



**IMPORTANT TO HAVE HONEST
EXPRESSION IN STAND-UP
COMEDY: AMIT TANDON**
pg 08

**SOCIETY'S MOST VULNERABLE
WILL BE HIT AS COVID-19 CASES
RISE IN POORER ECONOMIES**
04

**NO FEVER BUT BLAHS: TOM
HANKS SHARES HEALTH AMID
CORONAVIRUS SCARE**
pg 08



SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 72 | Gangtok | Thursday | 19 March 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

CABINET SANCTIONS

GANGTOK, 18 MAR (IPR)
The Cabinet meeting held on 16 Mar, 2020 at 5.00pm approved and sanctioned the following proposals:

1. Development of Eco-Friendly Tourist Complex at Than-gu near Chopta Valley, Lachen, North Sikkim at Rs.910.00 lakhs
2. Land compensation of Rs.37,61,582/- for construction of approach road at Menglee, South Sikkim.
3. Land compensation of Rs.32,35,227/- for the development of Tourist Infrastructure at Sunfu Waterfall at Daramdin in West Sikkim.
4. Forest compensation for construction of tourist infrastructure at Sapta Kanya Waterfall at Tuming Lingee in South Sikkim at Rs.20,42,758.00.
5. Flood Damage Repair along NH310 from Tashi View Point to Mang-an in North Sikkim at Rs.94.98 lakhs.
6. Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of Sikkim at Rs.440.305 lakhs.

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Unhappy with departmental disinterest, Gyalshing College students to continue protest

**RUDRA KAUSHIK
GYALSHING, 18 MAR:**

Students of the Government Degree College here, as a mark of protest against delay in constructing college infrastructure and the Education Department's continuing disinterest in addressing the demands of the students, raised black flags at the college even as they themselves sported black armbands and raised slogans against the state government's failure in providing them proper academic facilities.

The students have been sitting in protest at the college since 16 March demanding that the college construction work be completed within one year and the Education Department submit progress reports to the Students' Representative Council on bi-monthly basis and that the infrastructure development be undertaken as per the Detailed Project report prepared in 2010.

Students of the college led by their SRC members proceeded to

Gangtok today where a meeting with Education Minister and department officials was scheduled for the evening.

Gyalshing College SRC president, Sanjay Hang Limboo, informed that only SRC members were invited to the meeting and underlined that the protest was not of the SRC alone hence all interested students should be allowed to attend the meeting.

They further informed that efforts are also

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SSU students' protest continues despite Univ shutdown

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 MAR:**

The dharna by students of Sikkim State University [SSU] in front of the SSU building in Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College complex in Tadong has entered its third day. Students of the university have been standing firm with their decision to

continue their protest until the Education Minister, Additional Chief Secretary of Education Department and Vice-Chancellor of SSU address them on their demands.

A notice issued by SSU Assistant Registrar has also been pasted on the building of the university. The notice states that as

per the notification of the Home Department, the Sikkim State University has been closed with immediate effect till 15 April and any gathering of students is also prohibited as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the State of Sikkim and any agitation/demonstration by

turn to pg 02

Hotels directed to not take bookings for lodging or functions

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 18 MAR:**

Tourism and Civil Aviation Department has issued a notice today directing all hotels and homestays to not take any bookings for stay or weddings/functions/

parties till 15 April or till further notice.

The department has also advised tourists who are in Sikkim to cancel further stay and proceed to their respective home towns at the earliest.

Local public have

also been advised to refrain from visiting all tourist destinations in Sikkim to maintain social distancing.

Ropeway/cable car at Tsomgo lake and Namchi has been shut with immediate effect.



Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Government of India



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help you

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Practise Social Distancing... Safety comes first!

Do's



Maintain at least 1 metre distance in hospitals, malls, market places, restaurants, public transport, etc.



Work from home and avoid meetings, classes, tutorials, workshops, etc., as far as possible



Keep number of guests minimal if social events cannot be postponed

Don'ts



Visiting crowded or public places



Non-essential social, commercial, religious, cultural, sporting events, etc.



Shaking hands and hugging as a matter of greeting



Non-essential travel



Tourist trips

Together we can fight
COVID-19!

If you feel unwell (Cough, fever or difficulty in breathing),
avoid exposure to others and immediately call the helpline numbers

For further information call
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,
Government of India's 24x7 Control Room Number

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Email to: ncov2019@gov.in , ncov2019@gmail.com



mohfw.gov.in



@MoHFWIndia



@MoHFW_INDIA



mohfwindia

davp 17102/13/0025/1920

SKM to undertake COVID-19 awareness drive in Gangtok

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 MAR:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha has announced plans for its volunteers to undertake a mass awareness campaign on COVID-19 in Gangtok on Thursday.

This awareness campaign will be held at the SNT complex, the taxi stand near West Point Senior Secondary School and Deorali Taxi stand, an SKM press release informs.

SKM volunteers will be assembling at the SNT complex at noon and proceed from there, it is informed.

The party has invited all interested persons to join their campaign at the appointed venues.

East-South traffic redirected to Namchi-Namthang-Mamring axis

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 MAR:

DC East has issued an order today directing that vehicular traffic from East District and Rangpo passing through Rangpo to Melli be diverted through Namchi-Namthang-Mamring road.

This is being done in view of precautionary measures being taken due to COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

The DC has directed SP Traffic [East], SHO Rangpo and SHO Gangtok to enforce the directions with immediate effect.

