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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## ASK THE CM

We asked our readers to send in questions they would like to ask the Chief Minister, PS Tamang, and we would pose those questions to the CM during a press conference held today. Here are some of the questions we asked and their answers.

**ARUN SUBBA**

Is the government going to do anything about students staying on rent in different places across the state?

CM: Appeal to landlords to provide relief to students and others who cannot afford to pay rent during the lockdown. If there are students staying who cannot afford to pay rent then they can approach the authorities and we will figure out something.

**YOGEN BHITRIKOTI**

By profession I am driver and I have my car finance from the company. In the current situation our tourist flow is totally stopped to avoid the spread of COVID-19 which is very important. But practically we are helpless now even after the lockdown there is no scope of tourist flow in our state. So it's our request and question to the Government on how they will support us who fully depend on tourists?

CM: For those who have taken loans to buy their taxi vehicles, the government will work on providing a relief package for such people while those who have taken loans from State Bank of Sikkim are being provided moratorium on their loan payments.

**BHUTIA GEMINI GEZU**

What are the measures taken for people stranded or stuck outside Sikkim?

CM: For now, we are providing all kinds of support to those stranded outside but they cannot come to Sikkim till the lockdown is in place.

**NAVRAJ TIWARI**

The Education department is starting classes on radio and online but those who do not have access to these mediums, what will the department do for such students?

CM: We will find some way or the other to provide education to the students.

**JIGMEE ORGANIC SIKKIM**

Will private medical clinics be opened for x-ray and ultrasound?

CM: Private diagnostic centres will be open.

## Sikkim prepared for COVID challenge, will follow Centre lead: CM

**SAGAR CHETTRI**

**GANGTOK, 14 APR:**

Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] today announced that Sikkim will support the call of the Prime Minister to continue the lockdown till 03 May.

He detailed that while the lockdown will be followed strictly till 20 April, some relaxation may be considered after 21 April as per the guidelines and directions received from the Centre.

He thanked health workers, police and other frontline workers for working round the clock to keep Sikkim safe from COVID-19.

He also thanked the people of Sikkim for having fully supported round one of the lockdown.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, the CM stated that a Cabinet meeting held today resolved to support the call of the Prime Minister and deciding that whole the borders will remain closed, some relaxation may be given for agricultural and developmental works of the government after 20 April.

He stressed that social distancing should be observed strictly even in the relaxed sectors like agriculture and construction.

The CM further announced that emergency permits for vehicles were valid only for the first round of 21-day lockdown and that fresh permits need to be taken out to ply emergency vehicles. Henceforth, only the District Collector, SDM and BDO will issue the permits.

He informed that each GPU can have only two vehicles with relaxation permits - one to carry essential commodities

and the other for medical emergencies.

He asserted that essential goods and medical emergencies would remain open during the lockdown by strictly maintaining social distancing.

Speaking on the preparedness of the State government, the CM stated that Sikkim did not wait for anyone and had immediately

check-posts at Reshi and Rambong have been sealed completely.

"Sikkim had fully supported Janta Curfew called by the PM and then has been following the national lockdown strictly since 25 March," he said.

He informed that the State has sent around 60 samples and all samples have returned negative. He added

government.

He informed that the state government has traced and connected with more than 1,000 students at different places and has been sending them financial support.

He said that there will be no inter-state or inter-district vehicular movement during the lockdown people except those on medical emergency duty.

check-posts directly during this period.

He said that pharma companies in the State cannot bring workers from the outside but has to manage with the local workers and drivers of these companies need to wear the personal protection equipment while entering and exiting the States. On to set-up testing lab in the State, he stated that the process to set up the testing lab for COVID-19 has already been started and the State already has machines for the lab but the structure was taking some time to build it as per the guidelines of the Central government.

CM informed that the government offices may also be operational soon by taking limited skeleton staffs by seeing the situation. On the digital classes for students, he informed that the government would reach out every student through every medium.

While mentioning that everyone has to come forward to support each other in such time of crises, CM said, "The government cannot give direction but we appeal all house owners to relax room rents of students and workers working on daily wages."

CM stated that medical shops were opened and medical related services can be operational during lockdown. He added that the State government has arranged guest houses and even hotels for patients from Sikkim presently in Siliguri for treatment on its own expenses and would also support them in their requirement. He informed that all ASHA workers will be given honorarium of Rs 5,000 in view of their role in the ongoing efforts to contain spread of the COVID-19.

started its preparedness against this pandemic.

He mentioned that the State government started the screening process on 21 February at check posts and although people had faced some problems initially, now the entire state has benefitted.

He added that Sikkim had stopped issuing Inner Line Permits on 05 March after consulting with all concerned stakeholders and international borders with Nepal, Bhutan and China were also sealed the same day.

He said that entry of domestic tourists has also been banned in the State since 17 March after consulting with all related stakeholders.

The CM mentioned that

that quarantine and isolation facilities have been set up in all four districts and the 8th and 9th floors of the STNM Hospital have been dedicated for COVID-19 patients.

On the same, he expressed that the State was capable to fight against the coronavirus.

The CM appealed to the people of Sikkim to continuously support the lockdown and maintain social distancing. He further urged the people to stay at home and to stay safe

Responding to media queries, CM appealed to students and people stranded outside Sikkim due to the lockdown and stay safe wherever they were and assured to provide all possible support from the

## COVID-19 tests, hotspots: All you need to know

**KUNAL DUTT**

**NEW DELHI, APR 14 (PTI):**

As the world is reeling under the COVID-19 pandemic, medical terminologies like rapid antibodies test, RT-PCR test, hotspots and containment zones have come into focus.

Doctors explain for the common man what these testing and containment terminologies mean.

Two kinds of diagnostic tests are being currently used in India -- RT-PCR test and rapid antibodies test, as per the global health norms.

A reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test is a laboratory technique combining reverse transcription of RNA into DNA that detects the virus while the antibody tests, which use blood, detect the body's response to the virus, experts said.

"In RT-PCR, it is tested if the virus is present or not. A sample is taken from the respiratory tract of a person, throat swab or a sample from the naseopharyngeal region and then tested. The results take about 12-24 hours," said noted

Delhi-based lung surgeon Arvind Kumar.

Kumar, who works at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here, said, RT-PCR tests take time and are a costly affair because of its elaborate kit.

"On the other hand, the rapid antibodies test are less expensive and the results can come in 20-30 minutes. It essentially tests if the antibodies in response the coronavirus infection has been generated or not," he said.

These tests are generally used in hotspots where the infection is found concentrated in a given area. A hotspot is a zone from where a large number of COVID-19 cases are reported.

In Delhi, till Monday night the number of hotspots stood at 47, which have been made containment zones and sealed.

"In rapid antibodies test, the result will be positive only if the antibodies have been generated. So, even if a person is infected but the antibodies are not generated, the result will come negative," Kumar said.

In many cases, it has

happened in the past that a person tested negative earlier but after a few days when he or she reached another country, the test came out positive there.

This same person would have come out positive had the RT-PCR test been conducted, but the issue is feasibility of its use.

In government labs, the tests are free but at private laboratories, which use RT-PCR test the cost is Rs 4,500.

The Supreme Court on Monday modified its April 8 order that asked private labs to conduct free COVID-19 tests and said the benefit will be available only to "economically weaker sections" who are covered under a government scheme such as Ayushman Bharat.

The apex court said it never intended to make testing free for those who can afford to pay.

It had on April 8 directed that private labs, which were allowed to charge Rs 4,500 for it, would not charge for the tests observing that they need to be philanthropic in the hour of national crisis.

A spokesperson of the Thyrocare labs, one of the laboratories authorised by the government to do testing, said, testing has to be done judiciously as there are less number of kits in India.

"A doctor's recommendation is required before we can do testing. Well-known video blogger Mumbiker Nikhil had recently returned from the UK and he got his testing done and even made a video on it to raise awareness as people coming from abroad should consult doctors, especially if they are showing symptoms," he said.

The death toll due to coronavirus in the country rose to 339 while the number of cases soared to 10,363 on Tuesday, said the Union Health Ministry.

Houses containment zones are being surveyed by medical teams and people being made aware about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, methods of prevention, social distancing measures, importance of hand washing, Delhi Health Department authorities said.

Sample collection for high-risk areas in identified containment zones for people who had come in contact with persons testing positive is being carried out, they said, adding that 310 samples have been collected till Monday.

Doctors at Delhi government hospitals said from naseopharyngeal and oral samples, if either of that comes positive, that person is considered COVID-19-affected.

How well these tests work depends on several factors, including the time from the onset of illness, the concentration of virus in the specimen, the quality of the specimen collected from a person and how it is processed, and the precise formulation of the reagents in the test kits, experts said.

Additionally, false positive results -- that is, a test showing that a person is infected when they are not -- could occur if the antibodies on the test strip also recognise antigens of viruses other than COVID-19, such as from human coronaviruses that causes the common cold, they said.

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## Governor chairs somber Ambedkar Jayanti observance



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 14 APR:**

Governor Ganga Prasad paid floral tributes to Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary at a somber function held at Sikkim Legislative Assembly Complex, Namnang, Gangtok today. Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay], Minister for Tourism, Minister for Health, Chief Secretary and other officials were also present on the occasion.



# SPYF demands financial assistance for economically vulnerable section

## VIEWPOINT PRITAM

Government's timely decision of sealing the boundary proved to be a masterstroke in preventing any kind of contraction of the COVID-19 virus in the state. As a result, Sikkim could achieve a rear feat of becoming the only state without a single case of coronavirus in the country. People's whole-hearted support to the lockdown call by the Govt also must not be overlooked. The ordinary people supported in all possible manners be it in following the Govt's orders or responding to the Govt's call of donation to the Chief Minister Relief Fund. People from all walks of life contribute from whatever capacity they had. Many people distributed ration

and other essential commodities to their neighbours in many places. So much so that many schools going children were seen contributing from their piggy banks savings.

However, the people belonging to the below poverty line and the lower middle class suffered in a great deal owing to the lockdown. The daily wage labourers, the small businessmen, the people engaged in private jobs, taxi drivers, truck drivers, the farm labourers, the masons, carpenters, tourist guides, hoteliers, people engaged in running coaching institutes etc suffered a huge economic loss. The situation is so bad that many families have nothing to eat now owing to the long lockdown. Many people are not being able to buy

their daily medicines. Many people have no money to pay for their room rents.

