the leap to Hush, well, that's something fans will have to tun in next week to find out.

You can read on for how fans are reacting to Batwoman's Hush reveal and be sure to let us know your thoughts in the comments below. Batwoman airs Sundays at 8/7c on The CW. "A Secret Kept From All the Rest" will air on May 10th.

ARIES:

While there is a voice in your head that's whispering, "you can", there's another that's demotivating you from taking the next step. Two opposing forces are at play, Aries. The real question is: whose demands will you ultimately give in to? This is your journey, Aries. Only you can break free from the mental prison that's holding you back. The time to let go of the old paradigm has come.

Tip: Take a great risk. You won't regret it. We promise.

TAURUS:

The pain never truly leaves us until we acknowledge it. Allow yourself to feel what's coming up in its entirety. Make space for the healing to occur, Taurus. Word for wise: denial is never a healthy way out of a given situation. Some of you may be turning to substances in order to drown out the noise. Sure, chemicals may provide temporary respite, but will they help you deal with anxiety in the long run? Approach the situation in a holistic manner.

Tip: Hold space for the healing to occur.

GEMINI:

What if the sixth sense is our primary sense, with every other sense playing the role of the supporting actor? Hear, hear, Gemini. Listen to that niggling feeling, to the messages your subconscious is bringing forth through symbols and signs. Trust us, you don't need a psychic to help you interpret this one. What you do need to focus on is finding a state of balance, especially if your emotions are running high. Grounding exercises will help you come back to the present moment.

Tip: Listen to what your subconscious is revealing to you.

CANCER:

You could be experiencing a classic case of "return of the ex". But do people really change like they claim they have? Chances are, the suitor at hand is still operating from the old paradigms—the paradigms at once threatened to break you down. You deserve to be honoured and respected. You deserve to be seen and heard. Don't sell yourself short or go back to being the person you worked so hard on healing.

Tip: Level up.

LEO:

Things on the work and money front are taking a turn for the better. This is what you get for showing up for your dreams and being consistent in your efforts. But you are no longer driven by base motives like status and power. There is a deep inner need to serve, to wield your power for the greater good of humanity. Pick a cause that you resonate with, Leo, and contribute in the best way you can. Trust that your example will motivate many others to join the revolution.

Tip: Wield your power for the greater good.

VIRGO:

Can't live with them, can't live without them? That's the oldest story in the book. But, how did something that started off so well quickly turn poisonous? Something to think about, Virgo. The cards are asking you to be brutal when it comes to editing the script of your life. If there is somebody who doesn't deserve a place in the new narrative, now is the time to let them go. Find a healthy way to process the emotions that may be coming up at a time like this. Relying on substances that lower your vibration is never the answer.

Tip: Let go of all that is toxic.

LIBRA:

Things are about to get rather romantic in the Libra headquarters, and nobody is complaining. It's not that you and your SO haven't gone through your share of ups and downs. It's just that you've committed to the inner work and confronted the challenges like an A-team. Now is the time to sit back, relax, and enjoy the sweet, sweet results. Single Venusians could be experiencing a case of "return of the past". Could you potentially write a new story this time around? The cards are urging you to observe both their actions and words.

Tip: Love and romance are on the cards.

SCORPIO:

The world may be on hold, but your dreams don't have to be. You're making the most of this period of isolation by working hard and showing up for what you believe in consistently. But how much is too much? The cards are urging you to pace yourself and honour the rhythm of your body. Scorpio, you are making steady progress. Let go of the need to prove your worth to others.

Tip: Pace yourself.

SAGITTARIUS:

You are your only competition, Sagittarius. Stop measuring your success against that of others or holding onto the false notion that you have missed your train. You're moving towards the desired destination at the right pace. Replace the energy of envy with love. Replace the energy of anxiety with courage. The Universe is helping you in the process of realignment. Trust that your true path will be revealed in due course of time.

Tip: You are exactly where you need to be.

CAPRICORN:

Living in the realm of dreams doesn't cost a thing. But giving your dreams a tangible form is another story altogether. This where your true power lies, Capricorn. Don't let your outer reality hypnotise you into believing that you will not be able to manifest your desires in your conscious reality. The cards are urging you to work on a stellar plan of action, browse through your contact list, and sync forces with the right people. With the right amount of courage and discipline, you will soon be able to move forward on your path.

Tip: The time to work on a stellar plan of action is now.

AQUARIUS:

The cards speak of success and breakthroughs. The things you once considered a distant dream are now manifesting in your conscious reality. For some, this could be a professional or creative milestone. Others could find themselves celebrating a personal victory. What does this mean for coupled Aquarians? You've worked through serious karma together and will soon experience a whole new level of love, balance and harmony.

Tip: This is a big moment.

PISCES:

There are some people who come into your life to make you laugh, share a few joyful moments, and remind you of all that is good in your life. And then there are friends who seem to see the real you with all your grandeur, and encourage you to let go of the cloak of mediocrity. These are the friends you want to keep close to you, Pisces. Today, you're being asked to see yourself through their lens, awaken to your power, and take a great risk.

Tip: Awaken to your true power.