CONTACT

SUMMIT TIMES REPORTERS

SINGTAM

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MANGAN/ DIKCHU

9832612485/

9434011213

GANGTOK

8116388176

9832424750

8016270440

CABINET SANCTIONS...

7. Grants of Rs.30.00 lakhs to Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency (SSOCA).

8. Implementation of National E-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGP-A) phase II in Sikkim at Rs.55.55 lakhs.

9. Implementation of Pilot Project "Development of Model Villages" under Soil Health Card Scheme at Rs.53.32 lakhs

10. Implementation of Seed Village scheme under Sub Mission on Seeds and Planting Materials (SMSP) at Rs.47.00 lakhs.

11. Implementation of CSS Scheme-National Bamboo Mission 2019-20 at Rs.930.59 lakhs

12. Grants-in-aid of Rs.100.00 lakhs to various Religious Institutions.

13. Secure Himalaya Project at Rs.161.08 lakhs.

14. Rs.1139.01 lakhs for Strengthening, Modernization and Improvement of Transmission and distribution system of Raj Bhawan, Mintogang, High Court, VIP Area and surrounding areas in Gangtok, East Sikkim.

15. Construction of 45 m Span SFB over Khaling Khola under Ben Namprik GPU at Rs.52.85 lakhs.

16. Improvement of Pavement and Drainage System along road from Ranipool to Lower Syari in East Sikkim at Rs.378.48 lakhs.

17. Improvement of Pavement and Drainage System along Dhajay to Barbing Road in East Sikkim at Rs.288.29 lakhs.

18. Implementation of various Roads under PMGSY II (Batch I) at Rs.104.68 crores.

19. Construction of 3050 houses under SGAY at Rs.489.22 crores and Rs.45.05 crores for providing Television and furniture to 3050 numbers of houses under SGAY.

20. Under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)- i. Central Share of Rs.508.00 lakhs and State Share of Rs.5.00 lakhs for year 2018-19

ii. Rs.51.44 lakhs as State Share for 2019-20.

iii. Rs.125.60 lakhs as total RGSA allocation for 2019-20

21. Construction of 30 mtr span Steel bridge over Naray Khola along Tshalumthang to Tareythang Road in East Sikkim at Rs.2, 01, 75,318.00 lakhs.

22. Construction of 30 mtr span Steel bridge over Duray Khola along

West prepares to set up COVID-19 District Task Force

GYALSHING, 18 MAR (IPR): Keeping in mind the global situation and the Novel COVID-19 infections, the West District Administration held a preparatory meeting for setting up of District Task Force to tackle the pandemic Novel COVID-19 at the Conference Hall, Rabdentse, West Sikkim.

Chaired by Karma R Bonpo, DC West along with PVG Satish, ASP West and Karma L Lepcha, ADC West the meeting was called to tackle and limit the outbreak of the COVID-19 in the district with all possible measures and to chalk out the possible preventive measures.

The District Collector West informed that the situation in the world has worsened and hence it is the duty of every individual to treat this as a personal responsibility and try their best to follow instructions laid down by the WHO and the Indian Government.

He mentioned that the containment of the outbreak is nearly impossible however, with following up of proper instructions the number of infections and cases can be minimized. He urged every official to take the matter seriously and with utmost sincerity in dealing with the following of instructions. He appealed during the



meeting that the participation of the public is the main foundation in minimizing the outbreak.

He informed that inter-district and intra-district travels need to be minimized, social gathering and departmental meeting need to be averted and postponed, all tourists' spots need to be closed for tourists. Gathering of more than 25 people needs to be averted and monitoring of citizens travelling from other states needs to be done.

The Transportation Department needs to sensitize the taxi drivers about taking preventive steps and sanitize their vehicles frequently. Similarly, other departments need to work in close coordination amongst themselves as

this is a situation which concerns all.

He also informed that non-essential services like Voter IDs; Aadhaar Cards; Ration cards would be stopped in order to reduce public gathering as a preventive measures. He also mentioned that public needs to maintain social distancing and isolation in order to keep themselves safe.

He urged them to follow the directives chalked out by the District Administration in order to save themselves and others from the COVID19 virus. He also asked all to retrospect the case studies of other countries and learn from their mistakes and follow Health Advisories issues for public interest.

He informed that the

taining social distancing and practicing good hygiene.

Further, the DC West asserted that no Government vehicles are to leave the district without informing the DC and prior permission. He also informed that Officers should be stationed at the district to tackle the outbreak. He also mentioned that since the pandemic is alarming the district needs to be ready for the worst case scenario and be prepared to tackle it.

The District Control Room would soon be operational and all citizens who are travelling from other states and coming to West Sikkim will have to fill out Self Declaration Forms for contact tracing and surveillance of disease. He also urged the Police Department West Sikkim to maintain database for those people coming from outside Sikkim.

The Health Department has been directed to work on the procurement plan for medicines, masks, ventilators and set up a 10 bedded ICU in the district for the Corona Victims.

He also informed that illegal hoarding and selling of essential commodities at higher prices would be strictly dealt with by the District Administration.

Swami Sadanand meets North officials

MANGAN, 18 MAR (IPR):

Member National Commission for Safai Karmachari, Mahamandleshwar Swami Sadanand Maharaj, Government of India, New Delhi, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment who was on three days tour to North Sikkim from 15 to 18 Mar, 2020 held a meeting with the District Magistrate, Tenzing T Kaleon alongside ADC (Dev), Somnath Adhikari, ASP/ North, Tseten Palzor, SDM, Mangan, Karma Thendup Bhutia and other officers from various department of the district on Wednesday.