Understanding the situation of the people belonging to the vulnerable section, the state Governments of many states ran many pro-poor schemes to address the immediate need of the vulnerable people. For example, the Delhi Government provided daily food to over 6.5 lakhs people in Delhi. The Delhi Government also extended the financial assistance of Rs 5000 every month to the daily wage earners and drivers in Delhi. The Kerela Government facilitated the loan of Rs 2000 crore through Self Help Groups and another 2000 crores were distributed as village employment assurance programme

for April and May among many other schemes. Similarly, the Uttar Pradesh Government declared Rs 353 crore package to 3.53 million daily wage earners. Most of the states provided rice and all other essential commodities free of cost to the people belonging to economically weaker section. There were schemes to help these people survive this difficult time.

However, there were no such financial assistance schemes in our state to help the marginalised people. Though there was a scheme to provide a fixed quantity of rice, potato, cooking oil, pulses and onion to the families which do not have Government jobs in their families. However, the implementation

of the scheme was extremely poor. There were irregularities and arbitrariness in the distribution. The quantity was greatly curtailed and many deserving families were denied the benefits. As the lockdown has almost ended but the distribution process is not over yet. Besides this, there are any such schemes to support the daily wage earners, the unemployed, people engaged in private sectors whose source of income was completely cut off during the entire lockdown period, the drivers who could not earn even a rupee during the entire lockdown period.

At such backdrop, to assist the marginalised people whose source of livelihood was completely halted owing to the lockdown we place

following charters of demand in favour of the categories of the people mentioned above:

1. House Rents and rents of the business establishments of the category of the people whose income during the lockdown was nil be completely waived off.

2. Financial Assistance to the unemployed, the people engaged in private sectors like salesmen, helpers, daily wage earners etc.

3. Financial Assistance to the driver's community and their annual Taxes be reduced if not completely waived off.

4. Complete transparency of the funds allocated to fight COVID-19 from the central Govt and through CM Relief Fund.

*[the writer is Central Committee Member, SPYF]*

## SICA contributes Rs 10 lakh to CM's Relief Fund

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 14 APR:** Sikkim Cricket Association [SICA] has contributed Rs 60 lakh to fight Coronavirus (Rs 50 lakh to Prime Minister's Relief Fund through BCCI & Rs 10 lakh to Sikkim Chief Minister's Relief Fund), a press release from SICA president, Lobzang G Tenzing informs.

"I'm well aware that some of our SICA Members are already in the frontline fighting the Virus like Police

Personals, Heath Care workers, NGO's etc. and we are extremely grateful and proud of their contribution to the Society. We pray for their safety and good health," Mr Tenzing states.

Stating that PS Tamang (Golay) as the Chief Minister of Sikkim has shown great resilience and foresight in tackling COVID-19, Mr Tenzing has appealed to all members of SICA family to contribute to CM's Relief fund to fight COVID-19.

## New Zealand PM says country appears over worst virus, but no time to let up vigilance

**WELLINGTON, APR 14 (AP):** New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Tuesday said the country appears to be over the worst of its coronavirus outbreak but it is no time to let up on strict lockdown measures.

The country recorded just 17 new cases of the virus on Tuesday, bringing the total to 1,366. There were also four new deaths, the worst day yet on that measure, bringing the total number of deaths to nine.

New Zealand lawmakers will decide early next week what will happen after an initial four-week lockdown ends on April 22.

Meanwhile, as the economic effects of the coronavirus outbreak hit New Zealand, the operators of the country's Burger King restaurants have been placed into bankruptcy proceedings.

Also, one of the country's largest

media companies has announced plans to shed 200 staff.

New Zealand has been in a strict lockdown for nearly three weeks and all restaurants, including those serving fast food, have been temporarily closed.

Company receivers KordaMentha said Tuesday they hope to sell dozens of Burger King restaurants to a new franchise owner and get them reopened after the lockdown ends.

NZME, which runs a number of radio stations and newspapers, announced to the New Zealand stock market it is reducing its workforce by 15% through layoffs and by not filling vacant positions. NZME stock is down by more than 60% over the past year.

Earlier this month, German company Bauer Media announced it was closing its New Zealand operation and would no longer publish many of the country's weekly magazines.

# Ministers inspect Lal Bazar meat stalls, allow reopening

**GANGTOK, 14 APR (IPR):** Animal Husbandry Minister, Lok Nath Sharma and the Minister for Urban Development and Food & Civil Supplies Departments, Arun Upreti made a joint inspection at the Non Veg Building (Meat Retail Outlet), Lal Bazar, Gangtok, today.

Ministers were accompanied by the Mayor Gangtok Municipal Corporation, SS Choudhary, Municipal Commissioner, HK Chettri, Assistant Municipal Commissioner, Karma W Chankapa, Director, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Sangey Bhutia, Additional Director, Dr Madan Shanker, Joint Director, Dr Sunita Joshi, designated officers from Food Safety Standard Cell, Health and Family Welfare Dept and others.

The visiting team minutely inspected the Non Veg Building and professed with the present state of cleanliness maintained in different meat retail



outlets. It may be mentioned here that the building was enforced to close down since 01 Apr, 2020, with a strict instructions to maintain proper hygiene and cleanliness.

The visiting team decided to give relaxation to continue selling of meat from tomorrow

while the sellers need to adhere to the norms and directives for maintenance of hygiene and cleanliness.

Both the Ministers listened to the grievances of the meat sellers and assured to address their necessary requirements at the earliest.

While speaking to

media, Minister Sharma urged the concerned sellers to treat the Non Veg Building equally as our personal health and to ensure healthy environment in their daily business. The state government is putting all possible efforts to adopt preventive measures to fight against COVID-19 crisis.

He also assured that

the Non Veg Building will be upgraded to a well equipped infrastructure with required facilities as per the directives of the Chief Minister, in near future. It is our utmost duty to take extra care and hygiene at slaughtering stage to avoid further complication, he added.

## Started opening up as people were taking my narrative away from me: Gomez

**LOS ANGELES, APR 14 (PTI):** Singer Selena Gomez says she decided to take control of her narrative following the close media scrutiny that made her a tabloid fodder.

The 27-year-old star, who is the fifth most followed person on Instagram with 173 million fans, said a lot of what was being said about her in the media was not true.

This is why she decided to be open about her mental and physical health, the singer-actor told Amy Schumer for Interview magazine's latest cover story.

"My intention was never to become a tabloid. So when things kind of happened that way, it got out of control.

And then I was like, 'Wait, none of this is true', Gomez, who shot to fame at the age of 15 with Disney Channel's 'The Wizard of Waverly Place', said.

Gomez said the way the media has sometimes tried to explain things has made it sound really bad."

"When in reality, there's nothing wrong with the fact that I needed to go away or that I fell in love," she said referring to her relationship with ex Justin Bieber.

"I had to start opening up because people were taking away my narrative, and it was killing me. I'm so young, and I'm going to keep changing, and no one has the right to tell me how my life's going," she added.

## Migrants may have expected opening of borders: Deshmukh

**MUMBAI, APR 14 (PTI):** The hundreds of migrant workers who gathered outside Bandra railway station here on Tuesday might have expected that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would order reopening of state borders, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said.

They were told by the police that borders are not going to be opened and the situation was now under control, he said.

The migrants were assured that the state government will make arrangement of food and accommodation for them, following which the crowds dispersed, he said.

"Lakhs of workers from other states work in Mumbai.

They expected that the PM would open the state borders today.

They felt they could go to their home states," the minister said.

"But the PM and CM (Uddhav Thackeray) took a very good decision to extend the lockdown. The state borders will remain sealed. Permission will not be given to go to other states from Maharashtra," he said.

"We have assured them the state government will arrange facilities for stay and food, and the situation is under control now," Deshmukh told Marathi news channel ABP Majha.

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## 2,000 contacts of COVID-19 patient traced: Meghalaya CM

**SHILLONG, APR 14 (PTI):** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Tuesday said the health authorities have established 2,000 contacts of the 69-year-old doctor of Bethany Hospital here who has tested positive for COVID-19.

The senior doctor has no travel history except that his son-in-law, who is a pilot, had been to COVID-19 infected countries, and had returned home on March 22. The doctor tested COVID-19 positive on Monday

"We have established 2,000 contacts approximately. We have also established about 200 primary contacts including his immediate family members and those who had come in close contact with the patient," the chief minister told journalists here. He said the state health authorities have conducted 90 tests and are waiting for results.

"We will do more tests," he said. The COVID-19 infected person is under category C and is not on life support which is category D, the chief minister said. The state government has also instructed Bethany Hospital to shut both its branches here in the state capital and in Nongpoh in Ri-Bhoi district - and all staff are to mandatorily stay under quarantine.

Asked how the doctor got infected, the chief minister said his son-in-law had been to some of the infected countries.

"Most likely, the story of the travel history and the 14-day quarantine period could be the reason. We are investigating," he said.

A senior Health official said the authorities are investigating how the pilot son-in-law entered the state and whether he jumped quarantine and came in contact with the family during his stay.

The pilot, however, did not show any symptoms of coronavirus and was asymptomatic case, the official said.

The chief minister said the state cabinet has decided to revert to its earlier lockdown/curfew protocols wherein public vehicles are barred from plying on the roads and there will be no inter-district movements except for essential commodities.



# LIC steps up response to combat the impact of COVID-19

## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 14 APR:

LIC, recognizing the “unforeseen difficulties” being faced by the people in the wake of the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, has announced relaxations to mitigate the hardships being faced by policyholders in payment of premium.

LIC has announced that for all policies, where premium is due in the month of March and April 2020, grace period has been extended by one month. For February premiums where

grace period was expiring after 22 March, relaxation is allowed upto 15 April, an official press release informs.

The release adds that wherever policies can be revived without any evidence of good health, this can also be done online.

LIC's policyholders can pay premiums through any of LIC's digital payment options without any service charge. Policyholders do not need to register on the website for paying premium but can pay directly by giving basic details.

Premiums can also be paid by downloading mobile app LIC Pay Direct. Policy premiums are accepted through Net banking, Debit Card, Credit Card, and on payment apps such as Paytm / PhonePe / Google Pay/ BHIM /UPI etc. Premiums can also be paid at all IDBI and Axis Bank branches and in cash through Common Service Centres (CSC), operating at block level.

LIC of India has assured its policyholders that the Death claims arising due to

COVID-19 shall be treated at par with other causes of death and payments shall be made on an urgent basis. Corona virus has already claimed many lives and efforts are being made by LIC officials to locate Covid-19 victims on the basis of lists provided by government authorities to help the families.

Already, death claims due to COVID-19 under 16 policies have been settled without losing any time, the release adds.

LIC is taking every possible step to ensure that people stay

covered through insurance during these difficult times. In addition to providing facilities for online premium payments for existing policies, LIC has made five plans available online and these can be purchased with ease while at home. These plans are LIC's Tech Term, which is a Pure Protection Plan, LIC's Jeevan Shanti Annuity plan, LIC's Cancer Cover, LIC's SIIP and Nivesh Plus – the last two being ULIP plans which are available at very attractive NAV.