During the meeting, DC/N, Mr Kaleon said that the main objective of the meeting was to ap-

praise the present status of the "Safai Karmachari of the district - their working facilities, social & welfare upliftment".

After a discussion at length over various issues of safai karmachari with district officials, Private Secretary to Shri Mahamandleshwar Swami, Shri Rahul suggested to the district officials to ensure that the benefits and facilities being provided by the state and central government should be reached to the safai karmachari and their family. On top of that, Shri Rahul has asked to the MEO/Mangan Nagar Panchayat to submit all the achievement of the Mangar Nagar Panchayat to the Ministry of Justice & Empowerment, Gol.

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Program on Waste Management Rules held in North

MANGAN, 18 MAR (IPR):

A press release issued from the office of the Additional District Collector-Development Rural Management & Development, Mangan, North Sikkim informs that a day long programme on Solid Waste Rules, 2016 and Plastic Management Rules, 2016 was conducted by the Rural Development Department at Zilla Bhawan, Mangan, North Sikkim, on 13 Mar, 2020, the programme commenced at 10.30 am.

At the outset ADC (Dev) RDD, Somnath Adhikari, Mangan welcomed everyone present and requested for active participation from the

participants.

The resource persons for the programme were Sr Scientific Officer, BK Chettri, JSA, Kalpana Sharma and JSA from state Pollution Control Board, Shamir Raj Gurung, Sikkim Forest Department.

They highlighted participants on importance on segregation of wet waste and dry waste. Further explaining in detail all the important points on the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and Plastic Management Rules, 2016.

The programme concluded with the vote of thanks given by Block Development Officer, at 3.00pm.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.Com

SSU students'...

the students will be a violation of the State Government of notification.

The students have been on a protest since Monday demanding that SSU be provided with the required staff and facilities that a full-fledged university should have. So far, Education department officials have not met the protesting students or addressed the demands to their satisfaction.

Unhappy with...

being made to meet Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] so that their grievances can be placed directly with him in a proper manner.

The students have warned the state government that their protest will continue till the issues raised by them are resolved.

"It is sad to see the higher authorities at Education Department turn a deaf ear to issues concerning the students of Gyalshing College. We are suffering because of the failure of the Education Department," Sukmit Lepcha, vice president SRC, said.

It may be mentioned here that the college construction was sanctioned in 2010 for Rs 152 crore. Earlier, the college was being run from rented facilities near Kyongsa and was shifted to the incomplete college construction site at Arigaon in 2018.

A hostel block, library and guest rooms constructed as part of the college were appropriated for classes and are being run as academic blocks.

The college has 966 students.

KUTSHE SHEGU

49th days Kutshe Shegu (Anthyesti Kriya) of Late Chewang Dorjee Bhutia (Chewang Sardar), who left for heavenly abode on 01/02/2019 falls on 20/03/2020.

All the relatives, friends and family members are requested to join us for offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence Naya Bazar, west Sikkim.

We also express our heartfelt gratitude to those who stood by us in the time of bereavement.

Mrs. Tshering Choden (Wife)
Chopel P. Bhutia(Son)
Mrs. Sonam Paden Bhutia (Daughter)
Ugen Palzor Bhutia(Son)
Sonam Dorjee Bhutia (son)
and family members.
Contact:740723003/9734142243.



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GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

Field Day on Organic Vegetable Production by ICAR-NOFRI

GANGTOK, 18 MAR (PIB): ICAR-National Organic Farming Research Institute, Tadong, Gangtok organized Field Day on organic vegetable production under low cost protected structures for the progressive farmers of Nayabusty, Pakyong, East Sikkim on 17 Mar, 2020.

The program was organized in order to create awareness on self-reliance in organic vegetable crop production under All India Coordinated Research Project on Plasticulture Engineering and Technology under the guidance and leadership of Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR-NOFRI, Tadong.

A total of 32 progressive farmers (mostly women farmers) participated in the program. During the program, untreated vegetable seeds, organic pesticides, biofertilizers and plastics for construction of low cost plastic tunnels were distributed to the progressive farmers.

Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR-NOFRI, Tadong in his address emphasized the importance of low cost vegetable tunnel and their use for year-round vegetable production. He stressed the importance of ICAR technologies and how farmers can benefit from them. He highlighted the use of cow urine and other organic inputs and other practices for increasing the productivity of vegetables in the area. Joint Director also distributed untreated vegetable seeds and plastics to the farmers. Joint Director also guided farmers during on farm poly-tunnel demonstration.

Scientist, Dr Sudip Kr Dutta, Senior-Scale (Horticulture), ICAR-NOFRI, Tadong coordinated the program and shared the organic production technology for intensive vegetable cultivation under low cost plastic tunnel which can empower the farming community and their livelihood status in Sikkim. Dr. Dutta also practically demonstrated the construction of low cost plastic tunnel, bed preparation and crop sowing in field to the farmers.

SMS (Animal Science and Head I/C, KVK, East Sikkim), Dr PK Pathak and Scientist (Veterinary Microbiology), Dr Mukesh Bhatt, ICAR-NOFRI discussed in detail about the pig, backyard poultry, dairy and goat management techniques. They emphasized the importance of Vanaraja birds which has gained popularity in Sikkim as backyard poultry. They also briefed about the disease management in dairy, goats and backyard poultry.