## Migrant workers come out on road; say want to travel back home

MUMBAI, APR 14 (PTI):

Hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announed extension of the coronavirus-enforced lockdown till May 3, a large number of migrant workers who earn daily wages came out on road here on Tuesday demanding transport arrangements to go back to their native places.

Daily wage workers have been rendered jobless ever since the lockdown was announced late last month to stem the spread of COVID-19, making their life a constant struggle.

Though authorities and NGOs have made arrangemnets for their food, most of them want to go back to their native places to escape the hardship brought by the sweeping curbs.

According to a police official, daily wage earners, numbering

around 1,000, assembled at suburban Bandra (West) bus depot near the railway station and squatted on road at around 3 pm.

The daily wage earners, who reside on rent in slums in in the nearby Patel Nagri locality, were demanding arrangement of transport facilities so that they can go back to their native towns and villages.

They originally hail from states like West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

One of the labourers, who did not reveal his name, said, NGOs and local residents are providing food to migrant workers, but they want to go back to their native states during the lockdown which has badly affected their source of livelihood.

“Now, we dont want food, we want to

go back to our native place, we are not happy with the announcement (extending the lockdown),” he said, looking dejected.

Asadullah Sheikh, who hails from from Malda in West Bengal, said, We have already spent our savings during the first phase of the lockdown. We have nothing to eat now, we just want to go back at our native place, the government should made arrangements for us.

Another labourer, Abdul Kayyun, said I am in Mumbai for last many years but have never seen such a situation. The government should start trains to shift us from here to our native place.”

Heavy police deployment was made at the protest site to tackle any untoward incident.

Personnel from other police stations were called at the spot to maintain order, the official add.

## Woman from Mizoram tested COVID-19 positive in Mumbai

AIZAWL, APR 14 (PTI):

A 22-year-old woman from Mizoram has tested positive for novel coronavirus in Mumbai, state Health Minister Dr. R. Lalthangliana said on Tuesday.

The woman reached Mumbai in February and was admitted to a private hospital for treatment of some other ailment. As she was suffering from fever, her swab sample was tested and the result was found to be positive on Monday, the minister said in a statement here.

She was then shifted from the private hospital to the ICU of a designated Covid-19 facility, he said.

She was found asymptomatic on Tuesday and her sample was collected for another test,

the result of which is yet to come, he said.

Lalthangliana said the sample of the woman's husband has not been collected and it would be done only when required.

The health minister said a total of 48 people from Mizoram - 16 patients and 32 attendants - are currently lodged at the Mizoram House in Mumbai.

Medical experts from Mumbai Municipal Corporation on Tuesday screened the inmates and have taken samples of 22 of them for test, he said.

They did not show any symptoms of novel coronavirus, he said.

The minister said that the Mizoram house was sanitized with disinfectant on Tuesday.

He said the state government has traced

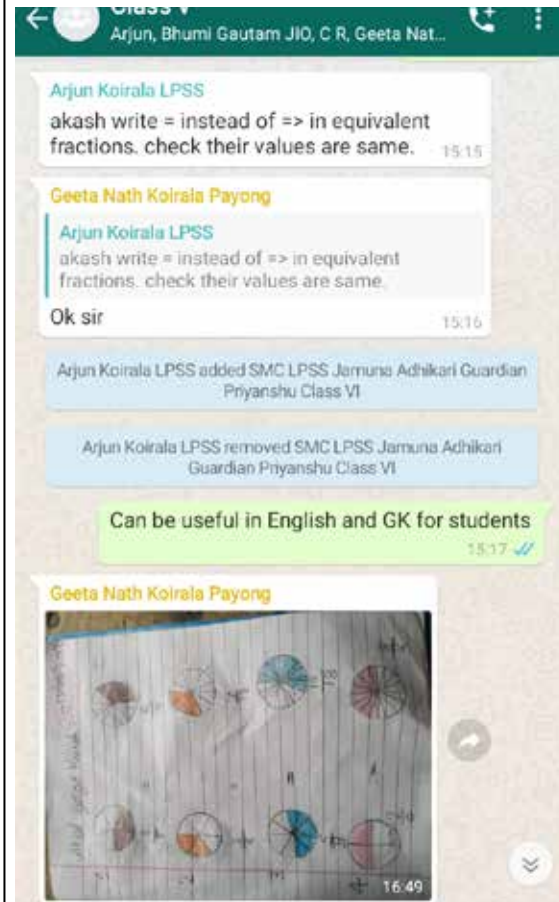
11 people, who came into contact with the woman and returned to Mizoram from Mumbai after March 15, were put under home quarantine.

A senior doctor in Shillong, who belonged to the Mizo community, has also tested positive for novel coronavirus on Monday, Lalthangliana said and asked the Mizo people in Shillong not to panic as the patient was stable.

The lone COVID-19 patient undergoing treatment in Mizoram is recovering, the minister said.

The patient, who was pursuing higher studies in Amsterdam, tested positive for novel coronavirus on March 25.

## Online learning begins at Lingi Payong School



### SUMMIT REPORT

LINGI PAYONG, 14 APR:

In view of ongoing shutdown of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lingi Payong School has shifted to online mode to facilitate e-learning of students, a press release informs.

Subject-wise WhatsApp groups have been created for Class X while class-wise WhatsApp groups have been created for primary classes specially Classes IV and V.

Besides this, video lessons are constantly being uploaded on the school's Facebook page to enable students view and learn various concepts, the

release adds.

Parents and students are regularly updated about the new ways and means of online learning.

“Although e-learning has been initiated, it is very difficult to reach each and every student as most of the parents and students do not have smartphones and also there is problem of poor internet connectivity in the area,” the Headmaster explains.

Students have also been informed to learn through Gurushaala WhatsApp Group, various TV Channels like Swayam Prabha, CBSE and NCERT channels on DTH and you tube channels.

## US lawmakers slam Chinese sinking of Vietnamese vessel in South China Sea

BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, APR 14 (PTI):

A bipartisan group of powerful American Senators has slammed China for sinking a Vietnamese vessel in the disputed South China Sea, terming it a “flagrant violation” of international law at a time when the world is combating the COVID-19 pandemic that spread partly due to Beijing's “cover-up and negligence”.

Last week, the State Department expressed serious concern over reports that China sank a Vietnamese fishing vessel in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea.

This incident is the latest in a long string of Chinese actions to assert unlawful maritime claims and disadvantage its Southeast Asian neighbours in the South China Sea, said State Department Spokesperson Morgan Ortagus.

The Pentagon said that the Chinese behaviour stood in contrast to the United States' vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, in which all nations, large and small, are secure in their sovereignty, free from coercion, and able to pursue economic

growth consistent with accepted international rules and norms.

A joint statement was issued on Monday by Senators Cory Gardner and Ed Markey, chairman and ranking member of Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy, along with Senators Jim Risch and Bob Menendez, chairman and ranking member of Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

“I condemn in the strongest terms China's sinking of a Vietnamese vessel in the South China Sea,” Gardner said.

“This is a flagrant violation of international law and comes at a time when nations around the world are focused on combating the COVID-19 scourge that spread in part due to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) cover-up and negligence,” he said.

Gardner urged the US administration to use every policy tool at its disposal, such as those provided by Asia Reassurance Initiative Act, to push against the CCP's “malign behaviour” and continue to vigorously re-assert the international rights of freedom of navigation and overflight in the

South China Sea.

As authoritarians exploit the pandemic to erode rule of law, the US must continue to call out Beijing's efforts to assert unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea, said Markey.

“The United States will not turn a blind eye to military coercion of Southeast Asian countries. Like the rest of the world, the Indo-Pacific is focused on fighting the coronavirus, but the United States must continue to assist our regional partners and allies in defending their freedom of navigation, the free flow of commerce, and adherence to international agreements in the face of Chinese aggression during this pandemic,” Markey said.

The reports of a Chinese Coast Guard vessel sinking a Vietnamese fishing vessel and China's other activities on illegally reclaimed features in the South China Sea are deeply concerning, Risch said.

These are just the latest examples of the CCP's blatant intimidation of its neighbours to assert its excessive maritime claims, he said.

“The CCP is

undermining regional stability at a time when the international community should be coming together to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States will work with our allies and partners in the region to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific and promote peaceful activity in the South China Sea,” Risch said.

“At a time when the international community should be working together to face a common foe, China's continued divisive and aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea is deplorable. The first duty of any coast guard is to guarantee safety at sea not to contribute to lawlessness and danger,” Menendez said.

The Chinese coast guard's culpability in the collision and sinking of a Vietnamese fishing vessel is unambiguous, and constitutes unsafe and unacceptable maritime behaviour, deserving of condemnation, he added.


“All nations in the Indo-Pacific must be able to live free from coercion in a region governed by international law, norms and institutions. I strongly believe that the United States must stand up and support efforts by regional institutions and our allies and partners to ensure freedom of

navigation and economic opportunity throughout the entire Indo-Pacific,” Menendez said.

China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas. Beijing has also made substantial progress in militarising its manmade islands in the past few years, which it says it has the right to defend.


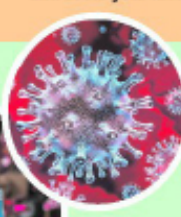
China claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea. But Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and Taiwan have counter claims. In the East China Sea, Beijing has territorial disputes with Japan.

The South China Sea and the East China Sea are stated to be rich in minerals, oil and other natural resources. They are also vital to global trade.



**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.

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

Here are the basics, in Geographical terms - the South-East quadrant of Sikkim, its footprint spreading across the alignment from Mangan to Dikchu, also sweeping through Rabong, and then to Gangtok up to Rongli, is the maximum rainfall zone of the State. The South-West corner around Hilley in West Sikkim is the other wetter zone and between the two sits the dry-to-the-extent-of drought-prone spread of Namchi and its immediate surroundings.

This much, anyone who has lived in Sikkim for a decent stretch of years will know instinctively. Ironically, this obvious fact has remained blindsided for far too long in the State, catching its people and planners on the wrong foot every time the skies open up, which is very often. Readers of this newspaper would have noticed that all four districts have been going through the motions of monsoon preparedness, but most of these have been limited to clearing jhoras and drains, with the connectivity and supplies situation receiving only nominal attention. Perhaps the reasonably tame monsoons of the past few years have inflicted some somnolence, but then again as any resident will point out, monsoons play in cycles of three years in Sikkim – three years of normal or less than normal rains and then three years of ferocity. The last monsoon was normal, and if past trends, also recognized by experts are any indication, Sikkim is being set up for a strong wave of rains this year. News reports about monsoon preparedness are included in the paper as much to inform people of the preparedness plans as for them to check back when the slides begin.