Scientist (Soil Science), Shaon Kr Das talked on the organic nutrient management techniques in vegetable crops and emphasized on the need of proper management of soil acidity for balance nutrition of crops.

Block Project Manager, Shashi Subba, SRLM (RMDD), Pakyong Block, East Sikkim in her address thanked the Joint Director, ICAR-NOFRI for organizing program and imparting knowledge regarding agricultural practices and also for providing quality inputs to them. She also convinced farmers to cultivate their land and generate income to improve their living standard and become self-dependent.

Earlier, Ward Panchayat, BS Gurung, Nayabusty, East Sikkim welcomed all the participants and helped in organizing program at Nayabasti, Pakyong, East Sikkim.

Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, Dr Sudip Kr Dutta, Dr PK Pathak, Dr Mukesh Bhatt, Shaon Kr Das, Gagan Gurung (JRF) and Bandan Chettri (Project Assistant) actively demonstrated the constructing the low cost poly tunnel, bed preparation and seed sowing in the field of farmers.

Loken Gurung brings football to rural Sikkim

NISIM SUBBA GYALSHING, 18 MAR:

Former footballer, Loken Gurung from Yangtey, West Sikkim is inspiring youngsters in rural Sikkim to lace up. He has started a football academy to train young players from Yangtey and surrounding areas.

Mr Gurung has trained in Namchi Sports Hostel and played with the likes of Bikash Jai-ru, Robin Gurung, Sanju Pradhan and Nirmal Chettri. He also represented Sikkim in U-14 Subroto Mukerjee Cup and played for Sikkim



United Club and Dem-po Sports Club U-19 amongst others.

In 2019, he came up with the initiative to train young footballers in his village and opened Yangtey United Soccer Academy.

He held a selection

camp and selected 22 kids from 35 participants. He currently coaches the kids at Yangtey Primary School Playground free of cost.

He plans to hold a program in the near future where he will dis-

tribute sporting gear to children.

Mr Gurung believes that sports can help keep children away from harmful activities and groom them for success in life.

He has thanked Yangtey School Principal, Bandana Rai, Headmaster, Dawa Tshring Bhutia, Upper Baluthang Primary School Headmaster, K L Mukhia as well as other teachers.

Those interested in supporting Mr Gurung and his initiative can contact him at +91 96098 93809

Labour deptt convenes meeting with companies, invites collaborations for to keep Sikkim safe

Gangtok, 18 Mar (IPR): In the alarming situation of COVID-19 globally, a precautionary awareness meeting was organized for pharmaceutical and other companies and line Departments at the conference hall of the Labour Department here at Lingding chaired by Principal Secretary, Labour Department, SD Negi, today.

The meeting was organized jointly with the Commerce and Industries Department.

where Secretary, HK Sharma, IAS and Director MSME, N Jaswant, IFS attended the programme.

Mr Negi invited companies to use the high-end stitching machines installed at Labour Department to manufacture face-masks provided the companies could bring the expertise to produce them.

He also called upon the companies to be generous in supporting the State Government in all possible means in its efforts to prevent COVID-19 from reaching and spreading in Sikkim.

Commerce & Industries Director, N Jaswant, in turn detailed some of the precautionary measures required to be taken up by the companies immediately to check against the potential spreading of COVID-19.

He requested the companies to arrange for thermal scanners at their entry gates and installing visual alert signs with instructions about hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with tissues, he said, may be placed at entrances, waiting rooms, cafeterias, store rooms and buses.

The companies can also identify areas to create temporary quarantine spaces for any suspected cases. Transports buses should also be routinely sanitized and cleaned.

Farewells, birthdays, meetings and other gatherings at the units should be discouraged for now, he added and requested the companies to provide surgical masks to their workers and make arrangements to ensure physical distance between them while working.

Commerce and Industries Department secretary, HK Sharma, urged companies to co-operate in this pandemic situation and requested them to discourage visits by guests and employees from outside the State.

He requested the companies to abide by the principle of safety and prevention.

Sikkim Denzong Sherpa Assoc contributes to CM's Relief Fund

GANGTOK, 18 MAR (IPR): Sikkim Denzong Sherpa Association led by president, Pema Wangchuk Sherpa called on the Secretary to Chief Minister, SD Dhakal at Tashiling Secretariat and handed over a cheque for Chief Minister's relief fund to fight COVID-19.

Mr Dhakal expressed gratitude towards the association for their kind gesture.

Mingma Sherpa of Global Sherpa Association, Chief Patron of Sikkim Denzong Sherpa Association along with the executive members were also present on the occasion.

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Sports Talent Hunt 2019-20 postponed

SAGAR CHHETRI GANGTOK, 18 MAR:

Sports Talent Hunt 2019-20 which was scheduled to be held from 23 March to 09 April as well as the Khelo India Girls League Tournament has been postponed till further notice. Directions to this effect were given by the Secretary, Sports Department during a day-long workshop on 'Sports Talent Hunt 2019-20' held here at Paljor Stadium conference hall on Tuesday.

The workshop, which was chaired by Secretary Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Kuber Bhandari, was attended by officers, Physical Education Teachers and coaches from all four districts.

A press release from SYA Department mentions that the Secretary has congratulated officials and staff of Department of Sports & Youth Affairs for the successfully conducted the Rural Sports I and II. He further thanked them for their hard work and dedication towards the departmental programme.

The Secretary suggested that officials and staff of the department should take precautionary measures in their respective places regarding prevention of COVID-19. He further directed to postpone the 'Sports Talent Hunt 2019-20', which was scheduled to be held from 23 March

to 09 April, and Khelo India Girls League Tournament till further order following the directive of the State Government in view of the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

Likewise, Deputy Director [HQ], CL Rai explained the concept and methods to conduct Sports Talent Hunt with power point presentation. He also briefed about the scientific approach for the selection in three stages, Block Level, District Level and State Level. He informed that a total of 160 athletes, including 82 boys and 78 girls, who scores maximum points will be short listed as per ranking.

"These selected children will be identified for 13 different sports disciplines by the committee of experts in the State Level and some of high-ranking children will be inducted in State Sports Academics as per vacancy in selected sports discipline. The rest of the children will be given sports scholarship/incentives and will be attached to the coaches of respective sports discipline for further training," he informed.

Earlier, the workshop started with the welcome address by Deputy Director [coaching], Jigme Yodzer Lepcha and concluded with vote of thanks presented by Assistant Director-I [HQ], Sonam P Lepcha.

Cops fan out to guard against illegal entries

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 18 MAR:

With the interstate border check-posts regulating entry under stricter protocols in the wake of the State Government's decision to shut down the state to outsiders, Sikkim Police too has begun exercises to check illegal entries along the rather porous borders of the State. A post on Sikkim Police's Rangpo Police Station Facebook page informs that police personnel have also sealed all access points along the river belts around Rangpo to stop all illegal entry from outside State. Strict action will be taken against those found entering Sikkim through river belts and against those found aiding such entries, the police has warned.

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SummitTIMES



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
MOTOR VEHICLES DIVISION, TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT
YATAYAT BHAWAN, GANGTOK: 737101
Ph No: 03592-201073, Fax No: 03592-201074, Email: headofficecmvd@gmail.com
No. GOS/MVD/T/2020-21/1859 Dated: 13/03/2020

SUB: SHOW CAUSE NOTICE

Whereas, Ms. Sangeeta Gurung, LDC/HQ, Motor Vehicles Division, Transport Department was sanctioned 1076 days leave vide O.O. No. 256/MV/T dated: 25.02.2017 as under:

- 120 days w.e.f. 01.02.2017 to 31.05.2017 as Earned Leave
- 98 days w.e.f. 01.06.2017 to 06.09.2017 as Half Pay Leave
- 858 days w.e.f. 07.09.2017 to 11.01.2020 as Extra Ordinary Leave.

Whereas, Ms. Sangeeta Gurung, LDC/HQ, Motor Vehicles Division, Transport Department has exceeded the admissible leave period of 3 years and still not reported for duty nor intimated the department on expiry of leave period till date which is in contravention of Rule 14 of Sikkim Government Service Rules, 1974.

Now, therefore, in accordance with Rule 14 (2) of the Sikkim Government Service Rules, 1974, the lien to the post of LDC in R/o Ms. Sangeeta Gurung, LDC/HQ, Motor Vehicles Division, Transport Department shall stand cancelled and she shall cease to be in Government employment with effect from 12.02.2020.

Secretary
Transport Department

To,
Ms. Sangeeta Gurung
W/o Bhim Lal Gurung
Chakung, West Sikkim

R.O. No.397/IPR/PUB/Classi19-20
Dated: 17/03/2020



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
ECCLESIASTICAL DEPARTMENT
GANGTOK

CIRCULAR

No. 32/20

Date: 17/03/2020

In view of the recent outbreak of COVID -19 in India and in some countries of the World, the Ecclesiastical Department has deemed to take some preventive measures against spread of the disease in the State of Sikkim. Therefore, it has been decided to take the following steps to prohibit entry of foreign as well as national tourist in the religious institutions of the State of Sikkim –

- The entry of foreign tourists into all the religious institutions of Sikkim is temporarily prohibited till further orders.
- The entry of Indian visitors/tourists into the religious institutions is to be discouraged.

Hence, all the Duchi/Committee of religious institutions of Sikkim are requested to take necessary actions as indicated above to ensure prevention of Corona Virus within their respective areas.

R.O. No.399/IPR/PUB/Classi19-20
Dated: 18/03/2020

SECRETARY
(Ecclesiastical Affairs Deptt.)
(S. Gyalnam) Sikkim
Secretary/Ecclesiastical Department.



SIKKIM STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
Development Area, Gangtok: Sikkim
Phone: 03592-207753, Fax : 03592-207753

"MESSAGE".

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority is organizing National Lok Adalat on Saturday the 11th April, 2020 for the following types of pre-litigation and pending cases viz:

Pre-Litigation

- N.I Act cases under Section 138;
- Money Recovery cases;
- Labour disputes cases;
- Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- Maintenance Cases.
- Other (Criminal Compoundable and other Civil dispute).

Pending in the Courts (which are reflected on National Judicial Data Grid)

- Criminal Compoundable Offences;
- N.I. Act cases under Section 138;
- Money Recovery cases;
- MACT cases;
- Labour disputes cases;
- Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- Matrimonial disputes (except divorce);
- Land Acquisition cases;
- Service matters relating to pay and allowances and retiral benefits;
- Revenue cases (pending in District Courts and High Courts only);
- Other civil cases (rent, easmentary rights, injunction suits, specific performance suits) etc. (please specify the category).