The concerned departments getting into monsoon readiness mode is a welcome sign, but what cannot be ignored is that monsoons become a challenge essentially because the drier months are allowed to pass without enough preparedness work getting done. For instance, meteorological data informs that Sikkim has an average of 160 days of rainfall every year (for Gangtok, this is 184 days!). That is a staggering number of wet days, but the data also reveals that the capital has almost as many days without rain and for a region kept on tenterhooks with what the clouds bear, the dry months need to be used well – to reinforce, repair, rebuild and restore. And yet, planners in the various civil works agencies of the State and Central governments refuse to make use of the dry months to get done with their digging and scrapping. It goes without saying that any work which, in any way, weakens slopes and alignments should be banned safely ahead of the monsoons because Sikkim's slopes have a tendency to come down like dominos at the slightest disruption once the monsoon sets in. With slightly over half the year spent with rainfall [albeit of varying intensities], planning here should be with the wet weather in mind. In these days of climate change, this becomes even more important because while the number of days with rainfall might come down, the intensity is projected to increase and that is even more destructive.

One needs to also bear in mind is that the rash of freak weather that Sikkim has been experiencing in recent years is no longer 'freakish' because it is consistent with climate change patterns. Sikkim now has a Department of Science & Technology with a longer name which includes "Climate Change". The policy-makers should realign the focus of this department to counsel other arms of the government on climate change adjustments and preparedness. Any student who has prepared for an essay/ debate competition on climate change will tell you that the intensity of climatic phenomenon is projected to reach extreme levels with climate change. Sikkim is already experiencing this. There might be fewer days of rainfall, but the days when it rains, it will pour. Departments working on civil projects like roads, hydel projects or construction should be the ones who get briefed on what to expect in the coming years and adjust their designs and work schedules accordingly. Storm drains, for example, should not be designed to just receive 8 cm of rain over an entire day in May, but to evacuate this inundation within an hour. Having been caught off-guard should not be accepted as an excuse anymore. Water conservation, an important issue around the word as in Sikkim, needs to be approached in a more pragmatic and interdisciplinary manner with intelligent and informed plantation efforts because a hill/slope which conserves water well is also less prone to slip away. Done right, the spring rejuvenation mission should not only address the future needs of water supply, but also stabilise the slopes of Sikkim which have been debased by too much 'development' and too little respect for traditional knowledge...

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# Staying Put or On the Move: Coronavirus puts class dimension of mobility into sharp focus

ROBIN COHEN

THECONVERSATION.COM

The coronavirus pandemic demonstrates the salience of class to the spread, containment and impact of infectious diseases. The virus hitches a ride on us, the humans who act simultaneously as its hosts and victims. Human mobility and immobility – who can and can't move and why – is therefore crucial to understanding the virus. And these issues of mobility have significant class dimensions.

Some researchers have argued in recent years that we are living through an "age of migration", characterised by international movements of people. Yet the coronavirus crisis also shows this is an age of involuntary immobility for many people around the world.

One of the earliest cases in the UK of COVID-19, the disease linked to the new coronavirus, concerned a businessman who had contracted the virus in Singapore in January 2020. He passed it to others in a French ski resort, before returning to the UK and spreading the virus in his home city, Brighton. He carried the virus while asymptomatic, so bears no moral responsibility. However, his privileged lifestyle and ability to travel internationally provided the virus with an effective delivery service.

THOSE WHO COULD, MOVED

In Italy, Spain and France, those who had the means of transport rapidly exited highly infected areas in early and mid-March, some acting as carriers of COVID-19. In Italy, when a draft decree locking down

Lombardy was leaked, thousands headed to their extended families in the south. In Spain, a newspaper reported 4km of traffic jams on motorways heading out of Madrid. The Spanish flight was largely to second homes.

In France, Parisians were met at Cape Ferret in south-western France by hostile graffiti. A local lamented on a Facebook page: "It's very worrying to see all those people fleeing Paris – that will certainly spread the virus."

The exodus from New York also started in mid-March. One provider of private healthcare fielded 75 telephone calls a day asking whether it would be better to stay in the city or go to the Hamptons, Aspen, St Barts (an island in the Caribbean catering to the wealthy) or Palm Beach. Private jets were chartered and some even sought to establish their own ICUs together with ventilators in their second homes.

FORCED TO FLEE

Movement by the poor has taken a very different form. As factories, offices and businesses shut, daily-paid and migrant workers were discarded without ceremony. In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's order to lockdown the country from midnight on March 24 provided a traumatic illustration of the plight of the poor. Desperate migrants tried to return to their home areas, with crowded stations becoming giant petri dishes on which the virus could thrive.

At first, the Uttar Pradesh government was sympathetic,

sending 1,000 buses to pick up the state's workers in Delhi. When many returnees were greeted with hostility, the pickup was abruptly stopped on March 31, causing further chaos. In the city of Bareilly, returnees were assembled and sprayed with disinfectant.

TWO SIDES OF IMMOBILITY

In sharp contrast, my wife and I provide a simple example of the privileged immobile. We have a comfortable house and a small garden. We are digitally connected with colleagues, friends and relatives worldwide and have paid for streaming services that keep us moderately entertained. We are able to work from home. Of course, life is weird and unnatural, but we experience no pressing hardship.

The immobility of the poor could not be more different. In Tehran, as economic activities crumpled, about 1.5 million children who made their living from selling commodities such as flowers, cigarettes and chewing gum to car owners and those on public transport suddenly had no means of survival.

In the Johannesburg townships, social distancing is almost impossible, while mass unemployment (already at 30%) resulting from the lockdown may mean mass poverty and even starvation. In Barcelona, there are also notable class differences in infections – in the working-class district of Roquetes the rate is 533 per 100,000, compared with 77 per 100,000 in upmarket Sant Gervasi.

NEW WINNERS AND LOSERS

Any sophisticated class analysis of the pandemic will become more nuanced as more data from around the world emerges. Given the current difficulties of collecting data, the most immediately useful indicators of variation will be infection and death rates according to the socioeconomic characteristics of different wards and districts.

But it's already apparent that sections of the working class will be impacted differently. A China-wide survey conducted after the Wuhan lockdown found that 75% of truckers had lost their livelihoods, while taxi drivers' incomes had collapsed. In contrast, many more workers were recruited to deliver food. In other words, COVID-19 creates new winners and losers.

Only the privileged immobile can afford to ride it out. As lockdowns begin to loosen around the world, it's possible that workers who can prove they are immune will be considerably advantaged. A new form of stratification could arise between "CIs" (certified immune persons) and "DKs" (don't knows). Becoming a CI might be a chosen strategy for many desperate and impoverished people who may seek to infect themselves and get back to work with a certificate in hand. Perhaps it is an exaggeration to imagine forged certificates of immunity or distinctive CI tattoos. But these are desperate times.

*[the writer is Emeritus Professor, Senior Research Fellow, Kellogg College, University of Oxford]*

## 4 Ways to be a Good Landlord in a time of Coronavirus

EMMA BAKER & REBECCA BENTLEY

THECONVERSATION.COM

The COVID-19 pandemic is creating major challenges for our residential rental system. The lockdown of businesses has meant an almost overnight loss of jobs or reduced hours for many Australian workers. Many tenants are struggling to pay their rent.

While the release of a government package to help residential renters has been mooted for weeks, the only concrete outcome so far has been a halt on evictions and some progress in individual states and territories. The rapid sequence of events has left renters – that's about one in three Australian households – and landlords in uncharted territory; they must renegotiate their terms.

We asked stakeholders from across the rental market – landlords, tenants, advocacy groups, housing researchers – for ideas on what ethical landlords might do in these highly uncertain circumstances. We discuss some of these ideas later in this article.

LANDLORDS ARE TAKING A HIT TOO

But, first, it's important to remember it isn't just renters who are struggling. Some landlords are too. For many of Australia's more than 1 million "mum and dad" landlords, COVID-19 has dealt a blow to their relatively safe bricks-and-mortar investment.

On the other hand, landlords may have access to mortgage holidays and low interest rates. Some are also calling for relief on rates and other costs associated with their investment properties so they can better support their tenants.

At the coalface, responses from landlords, letting agents and property managers have reportedly varied widely. The official position of the Real Estate Institute of Australia is that a "a moratorium on evictions during these challenging times is the correct thing to be doing". However, there have been widespread reports of threatened evictions, suggestions renters draw on super or use savings to pay rent, or that rent reductions will only

come in the form of deferred loans.

PULLING TOGETHER IN A CRISIS

Australians have rallied together in this crisis – checking up on older neighbors, for instance, or delivering groceries or home-baked bread to isolated friends and relatives. This is grassroots stuff, which has largely happened separately from, and in advance of, formal government responses. People see COVID-19 as a shared challenge, and there is a lot of goodwill.

In this environment, while landlords are rightly concerned to protect their investment and keep paying their mortgages, many also have a competing concern to help out their tenants.

The problem is, in such a dispersed system of ownership, there is no template for how they might help, and no library of what other landlords are doing, so each mum and dad investor is responding in different ways. Anecdotal evidence suggests some letting agents have been contacting landlords for direction on how to respond to requests for rent reductions and gauging attitudes to eviction.

An added complication is that many of the responses that aim to help out tenants may be counter to the best interests of letting agents, who receive a percentage of rental income.

4 WAYS LANDLORDS CAN HELP

Here are some ideas in response to our questions of rental stakeholders:

- Talk directly with tenants if you can, or at least ask to be included in the conversation.

- Everyone will have different pressures. Work out what position you are in. Find out what concessions your bank may be offering, what inflexible costs (such as council rates) you have, what landlord insurance covers you for, and how much of the pain you are prepared to share – and for how long. Ask your tenants to do the same. This will form a good, and hopefully fair, basis on which to compromise.

- Use letting agents



who reflect your values as a landlord. You may wish to have a chat to your agent and ask that they notify you if tenants are having trouble. Some landlords have gone further and requested that all communication between agent and renter is cleared by them first.

- Share success stories. One of the motivations for this article was the lack of information for mum and dad investors who are trying to be good landlords. Options to offer tenants as part of negotiations might include rent reductions, or deferred rent, but there aren't many examples of what other landlords have done out there.

It would be helpful if landlords shared the solutions they have developed, what worked and what didn't. Even though every case will be different, having positive case studies available for other landlords to emulate will be valuable.

The full extent of COVID-19 and its effect on employment, housing and the economy just isn't known. And neither is the full detail of what government assistance may be provided – or the implications for landlords, tenants and agents.

IMPACTS ARE AFFECTING

EVERYONE

It's worth remembering that we're all in this together. Everyone in the rental system – tenants, landlords and agents – will feel the effects of the pandemic.