Any individual or any department having such matters either pending in Courts/Tribunals/Departments or in pre-litigation stage may approach directly before the Sikkim SLSA, District Lok Adalats or Taluk Lok Adalats for settlement on or before 31.03.2020 at the following address:

- Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slisa@live.com Phone No.03592-207753.
- High Court Legal Services Committee, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slisa@live.com Phone No. 03592-207753.
- District Legal Services Authority (East) District Court's Complex, Sichey Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284462.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee (East), District Court's Complex, Sichey, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284131.
- District Legal Services Authority (North) District Court Complex, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone No . 03592 234502.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee (North), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Pentok, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone no.03592 234383/234514.
- District Legal Services Authority (South) District Court Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone No. 03595 264356.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee (South), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, District Courts Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone no.03595 263145.
- District Legal Services Authority (West) District Court Complex, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone No. 03595 250061.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone no.03595 250061.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee, Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Chungthang, Sub-Division, North Sikkim.
- Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Soreng, Sub-Division, West Sikkim. Phone n o: 03592-253200.

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Curtailing Corruption

Read, notice, realize and demand accountability

The State Government is in the process, unless it has since changed its mind, to hire former CBI sleuths to staff its Vigilance Police with more experienced hands to investigate past instances of corruption. The last time that an official figure on action on corruption was shared was in the Legislative Assembly in 2016-17 when it was informed that a total of 515 corruption cases have been registered by the Vigilance Police in Sikkim the, till then 23 years of the SDF Government. This works out to an average of around 22 Vigilance “cases” every year. It would be interesting to also find out how these cases are spread out over the years, when they record a slump or when they surge. Meanwhile, something like 259 government servants and 256 private citizens have been implicated in these cases and chargesheets have been drawn up in 183 instances. This is quite a number. But has it had any effect on corruption?

Corruption cannot be tackled by government agencies instituted directly to combat this problem. These agencies, with their explicitly defined roles of investigating corruption, become convenient weapons of mass political destruction. In the hands of politicians, as we see often with CBI and many would claim even with Vigilance, this arsenal gets aimed at reputations and does not target the faulty system itself. The system, after all, outlives reputations and political dynasties and everyone in the political rat-race will want the system sustained in its murky existence so that it can be oiled to serve their needs when they command it. This explains why such agencies make raids, FIRs and chargesheets into major media events, but downplay the actual trial and verdicts or even the processing of such cases.

Even when earnestly implemented and enforced without bias, this approach addresses only one end of the corruption chain. A more effective option would be for those who feed this monster to decide otherwise. Corruption would get automatically contained. But that is easier said than done and would require a ground swell of civil activism, even the tremors of which not yet in the making; at least not in Sikkim yet.

Does that mean that corruption cannot be contained? What would life be without some optimism? Of course corruption can be contained; by deploying guerrilla tactics that seem to serve every deprioritised issue so well. Instead of knocking on doors of anti-corruption agencies, the people should start studying documents produced by the non-aggressive arms of the executive like the CAG reports and the even the annual reports of respective departments with more interest. These documents encapsulate findings and claims and each links up with accountability. It is because people continue to ignore the importance of fixing accountability and demanding it that the system continues to corrode. The voters have to demand of their elected representatives to hold departments and its officials accountable. The leaders need votes and if the voters lay the condition of accountability in exchange for support, then their representatives will deliver them accountability. Once the message gets through that transgressions in handling of public accounts will no longer be excused with merely “don't do it again” advise, things will start falling into line. Corruption would have been curtailed to a significant extent.

WRITE US:

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

Society's most vulnerable will be hit as COVID-19 cases rise in poorer economies

DAVID EVANS & MEAD OVER
theconversation.com

As travellers cancel flights, businesses ask workers to stay home, and stocks fall, a global health crisis becomes a global economic crisis. In any health crisis, our first concern is (and should be) with the health of those affected. More than 6,400 people have died worldwide and more than 164,000 cases have been confirmed in 146 countries or territories.

The economic impacts have dramatic effects on the well-being of families and communities. For vulnerable families, lost income due to an outbreak can translate to spikes in poverty, missed meals for children, and reduced access to healthcare far beyond COVID-19. With cases confirmed in many low- and middle-income countries, these impacts may affect the world's most vulnerable populations.

What are the channels of economic impact we can expect from COVID-19? Beyond the human tragedy, there is a direct economic impact from lives lost in an outbreak. Families and loved ones lose that income and their in-kind contributions to household income such as childcare.

Though less likely to pass away from COVID-19, many working age adults still fall ill and their families will feel the financial burden as they miss work for days or weeks.

AVERSION BEHAVIOUR

Most of the economic impact of the virus will be from “aversion behaviour.” That is, actions people take to avoid catching the virus. Aversion behaviour comes from three sources:

- Governments impose bans on certain types of activities, as when the government of China orders factories to shut down or Italy closes most shops throughout the country.
- Firms and institutions (including private schools and private companies) take proactive measures to avoid infection. Business closures – whether through government bans or business decisions – result in lost wages for workers, especially in the informal economy, where there is no paid leave.
- Individuals reduce travel – to the market, for tourism, on business, and going out for social and other activities.

These actions affect all sectors of the econo-

my. These in turn translate into reduced income both through the supply side (reduced production drives up prices for consumers) and the demand side (reduced demand from consumers hurts business owners and their employees).

These short-term economic impacts can translate into reductions in long-term growth. As the health sector soaks up more resources and as people reduce social activities, countries invest less in physical infrastructure. As schools close, students lose opportunities to learn (hopefully only briefly) but more vulnerable students may not return to the education system, translating to lower long-term earning trajectories for them and their families, and reduced overall human capital for their economies.

For example, unplanned pregnancies rose sharply in Sierra Leone during the Ebola epidemic, likely in part a result of school closures. Adolescent mothers are less likely to return to school, and their children will likely have fewer health and educational investments.

Further, the infection and death of health workers in the front lines of epidemics can lead to worsening health conditions in the long-term, such as maternal and infant mortality. These all have poverty implications well beyond their humanitarian implications.

WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR AND WHAT TO EXPECT

Economic estimates of the likely global impact vary dramatically. Tom Orlik and others at Bloomberg hypothesise \$2.7 trillion in lost output. The Asian Development Bank projects losses ranging from \$77 billion to \$347 billion, and an OECD report talks about a halving of global economic growth.

Some recent analysis of the actual and potential economic impacts of the crisis provides a snapshot. Across sectors in African countries, the economic impact stems from the slowing down of the Chinese economy, with reduced Chinese demand for raw materials. This analysis projects reduced investments in energy, mining, and other sectors, and a fall in travel and tourism.

Another analysis reports that Chinese factory closings have adversely affected consumers in Africa. In Zimbabwe and Angola, exports to China have crashed.

“About a fourth of Ugandan imports come from China. Supply chains have been interrupted for weeks because many Chinese factories shut down

production. Small traders selling textiles, electronics or household goods are in trouble ... In Niger, stocks of certain goods, including groceries, from China have already been significantly decimated, leading to higher prices.”

Most of the data and observed impacts in the developing world so far stem from production and export stoppages from China, and those estimates pre-date the worsening economic conditions in Europe and the US. But as the economies of other countries slow down with the spread of the disease, these impacts will show up more clearly in economic data and likely grow over time.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

Beyond three stimulus and liquidity recommendations from the International Monetary Fund, we add three recommendations.

First, contain the pandemic. As our colleague Jeremy Konyndyk puts it, “To assuage market reactions to the outbreak, you have to present a viable plan to defeat the outbreak.”

As long as the outbreak is actively spreading, many aversion behaviours are rational and wise. Containing the disease is the first step to mitigating not only the health impacts but also the economic impacts.

Second, strengthen the safety net. The most vulnerable households are those most likely to be affected economically. Low-wage workers are often those most likely to lose their jobs if they miss work due to an extended illness. They are often the least able to work remotely to avoid contracting the virus. And they are the least likely to have savings to survive an economic downturn.

Making sure there is an economic safety net in place – cash transfers, sick leave, subsidised health coverage – helps the most vulnerable survive and provides support to enterprises that serve those populations.

Third, measure the impact. Systematic data on which populations are experiencing the greatest hardships and which industries are failing is essential to providing assistance. During the Ebola epidemic of 2014-2015, researchers used phone surveys in Sierra Leone and Liberia – building on the sample frames from existing surveys – to gather information on the impacts of both ill health and aversion behaviour on households and enterprises across the countries.

[David Evans is Professor of Public Policy, Pardee RAND Graduate School; Mead Over is Adjunct Professor - Global Human Development (GHD), Georgetown University]



To limit coronavirus risks on public transport, here's what we can learn from efforts overseas

YALE ZHUXIAO WONG
theconversation.com

Public transport in our cities is highly vulnerable to disease outbreaks such as the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, public transport is the lifeblood of our cities, so it's desirable to keep services running as long as possible. Australia can learn from what has been done overseas, especially in China, where concrete strategies to reduce the spread of the virus on public transport helped eventually to contain the disease.

The confined spaces and limited ventilation of public transport vehicles could lead to infections among passengers, while frontline transport workers are particularly exposed. An outbreak among these workers could bring entire fleets to a standstill. It would also disrupt the travel of health workers who need to be mobilised during the pandemic.

Unions representing transport workers have rightly voiced their concerns and imposed actions including a unilateral ban on cash handling. The Australian government has offered guidelines for drivers and passengers. Transport authorities have engaged expert taskforces and begun the process of sourcing products like hand sanitisers.

While these steps are important, surely we need advice beyond general instructions to “practise good hygiene” and “use disinfectant wipes”?

WHAT ARE OTHER COUNTRIES DOING?

In China, despite most of the country being in lockdown, public transport was entirely suspended only in Wuhan and its commuter belt. Buses were then used to move medical staff and deliver goods.

Most other Chinese cities ran reduced public transport services, with a heavy focus on hygiene and sanitation.

In most cities, the temperatures of transport staff are checked daily. They are equipped with adequate protection gear like face masks and gloves. Masks are compulsory for all staff and passengers, as is common practice across Asia.

In a typical city like Shenzhen, the bus fleet is sanitised after each trip. Particular attention is paid to seats, armrests and handles. At depots and interchanges, this is done as often as every two hours.

Buses are filled to no more than 50% capacity (one person per seat). On-board cameras are used to enforce this rule. Floor markings (also adopted in Europe) provide a guide to minimum distances between passengers and encourage social distancing.

Across China, health control checkpoints are being used at train and metro stations (as well as in many public and private buildings). This enables temperature checks and the tracing of the movement of people, in case of contact with a suspected COVID-19 carrier. In many taxis,

buses and metro carriages, passengers are encouraged to scan a QR code to register their name and contact number, to help with contact tracing.

Constant public education reminders are broadcast to passengers.

Cities across Asia are providing hand sanitiser gel in public transport vehicles and interchanges. Cleaning of air-conditioning filters has been enhanced. To increase natural ventilation and reduce the risk of infection, some operators have retrofitted window vents to air-conditioned fleets.