Many households have already been tipped into post-COVID unemployment, many landlords will also have lost their jobs, many agents are overwhelmed by trying to keep businesses afloat while quickly mediating temporary solutions. And many want to do the right thing – tenants and landlords alike.

Everyone is waiting to know the shape and impact of any government response. Although it is difficult to adequately plan long-term responses to hardship, individual landlords can do a lot in advance of government help, and in addition to it.

*[Emma Baker is Professor of Housing Research, School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Adelaide; Rebecca Bentley is Professor of Social Epidemiology, Centre for Health Equity, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne]*



## AAI to conduct online programmes for archers and coaches

**KOLKATA, APR 14 (PTI):** The Archery Association of India (AAI) is set to start online programmes to reach out to the coaches and players with the country under lockdown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A member of France's 1992 Olympic gold-winning team Pascal Colmaire, who is the World Archery development and education director, is in the list of 17 experts who will impart online lessons from Thursday.

"When you are in lockdown and not doing anything it's better to do some online training. We have prepared an online training module for our archers. Something is better than nothing," Archery Association of India president Arjun Munda told PTI.

Colmaire will deliver upon 'Expansion' -- the name World Archery use for the action to get the click or trigger, while the list includes national coaches Sanjeeva Singh and Purnima Mahato among others.

There will also be coach development programme and sports science lectures on physiology, biochemistry, strength-conditioning, nutrition and doping

among others till May 12. "It will help in the academic side of the archers. We have to see whether they can make some rectification through online training. At least you will get some tips. What else can you do in this situation."

The Indian archers are back at their respective bases barring the trainees from Army who are in lockdown at the camp in Pune, which is one of the COVID-19 hotspots.

Keeping this in mind, the AAI is "discussing" to shift the recurve national camp from Army Sports Institute there to Jamshedpur.

The three-time former Jharkhand Chief Minister Munda said their priority is safety of its players and once the lockdown is over they would take a call.

"Nothing has been decided as yet. We have archery facility in Pune and Jamshedpur also. They can train anywhere. It's under discussion. We will take a call after assessing situation till then I cannot comment anything on it," Munda said.

"First, we have to come out of lockdown. We don't want to do something to bring

coronavirus. Let this pandemic eases we will take a call. Till then I cannot comment on this. Jamshedpur has a practice facility. But it's difficult to say in lockdown period."

Pune has been the venue for recurve national camp since Rio Olympics 2016 with 16 archers in men's and women's sections slated for Olympic trials on March 24 and 25 before it was suspended ahead of the Janata Curfew on March 22.

All, barring the Army-based archers returned to their respective hometowns, and the fate of the national camp will be known after normalcy is restored.

The ASI, Pune boasts of a world-class facility for archers including an electronic scoreboard, a podium and it remains to be seen if top archers including Army man Tarundeep Rai, and Indian number one duo of Deepika Kumari and Atanu Das will consider a change in venue.

"We have to keep in mind the players' and coaches' comfort. It's has to be alright for them. Mind clarity is also needed. Practice won't be of any help if there's no comfort," he said.

# Kolkata eateries deliver 'Poila Boisakh' platter at home

**KOLKATA, APR 14 (PTI):** People in Kolkata had to give restaurant-hopping a miss this 'Poila Boisakh' (Bengali New Year) amid the lockdown, but that did not stop them from gorging on scrumptious meals on the occasion, with several restaurants delivering food online.

One thing is for sure, Bengalis, although not in the right frame of mind in the midst of COVID-19 crisis, will yearn for their quintessential favourites on this day, Debaditya Choudhury, a top restaurateur in the city, said.

"Being a Bong

(Bengali) myself, I knew people here will crave for good food today. We are ready with signature items including Awadhi Handi Biryani, Qalmi Kabab, Chicken Irani, Metiabruz Biryani. Anyone can order them online via food apps," Choudhury, owner of Oudh 1590, said.

"Since Good Friday, we, too, have also been supplying food items at doorsteps. Currently, our services are available in parts of south Calcutta, Salt Lake, Rajarhat and north Calcutta," he said.

Ishiaque Ahmad of Shiraz Golden restaurant

said, foodies are locked up at home, and many of them are not keen to order food online, but Poila Boisakh is an exception.

"Since Kolkatans are known for their love for biryani, kebab, rezala and basic non-vegetarian mughlai dishes, we are anticipating an increase home delivery orders today - say by round 10 per cent," he said.

Ranjan Biswas, the managing director of Saptapadi a sought-after restaurant serving Bengali cuisines said the outlet had decided on a few innovative items

for the occasion, but the lockdown has dealt a blow to its resources and led to losses worth Rs 6 lakh.

Asked why the eatery has not opted for the online delivery model to partially offset the losses, Biswas said, "We are not taking any chances. Safety of our employees and customers is of primary concern for now. If the staff remains healthy we can run the show, once the situation gets better."

A group of women entrepreneurs, running a home delivery business,

have also whipped up traditional fare, comprising 'Basanti pulao', 'fried eggplants', 'mutton curry' and 'chutney', for south and central Kolkata residents.

"We have got 52 online orders so far. We will try our best to cater to our customers with the help of our delivery boys. However, there are certain sensitive pockets, where movement has been barred. I am not sure if we will be able to reach out to our customers in those areas," Bibi Mukherjee, a member of the startup, said.

## Lockdown woes: Need haircut? Do it yourself or wait

**HYDERABAD, APR 14 (PTI):** A self haircut would have been beyond the skillset of most people but no longer is it so under the COVID-19 lockdown.

Making a virtue out of necessity is coming true with many experimenting hairdressing on their own as saloons are out of bounds for nearly a month now in view of the shutdown to check spread of coronavirus.

Saloons in Telangana like elsewhere are closed since the third week of last month in view of the lockdown, which has now been extended by the state government till April 30 and by the Centre till May 3 keeping in view the grim situation.

"My 10-year old son was in urgent need of

hair cut. I decided to cut his long hair myself at home. It may not be a perfect job, but I was able to handle it to acceptable level, said Mahendar Noogoori, a journalist with a vernacular daily here.

Several netizens also shared pictures and videos of their skills with a pair of scissors.

Fareed Mohmed, a 35-year-old IT professional and wildlife photographer, said he tried to cut his hair by himself and ended up leaving it in a mess.

"Finally, my father came to my rescue, took a trimmer and reshaped it," he said.

Prabhakar Kumar, a self-employed from Anand Nagar, took upon the job of haircut for himself and also for his

two-year-old son.

"In view of summer it was getting irritating for my son whose hair had grown and covered his ears. I took out my trimmer and did hair cut not only for my son but also for myself. My son liked it and gave a smile after the "perfect" haircut," Kumar said.

But, not all want to take the scissor themselves and there have been instances of people sacrificing their French beard like Sravan Kumar, a 35-year old musician.

I used to get it trimmed every week. Some days ago I tried to do it myself, but couldn't. So I completely removed it. I will trim it once the lockdown is over, Kumar said smearing his smooth cheeks.

On the other side, the barber community has been hit hard though they admit they cannot afford to work considering their own safety and that of their customers.

Working President of Telangana Nayee Brahmin Aikya Vedika, the apex body of barbers in the state, Hari Prasad said the association members were following the government orders as compliance was necessary to contain spread of the coronavirus.

It will be dangerous for all of us as we will have to handle people from all walks of life. Hair cutting or shaving is done with close proximity of the customer. We will be servicing several customers a day. So it is not advisable to open

shops at this juncture and do our job," he told PTI.

According to him, if salons are kept open there is a chance that people with travel history might also come.

"That's why we asked our community members to follow the lockdown procedure, he added.

Association president Maddikunta Lingam Nayee said about 15 lakh members of the community in the haircutting profession need government support as they are losing livelihood for nearly 40 days.

He also requested the government to waive power bills for salons besides extending financial support to them to overcome the present situation.

## One more tests positive for COVID-19 in Assam, count 31

**GUWAHATI, APR 14 (PTI):** One more person, who had come in contact with those who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi, tested positive for novel coronavirus in Assam on Tuesday, taking the state's tally to 31, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The 31 cases include one person who had died due to the virus.

The latest COVID-19 patient hails from Goalpara district. The case was confirmed late on Monday night and further details will be available during the day, he said.

This is the fourth confirmed case in

Goalpara district, where all other three COVID-19 patients had attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi's Nizamuddin area.

Thirty of the 31 confirmed cases in Assam are linked to the event.

Two persons had tested positive for coronavirus on Monday while a person from Nagaland also tested positive for the disease and is currently being treated at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital.

Of the 3,209 samples tested in Assam, 1,421 were linked to the Nizamuddin event, of which 30 have tested

positive and results for 34 are awaited, Sarma had said.

All the persons who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat event have either been quarantined or isolated, he said.

Sarma had said that the condition of all the COVID-19 patients, barring a cancer patient who had tested positive in Silchar, is stable.

The highest number of cases was reported in Golaghat district at 9, followed by four each in Goalpara, Nalbari and Morigaon, three in Dhubri, two in Cachar, one each in Hailakandi, Kamrup (Metropolitan), Kamrup, Lakhimpur and South Salmara districts.

## Govt sets up 20 control rooms to address wage-related issues, migrant workers' plight amid lockdown

**NEW DELHI, APR 14 (PTI):** The Labour Ministry on Tuesday said it has set up 20 control rooms on pan-India basis to address wage-related grievances and to mitigate problems faced by migrant workers amid the lockdown period to contain the Covid-19 crisis.

The Prime Minister has announced extension of the nationwide lockdown till May 3 with conditional relaxation from April 20 in some areas on the basis of evaluation of the situation.

The workers, especially migrant labourers, are the worst among due to the lockdown as a large number of them either faced pay cut or job loss.

According to an International Labour Organisation assessment, 40 crore informal sector workers

in India could be pushed deeper into poverty due to this lockdown.

"The Ministry of Labour and Employment has set up 20 control rooms under the Office of Chief Labour Commissioner (CLC) (C) on pan-India basis due to issues arising in the backdrop of Covid-19," it said in a statement.

These control rooms have been set up to address wage related grievances of workers employed in the Central Sphere, the ministry said, adding that it would also work to mitigate the problems of migrant workers through coordination with various state governments.

These call centres can be accessed by the workers through phone numbers, Whatsapp and e-mails.

The control rooms are being managed by

labour enforcement officers, assistant labour commissioners, regional labour commissioners, and deputy chief labour commissioners of the respective regions.

The functioning of all 20 call centres is being monitored and supervised by Chief Labour Commissioner (C) of Head Quarter on daily basis, the ministry said.

All the concerned officers/officials have been advised to adopt a humane approach to assist the aggrieved workmen to the maximum possible extent and ensure delivery of timely relief to the needy ones, it added.

Earlier, the Labour Ministry had also issued an advisory to employers to desist from any retrenchment or pay cuts during the lockdown period.



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## Tour de France on hold after Macron extends outdoor sports ban until July

PAUL MACINNES

PARIS, 14 APR [THE GUARDIAN]: Lingering hopes that the Tour de France might take place as scheduled this summer appear to have been dashed following an intervention by the French president, Emmanuel Macron.

In an address to the nation on Monday night, Macron said France would remain in lockdown until 11 May in a continued attempt to stop the spread of Covid-19 and that no large public events would be permitted before 11 July.

The 107th edition of the Tour had been due to begin on 26 June in Nice, with the Colombian Egan Bernal hoping to defend his title against his Ineos teammate Chris Froome; the former champion due to return to the event after missing the 2019 race following a career-threatening crash.

There has as yet been no official confirmation of the postponement of

this year's race, with a formal announcement expected later this month. But the event would no longer be able to take place in front of spectators as originally planned and the Tour's organisers have already rejected the possibility of staging the race behind closed doors.

Speaking earlier this month to the French media, the race director of the Tour, Christian Prudhomme, said: "In the words 'Tour de France', the most important one is 'France'. It's the health situation of the country that counts.

"There's only one thing that I want, and that's that the Tour de France takes place this summer. That's not for the Tour de France's sake; more that if it doesn't take place, it'll mean that the country is in a catastrophic situation, which we really hope isn't the case."

He went on to insist, however, that: "Le Tour is the embodiment of

France and it will not take place behind closed doors"

Despite its status as a predominantly summer sport, cycling has not been immune from the effects of the coronavirus crisis. The women's Tour de France has already been postponed. The men's Giro d'Italia has been called off too, along with the Monument one-day races: Milan-San Remo, Tour of Flanders and Paris-Roubaix. The WorldTour series has been suspended since 14 March.

Last week the sport's governing body, the International Cycling Union, furloughed staff and cut executive salaries, citing the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics as a primary factor.

The UCI has said it is working with stakeholders to draw up a new road racing calendar for 2020, giving priority to the Grand Tours and Monuments.

## We may not see international football until 2021, says Fifa vice-president

LONDON, 14 APR [THE GUARDIAN]: Most international football might not be played until 2021 because of coronavirus pandemic travel restrictions and the need to give club competitions the chance to resume, one of Fifa's vice-presidents has said.

Victor Montagliani, a Canadian who is president of the governing body for North and Central America and the Caribbean (Concacaf), has been heading a Fifa working group formulating plans to deal with the implications of the sport being largely shut down since last month.

Fifa already has called off international matches that were due to be played in March and June. Montagliani, Concacaf's president, believes the September, October and November windows for national team matches could also be scrapped.

"I think that might be a bit of a challenge, not so much because of just the health issues around the world and the various degrees of preparedness, but also committing to international travel as soon as we come back," he said. "I think that domestic football is a priority. September is still in the books, but I

would garner to say that I'm not sure it's there on solid ground the way things are trending right now."

The return of fans into stadiums could be dependent on a vaccine for Covid-19 being ready, which might not be until 2021. "If we get the green light to play a football match. I highly doubt that first football match will be with fans. I just can't see that," Montagliani said.

"I think that would be taking a massive risk. I'm pretty sure it'll be a phased-in approach, just like the rest of society is going to be, in terms of us trying to get back to normal here."

## Will be interesting to see Kohli adapt to empty stadiums: Lyon

SYDNEY, APR 14 (PTI): Cricket in front of empty stands came up for discussion between Australian off-spinner Nathan Lyon and pacer Mitchell Starc with both wondering how Indian captain Virat Kohli would adapt to such an atmosphere if their Test series this year is held without fans.

India are set to play a four-match Test series in Australia later this year. But with the COVID-19 pandemic wreaking havoc, speculation is rife that the games could be held behind closed doors.

This led Lyon and teammate Mitchell Starc to discuss how Kohli's on-field demeanour would change without the backing and noise of the crowd, something the Indian captain thrives on.

"He's probably good enough to adapt to any scenario. But I was talking to Mitch Starc the other day and we actually said that if we are playing with no crowd, it'll be quite amazing to see Virat trying to rev up the (empty) seats," Lyon was quoted as saying by 'cricket.com.au'.

"It's going to be a little bit different, but Virat is a superstar. He'll be able to adapt to any climate that we're able to play in," Lyon added.

Sports calendars have been shredded worldwide, including international and domestic cricket all over.

Last month, Australia's ODI series against New Zealand was called off after the first match. The 32-year-old Lyon is still excited by the prospect of the series against India.

"I'm excited about the prospect of India coming out to Australia, it's up there with the biggest series alongside the Ashes. They're an absolute powerhouse of the cricket world, and to have those guys out here is going to be fantastic," he said.

Lyon remains hopeful that the home series will go ahead, with or without fans.

"Playing in front of crowds or no crowds is out of our control, we've got to follow the advice of all the amazing medical people around the world. "I haven't thought about no crowds or massive crowds, it's just about the opportunity of playing against India again," he said.

Australia tasted their first Test series loss to India on home turf in 2018-19 when Kohli's men handed them a 2-1 defeat.

However, with the likes of Steve Smith

and David Warner, who were under suspension last time, and Marnus Labuschagne, the Australian batting unit seems pretty solid now.

"They had the wood over us last time they came over here but we're a much stronger Australian cricket side at the moment, and I'm just unbelievably excited about playing them here at home."

With several series' being postponed and an already booked Future Tour Program, doubts over the future of the maiden ICC World Test Championship have also cropped up.

India occupies the top spot with 360 points followed by Australia on 296 points while New Zealand are ranked third 180 points.

"I think it's important that the two best teams over that period compete in the Test championship final, and obviously I want Australia to be there," Lyon said.

"But that's a decision for the big bosses of the ICC and everyone else involved, we'll just have to wait and see."

At the moment Lyon is enjoying spending time with his family.

"I can't recall when cricket took the back seat of my life" Lyon said.

# Bryant remembered on anniversary of NBA farewell

LOS ANGELES, APR 14 (AFP): The anniversary of Kobe Bryant's 60-point NBA finale was recalled by his widow, Vanessa, in an Instagram post remembering the late Los Angeles Lakers legend.

"My husband worked his ass off for 20 years," Vanessa Bryant wrote of her superstar husband, who died in a January 26 helicopter crash with daughter Gianna and seven others.

"Gave it his all. All he wanted was to spend time with our girls and me to make up for lost time. He wanted to be there for every single milestone and special moment in our girls' lives." The post included a video featuring highlights from the Lakers' 101-96 victory over the Utah Jazz on April 13, 2016.

Bryant scored 60 points in that, his final



game in a 20-year NBA career that included five championships.

The video includes a moment showing Bryant with his family at courtside, hugging

Vanessa and kissing daughters Natalia and Gianna.

The couple's third daughter, Bianka, was born in December of 2016 and their fourth, Capri, was born last

June.

"He only got to enjoy 3 years and 9 months of retirement," Vanessa Bryant wrote.

"We had 2 more daughters, he won an Oscar, he opened Granity

studios, he became a 5x best selling author and coached Gianna's basketball team in that time. She worked hard and gave her all 7 days a week just like her daddy ... This is just senseless.

## Lockdown extension: Hockey India postpones all Nat'l C'ships indefinitely

NEW DELHI, APR 14 (PTI): Hockey India on Tuesday postponed all its rescheduled national championships indefinitely after the national lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic was extended till May 3.

These tournaments were rescheduled to start on April 29 and continue till July 3 but have been suspended for now.

"...Hockey India has taken a decision to postpone the remaining annual 2020 Hockey India National Championships keeping in mind the well-being of all our stakeholders including the players, Coaches, organisers, fans and officials," Hockey India President Mohd Mushtaque Ahmad said.

"These tournaments have been postponed indefinitely and we will announce new dates basis the evolution of the



COVID-19 situation in India," he added.

Ahmad said HI is working with the relevant central and state government departments to ensure that all necessary precautions are duly taken to maintain public health.

He said the participating member units must use this period

to continue to update the member unit portal with player details.

"We would like to thank the various Hosts and Member Units who have been extremely co-operative to accommodate the request to postpone.

"I would also like to urge all the participating Member Units to continue to update the

Member's portal with player's registrations and use this time effectively," Ahmad said.

The 2020 Hockey India National Championships that have been postponed indefinitely are as follows:

10th Hockey India Junior Women National Championship 2020, Ranchi, Jharkhand (B

& A Division) earlier scheduled from April 29 to May 9 and May 7 to May 17 respectively.

10th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship 2020, Chennai, Tamil Nadu (B & A Division) earlier scheduled from May 14 to May 21 and May 19 to May 30 respectively.

10th Hockey India Sub Junior Women National Championship 2020, Hisar, Haryana (B & A Division) earlier scheduled from May 3 to May 14 and May 12 to May 23 respectively.

10th Hockey India Sub Junior Men National Championship 2020, Imphal, Manipur (B & A Division) earlier scheduled from May 28 to June 4 and June 3 to June 13 respectively.

10th Hockey India Senior Men National Championship 2020, Guwahati, Assam (B Division) earlier scheduled from June 20 to July 3.

## Tokyo 2020: "No B Plan" for another Olympic Postponement

TOKYO, APR 14 (AP): Tokyo organizers said Tuesday they have no "B Plan" in the event the Olympics need to be postponed again because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Masa Takaya, the spokesman for the Tokyo Olympics, said organizers are proceeding under the assumption the Olympics will open on July 23, 2021. The Paralympics follow on Aug. 24.

Those dates were set last month by the International Olympic Committee and Japanese officials after the coronavirus pandemic made it clear the Olympics could not be held as scheduled this summer.

"We are working toward the new goal," Takaya said, speaking in English on a teleconference call with journalists.

"We don't have a B Plan."

The severity of the pandemic and the death toll has raised questions if it will even be feasible to hold the Olympics in just over 15 months. Several Japanese journalists raised the question on the call.

"All I can tell you today is that the new games' dates for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games have been just set up," Takaya said.

"In that respect, Tokyo 2020 and all concerned parties now are doing their very best effort to deliver the games next year."

IOC President Thomas Bach was asked about the possibility of a postponement in an interview published in the German newspaper Die Welt on Sunday.

He did not answer the question directly,



but said later that Japanese organizers and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe indicated they "could not manage a postponement beyond next summer at the latest."

The Olympics draw 11,000 athletes and 4,400 Paralympic athletes and large support staffs from 206 national Olympic committees.

There are also questions about frozen travel, rebooking hotels, cramming fans into stadiums and arenas, securing

venues, and the massive costs of rescheduling, which is estimated in Japan at 2 billion- 6 billion.

Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshio Muto addressed the issue in a news conference on Friday. He is likely to be asked about it again on Thursday when local organizers and the IOC hold a teleconferene with media in Japan.

The other major question is the cost of the delay; how much will it be, and who pays? Bach said in the

Sunday interview that the IOC would incur "several hundred million dollars" in added costs. Under the so-called Host City Agreement, Japan is liable for the vast majority of the expenses.

"This is impossible to say for now," Takaya, the spokesman said.

"It is not very easy to estimate the exact amount of the games' additional costs, which have been impacted by the postponement."

Tokyo says it's spending 12.6 billion to organize the Olympics. But a Japanese government audit published last year says the costs are twice that much. Of the total spending, 5.6 billion in private money. The rest is from Japanese governments.



# China moves to block new virus flare-up on Russian border

**BEIJING, APR 14 (AP):** China is facing a new coronavirus flare-up along its remote northern border with Russia, far from the epicenter of Wuhan, where it has all but declared victory in the battle against the pandemic.

The frontier has been sealed and emergency medical units rushed to the area to prevent travelers from bringing the virus back from overseas. The virus originated in China, which is now striving to keep it virus out while the U.S. and other countries struggle to bring their own epidemics under control.

The long, porous border of sprawling Heilongjiang province and neighboring Inner Mongolia has much less travel than major cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

But it is a popular alternative route into the country. Many Chinese live and work in Russia, where China has major investments encouraged by warm ties between Beijing and Moscow.

By Monday night, a field hospital was operating in the city of Suifenhe along the Russian border, equipped with a negative pressure lab to diagnose new cases.

Staffed by 22 experts from the National Institute for Viral Disease Control and Prevention under the Chinese Center for Disease Control

and Prevention, it will conduct nucleic acid tests and other forms of research to aid in virus control and prevention, allowing the city to test up to 1,000 cases per day, according to the CDC.

Suifenhe, a city of just under 70,000 that is frozen-in for much of the year, has at least 243 imported COVID-19 cases out of nearly 1,000 confirmed and suspected cases.

More than 100 people in the area have tested positive for the virus but showed no symptoms. Recent arrivals from Russia account for nearly half of China's imported cases.

We are facing a truly grave situation in the northeast as represented by Suifenhe, National Health Commission expert Wang Bin said Monday at a news conference. Up to now our medical resources in the area have just not been sufficient.

The CDC said the field hospital has been supplied with negative pressure tents, nucleic acid extractors, virus detection kits, throat swab sampling tubes and thermal cyclers used to enhance segments of DNA via the polymerase chain reaction.

Roughly 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) northeast of Beijing, Suifenhe's markets selling warm clothing, cell phones and daily items usually do a



thriving business with Russian visitors starved for choice on their side of the border.

That trade has gone quiet in recent weeks, dimming prospects for a sparsely populated region whose residents have been migrating to major cities seeking jobs and better living standards.

Russia requires 14-day quarantines for all travelers arriving in Primorsky Krai and its regional capital Pogradichny, across the border. It has closed hotels to visitors and is requiring travelers to have a pass showing they are not carrying the virus. Russia closed its land border to travelers from China in January.

On the Chinese side, quarantines have been extended to a full month for people arriving by air in Suifenhe and in Heilongjiang's capital, Harbin. All land border

crossings were halted last week.

The Chinese consulate again strongly reminds Chinese citizens not to summarily make trips to the border region, the Chinese consulate in the nearby Russian city of Vladivostok said in a notice posted Monday.

As Wuhan and other regions get back to business, Chinese authorities say they will remain vigilant against a second wave of infections, particularly from those arriving from outside the country.

New cases of local infection in China have fallen to near zero after more than two months of strict travel bans and social distancing measures. Of 89 cases reported on Tuesday, all but three were detected in people arriving from abroad. It wasn't immediately clear if any came from Russia.

No new deaths were reported in the country on Tuesday, suggesting the outbreak is running its course. Last week, authorities lifted a 76-day quarantine in Wuhan, where the virus was first detected late last year, an indication that the worst may have passed.

China had recorded 82,249 cases and 3,341 deaths as of Tuesday, while 1,077 people suspected of having the virus or testing positive without showing symptoms were under isolation and monitoring.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death. The vast majority of people recover.

## Pak clerics warn govt against ban on religious congregations amidst coronavirus outbreak

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN ISLAMABAD, APR 14 (PTI):** A group of over 50 senior clerics in Pakistan has warned the government against the ban on religious congregations amidst the coronavirus outbreak and said the authorities should instead abide by religious norms and allow more worshippers in mosques to seek forgiveness from Allah.

The government has banned prayer congregations of more than five people as part of its measures to curb the spread of the deadly coronavirus, which has infected over 5,715 people in Pakistan.

Despite the government's pleas to observe social distancing, over 53 senior clerics of Rawalpindi and Islamabad belonging to the Wafaqul Madaris al Arabia on Monday held a meeting in Jamia Darul Uloom Zakaria here to discuss the ban on prayer congregations, the Dawn News reported.

The meeting -- attended by clerics representing various seminaries, banned groups, proscribed persons and political and non-political parties -- warned the authorities against the ban and said government leaders should abide by religious norms and seek forgiveness.

The warning came before the government could come up with a plan to curb the spread of COVID-19 during the holy month of Ramazan,

which will begin in the last week of April.

Pir Azizur Rehman Hazarvi, president of the Jamia Darul Uloom Zakaria in Islamabad, said, "The closure of mosques, shutting down Friday prayers and Taraweeh is unacceptable to the countrymen."

Hazarvi, who is also the patron of Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), insisted that in order to get rid of the virus, it was imperative to seek forgiveness from Allah and increase the populace in mosques.

A video clip released by the clerics on Tuesday showed leaders of various political and non-political organisations -- including JUI-F, Aalimi Tanzeem Khatam-i Nabuwat, seminaries such as Taleem ul Quran Raja Bazar and a representative of banned group Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat -- sitting in close proximity of each other.

The meeting did not acknowledge the official directives of a maximum of five persons inside mosques for the collective prayers as the clerics said that the testing times demanded more time for prayers and announced that apart from the five times prayers, Friday and Taraweeh congregations will continue.

The clerics, however, agreed to take precautionary measures like use of hand sanitisers, removal of rugs and carpets, washing of floors, cleaning of hands

with soaps and social distancing. Hazarvi said, "The senior clerics have noted that all efforts will be made to avoid clash and confrontations with the government and the state institutions."

Lal Masjid's cleric Maulana Abdul Aziz also continued to challenge the authority of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration by openly flouting the stipulated precautionary measures, the report said.

Every week, Aziz releases footages of huge congregations gathered for Friday prayers, denouncing the restrictions imposed by the government. As a result, the number of mosques organising large Friday congregations is increasing in Islamabad.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of National Health Services on Tuesday said 342 new COVID-19 cases have been registered in the last 24 hours, taking the total number to 5,716.

Punjab recorded the maximum number of 2,826 cases, followed by Sindh at 1,452, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) 800, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) 233, Balochistan 231, Islamabad 131 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) 43.

While 1,378 people have recovered, 96 died and 46 are in critical condition, the ministry said.

A total of 69,928 tests have been performed, including 3,157 during the last 24 hours, it said.

## Trump hints at consequences for China's misinformation on COVID-19

**LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, APR 14 (PTI):** US President Donald Trump has hinted that there would be consequences for China's alleged misinformation to the international community and the WHO on coronavirus, that originated from its Wuhan city last year, and has claimed 119,666 lives with nearly two million infections globally.

Trump shot back at a reporter on Monday during his White House press conference on coronavirus when repeatedly asked why there are no consequences for China.

"How do you know that there are no consequences?" Trump asked.

"I wouldn't tell you. China will find out. Why would I tell you?" Trump replied when repeatedly asked if China was going to face the consequences of the alleged misinformation.

"You're going to find out," Trump said as members of the US Congress ramped up their rhetoric and move against China.

Senator Steve Daines sent a letter to Trump urging him to end the US government's reliance on medical supplies and equipment from China and bring back drug manufacturing jobs to America in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear how relying upon China for medicine or essential medical equipment and components is detrimental to our

national security and endangers public health," Daines wrote.

"It is critically important to ensure that legislation is fully implemented as quickly as possible and that the US continues to be the world leader in biomedicine, pharmaceutical development, and medical innovation," he wrote.

Four Republican lawmakers on Monday introduced a legislation to reduce the reliance on China.

Protecting our Pharmaceutical Supply Chain from China Act gives companies economic incentives to manufacture pharmaceuticals and medical devices in the US, makes it easier to know which country a drug came from by creating a list of the country of origin of all drugs marketed in the United States, and prohibits federally qualified health facilities from purchasing pharmaceutical products from China, it said.

"Relying on the Chinese Communist Party whose lies about coronavirus created the pandemic we now face for essential medicines is dangerous and short-sighted. As with 5G networks, when it comes to medical supply chains, national security must take precedence. China is an adversary that will use any US dependence as blackmail to achieve its nefarious goals," said Congressman Liz Cheney. China ran a

disinformation campaign to cover up the coronavirus crisis for weeks, putting the rest of the world at a disadvantage in combating the spread, alleged Congresswoman Elise Stefanik.

"We have become far too dependent on China, and it is time that we equip our domestic pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers to be able to efficiently produce these items here in the United States," she said.

Congressman Mike Gallagher alleged that the Chinese Communist Party's outrageous threats to withhold life saving drugs from the US endangers public health and should open eyes to the dangerous over-reliance on China in medical supply chain.

"This is a national security imperative that to many Americans, is a matter of life and death. It's past time for us to develop an aggressive plan to move critical pharmaceutical supply chains away from China," he said.

Congressman James Comer along with members of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform wrote a letter to the Director-General of the World Health Organization requesting documents relating to their assistance in the Chinese government's coronavirus propaganda efforts.

The WHO receives significant financial support from American taxpayers, including as much as USD 513 million in 2017.

The letter notes that as recently as January, the WHO promoted Chinese propaganda on social media in claiming that the coronavirus does not spread by human transmission.

The organisation likewise criticised travel restrictions implemented by President Trump, praised China's efforts to fight coronavirus even as the Communist regime was jailing doctors, and bowed to Chinese influence by delaying labeling COVID-19 a pandemic, the lawmakers said.

Another group of Senators - Marco Rubio, Marsha Blackburn, John Cornyn, Kelly Loeffler, and Joni Ernst in a letter urged Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Kelly Craft to address the crackdown of free speech in China and in countries across four continents including Turkey, Bangladesh, Niger, and Cambodia, amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The Chinese Communist Party is using this public health emergency as a thin veil to cover a crackdown on peaceful dissent and freedom of speech," the Senators wrote.

"Sadly, China is not unique in its utilization of the pandemic as an excuse to institute surveillance measures or draft new laws that are not necessary, proportionate, transparent, or time-bound," they said.

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SummitTIMES



# COVID-19 will change filmmaking and viewing experience, says Shoojit Sircar



**KOMAL PANCHAMATIA**

**MUMBAI, APR 14 (PTI):** The coronavirus led shutdown is going to change the way films are made or consumed, believes filmmaker Shoojit Sircar.

The country is currently under the lockdown, which has been extended till May 3 to contain the spread of the virus that has affected many countries across the globe.

When a change of mindset happens, there is a change. I expect it around the world. It is definitely going to change the narrative of filmmaking style and also the narrative of storytelling. It will have an effect but what kind is difficult to say as India is huge in terms of consumption, the director told PTI.

Referring to the demand for good content from the audience, Shoojit said cinema was already undergoing a transformation in India but the lockdown may accelerate the process.

There is a cinema that was changing in India but now it will take a deeper impact. I hope that we are able to see good cinema content.

With all the shootings and releases on a standstill, streaming platforms are the only source of entertainment for many who are staying home, which has led to a boom in the digital content, the director said.

Maybe in the lockdown period, people got into the habit of watching movies at home. Digital, may have a boom or is still booming when we get the real numbers. They must be doing well because that is the only consumption left at this moment. So all this impact will happen and the film industry will not get an excuse or will not escape from this kind of crisis that the world is going through.

The director said it is difficult to gauge the exact impact of lockdown and the pandemic on cinegoers.

Even if the lockdown is over by a month or two, it will take some time to gain the confidence of the audience back because people are watching (content) at home rather than going to a riskier place. It will be the general mindset.

If you ask me, that will be my mindset too. If I am not able to go to theatres confidently and watch a film then I don't expect people to watch my film also.

It doesn't seem logical that in the next three-four months

## Danny Goldman, voice of Brainy Smurf, dies at 80

**LOS ANGELES, APR 14 (PTI):** Veteran actor and voice artist Danny Goldman has died at the age of 80.

The actor was best known for voicing Brainy Smurf in the Hanna-Barbera animated series The Smurfs and for playing the medical student whose questions drove Gene Wilder's irate doctor to stab his own leg with a scalpel in the first scene of Young Frankenstein.

Goldman's agent Doug Ely confirmed the news on

Facebook.

It's with great sadness that I must tell you that Danny Goldman has passed away. He passed peacefully at home today amongst family and friends, after having suffered a couple of strokes around New Years, Ely's statement read.

He also paid tribute to Goldman calling his client and friend of 40 years one of a kind.

I've known Danny since 1980 when I first became

at least things will be smooth in terms of cinema watching, he added.

Shoojit had two films lined up for release - Gulabo Sitabo set to arrive in cinema halls on April 17. The film reunites Ayushmann Khurrana with Shoojit, eighth years after their hit, "Vicky Donor" and also features megastar Amitabh Bachchan. Another release was Vicky Kaushal starrer Sardar Udham Singh for January 2021.

Set in Lucknow, "Gulabo Sitabo is billed as a quirky family comedy, penned by Sircar's longtime collaborator Juhi Chaturvedi. They have worked together on "Vicky Donor", "Piku" and "October".

I had a film Gulabo Sitabo' to be out this month (April) but it is definitely going to get postponed. While for another film (Sardar Udham Singh) editing was going on, we have stopped it when the lockdown was announced. We are waiting whenever it opens and we will restart work on it.

It is too early to say anything. The entire industry needs to come together and sit. It will be a bottle-neck jam.

Shoojit, meanwhile, is keeping himself occupied by cooking in this lockdown period. I am cooking. That is also the most creative work. I have developed this habit for a few years and I enjoy it. I am doing general household work, reading a bit and less of movie watching. I am watching a lot of documentaries of all kinds. Documentary films have always been my passion, I have done documentaries.

The director said it is hard to accomplish something creative at a difficult time like this.

I am taking it as it comes. I will have enough time to do that when the lockdown opens. My mindset is not there, it is around the world like what is happening.

In this kind of situation sometimes your mind also doesn't work as freely as we can. So I am keeping it the way it is flowing with the world the way the world is going through. Shoojit said it is not necessary that one has to always stay occupied with work. I am trying not me, a lot of people. We all have a habit of doing something or the other, first time I have got the chance of not doing something all the time. The one lesson that I am taking is you don't have to do everything or a lot of things or a lot of thinking, just let your mind be sometimes blank also.

an agent and he first started casting on his own. We became fast friends and have been for the last 40 years. He was quite the actor as well.

Goldman was born in New York City in 1939 and grew up in the area. He graduated from Columbia University in 1961 and began his screen-acting career in 1963 with a role on popular soap opera General Hospital.

In his six-decade long career, Goldman made cameo

appearances in various shows including Hawaii Five-0, Colombo, The King of Queens and Criminal Minds.

In the international circuit he broke out with his stint on The Smurfs. He voiced the bespectacled intellectual Smurf known as Brainy for the 1980s series and reprised the role in a recurring parody on the 2005-11 Robot Chicken.

His last TV role was as Detective Bob Zablonsky on Criminal Minds.



**ONE TRUE PIECE!** The actress, Malin Akerman gets some fresh air while rocking a one-piece swimsuit on a lovely day in Los Angeles.

## Hope this nonsense of communalising virus stops: Sudhir Mishra

**MUMBAI, APR 14 (PTI):** Filmmaker Sudhir Mishra says it's about time people keep their politics aside while dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and stop "communalising" the situation.

The "Hazaaroon Khwaishein Aisi" director said the pandemic can be fought only if people stand united.

"I hope this nonsense of communalising the virus stops. I hope we realise we are all one. We have to keep our politics and our different opinions on the political structure of the country apart when things like this happen," the filmmaker told reporters over a Zoom call.

Mishra said the pandemic stands to completely change

all aspects of entertainment, from film shootings to theatrical viewing.

"I see a lot of changes. Most of the difficulties will be faced by those who shoot. I don't know how 250 people will shoot till a vaccine is not in place... Will you test everyone, then head outdoor to shoot?"

"Post this, we will start living differently, being cautious would become a habit. When will people start venturing into cinema halls, perhaps OTT will become more important, maybe the big films will directly release online, we will get to know in the next one-and-a-half years," he said.

Mishra said these are extremely difficult times for the daily wage workers and

one should help them in any which way possible.

"We have to start looking at ourselves totally anew. Like Dharavi. I think you have to do a lot for those people. It is a rich man's virus which has been transferred to the poor and they are the ones who will suffer the most. They didn't go to China or on holidays to Spain."

The filmmaker's webseries "Hostages" recently made its TV debut on Star Plus.

Many channels are airing their web content on television during the lockdown which has made it impossible to shoot for daily episodes.

The first season of the Hotstar Special featured Tisca Chopra and Ronit Roy in the lead.

your abilities. This will help you open the door to miracles.

Tip: Believe in yourself even when it's hard to.

Cancer:

Self-care looks different for different people. Some find sunlight and fresh air refreshing. Others find joy in baking themselves a cacao cake and engaging in other creative activities. Tune in and ask yourself what you need today as old wounds come up. While you're at it, let go of the idea of productivity and having everything under control. Remember, control is an illusion, and being is just as important as doing.

Tip: Allow yourself to be.

Leo:

This could be an especially challenging time in the Leo HQ, with old wounds resurfacing. Don't deny yourself the opportunity to face your demons, Leo, the skeletons that have been hiding in the closet for a while now. Embrace the virtues of courage and vulnerability at the same time. While you're at it, know that you have the permission to break down completely and cry your eyes out. This too shall pass. Know that you will find your true strength as you learn to face your shadows.

Tip: Release the old wounds.

Virgo:

As humans, we love our narratives, don't we? Narratives that portray us as the victims of our own stories. It's true that certain things didn't work out the way you would have liked them to. But the play of the external circumstances is a constant, Virgo. What we do have control over is our reactions to what plays out. So take back your power and steer your chariot in a direction that you feel called towards. Remember, your inner compass always knows the way.

Tip: Show up for what you believe in. Take the first step.

Libra:

Here's the thing, Libra: the Universe doesn't like to be micromanaged. The best way forward is to set your intentions and follow through with the right course of action. All the resources you need will come to you at the right time. Trust. Many doors are opening for you right now, at this moment. Blessings are rushing in a myriad of forms and from many directions. Remember to stay open and say a prayer of gratitude for the positive changes.

Tip: You are entering a new and exciting chapter in your life.

Scorpio:

There are days you wake up feeling the most radiant version of yourself. Then there are days when doom and gloom seem to be a constant. This is all a part and parcel of light, Scorpio, the interplay of shadow and light. Spirit wants you to take a deep breath, re-centre, and come back to the now. Many miracles are being planned for you at the moment. Lay your trust in the Great Mystery.

Tip: Spirit is co-creating with you now and in every moment. Call upon your guides.

Sagittarius:

You are not where you want to be, and that's okay. We all have our own timelines, Sagittarius. Trust that. Rushing the process won't get you anywhere. In fact, it will take you a few steps back. What Spirit wants you to be mindful of is the manner in which you communicate with yourself. Replace the negative self-talk with kind words. Rely on words of affirmation to get you through the tough times.

Tip: You are exactly where you need to be.

Capricorn:

Sometimes, you let your practical side take the wheel. At other times, you get woo-woo with your manifestation game. But today you're being asked to find a middle ground between the masculine and the feminine; the logical and intuitive aspects of your being. Both of these sides will play an integral role in helping you find the answers you need for your evolution. Yes, anxiety and paranoia are likely to get the better of you, as they always do. The key is to tap into your inner Buddha and find a way to centre yourself.

Tip: Find a way to balance the logical and intuitive aspects of your being.

Aquarius:

Forgiveness is a process, Aquarius. Some days you wake up feeling liberated from the past. On other days, the demons find a way to catch up with you. It's all a part of the healing process. Watch the rise and fall of your emotions instead of getting attached to them. What Spirit wants you to know: this too shall pass and soon. Remember, forgiveness is never about the others. It's about freeing ourselves from the old story and making space for love to pour in.

Tip: Forgiveness heals.

Pisces:

What we perceive as a loss is often a blessing in disguise, Pisces. Focus not on what is being taken away from you, but what it's creating space for. This will help you look at the given situation from a higher perspective. Some of you may find your lack mentality catching up with you because of the circumstances we have found ourselves in collectively. Work through the fears and insecurities you are facing right now.