Hong Kong rail operator MTR is even using a fleet of cleaning robots to disinfect trains and stations. In Shanghai, ultraviolet light is being used to disinfect buses.

In Europe, many public transport agencies have closed off use of the front door to reduce infection risk for drivers. Passengers now use the rear door (all-door boarding has been common practice).

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AUSTRALIA?

One of the best ways to reduce infection risk is to step up cleaning efforts. Public transport operators are already doing this, but not to the extent required during the course of the day.

Most private bus operators (contracted to government) are simply not equipped to take on the massive task if required to disinfect their vehicles, say, three times a day. For many operators, drivers are required to “sweep” their bus at the end of

their shift. Buses undergo a full interior clean overnight.

There is no capability to clean buses en route during shifts. Extreme cases like biohazard incidents (blood and vomit) require vehicles to be taken out of service.

To increase the frequency of cleaning, perhaps a government authority could organise “rapid response” cleaners stationed at terminals. While this might cause delays between trips, it would reduce the pressure on individual operators. Having a cleaning crew work across multiple operators would also be more efficient.

The government could provide free health services via video consultation for frontline transport workers. The critical role of the transport sector also warrants their protection through government-issued face masks, especially given how hard it is now to source these in the community.

These proactive measures based on disease prevention should always be preferred to any reactive approach after a major outbreak hits our transport system. Industry associations like the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and International Association of Public Transport (UITP) have developed a suite of responses that can be adopted.

Our transport authorities and operators must step up in this critical time of need.

[The writer is Research Associate, Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies, University of Sydney]

799 held in detention centres in Assam: Govt

NEW DELHI, MAR 18 (PTI): A total of 799 people are currently held at detention centres for declared or convicted foreigners in Assam where 26 detainees died due to illness in last four years, Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said the Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) in Assam operate under the provisions of Foreigners Act, 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1964.

As per the information provided by the government of Assam, 799 detainees are held in detention centres in Assam as on February 27, 2020. Out of these, 95 detainees have completed three years or more in detention, he said replying a written question.

Reddy said 26 detainees have died during their detention due to illness in the past three years and current year.

Over 7,800 public service vehicles disinfected in Delhi

NEW DELHI, MAR 18 (PTI): The Delhi government on Wednesday said it has disinfected 7,877 public service vehicles, including auto-rickshaws, so far to contain the spread of novel coronavirus.

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said, "We advise the owners and operators of public service vehicles to act responsibly and get their vehicles disinfected on a daily basis so that we can overcome this crisis. We are providing this facility free of cost for everyone."

The disinfection drive is being organised at all DTC and cluster bus depots on a daily basis in two shifts -- 10 am to 12 pm and 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm. A 'Certificate of Disinfection' is also being issued for every sanitised vehicle'

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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All 3 Rajya Sabha candidates in Assam elected unopposed



GUWAHATI, MAR 18 (PTI): Two nominees of the BJP and its ally BPF and an independent candidate, backed by the Congress and AIUDF, for the three Rajya Sabha seats in Assam were declared elected unopposed on Wednesday, officials said.

Sitting Bodo Peoples' Front (BPF) MP Biswajit Daimary, BJP's Bhubaneswar Kalita and Congress-AIUDF sup-

ported independent candidate Ajit Bhuyan were elected to the upper house of Parliament on the last day of withdrawal of nomination papers on Wednesday, Returning Officer Amarendra Narayan Deka said.

Elections to the three seats were scheduled to be held on March 26 but with only three candidates in the fray, they were declared elected as

their nomination papers were found valid, he said.

Daimary was re-elected with the support of BJP and its allies BPF and AGP along with Kalita who had vacated his seat on joining the saffron party after quitting Congress.

Bhuyan, a senior journalist who has served as editor in both the print and electronic media, had filed nomination pa-

per for the third seat as an independent candidate with the support of both Congress and AIUDF.

He was at the forefront of the movement against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in Assam.

Besides Daimary, the two other Rajya Sabha seats from the state were held by Kalita and Sanjay Singh, who had represented the Congress but later resigned to join the BJP.

Elections were necessitated as the three seats were falling vacant next month.

Assam Legislative Assembly has 126 seats comprising 60 of the BJP, 23 of the Congress, 14 each of the AGP and the AIUDF, 12 of the BPF and one independent while two are currently vacant due to deaths of the legislators.

Don't behave irresponsibly if you have coronavirus-like symptoms: Mamata

KOLKATA, MAR 18 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Wednesday that people should not behave irresponsibly if they show coronavirus-like symptoms.

Banerjee also instructed police to take stern action against those who spread fake news on the coronavirus outbreak. "We don't sup-

port if somebody tries to hide his/her symptoms and doesn't take precautionary measures. If people show any symptom of Covid-19 (coronavirus disease), they should immediately go for tests and medical examination," the chief minister said.

"Just because someone belongs to an influential family, it does

not give him the right to spread the virus," Banerjee said while addressing a programme here.

A few senior state government officials, including Home Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, were asked to stay at home after they came in contact with an officer whose son tested positive for the coronavirus, sources said. The

18-year-old youth, who recently returned from England, tested positive for the virus on Tuesday, making it the first confirmed case in the state.

He had gone to the UK for higher studies and had returned on Sunday.

Banerjee said the youth did not pay heed to the advice of doctors who suggested him to go for tests.

Priti Patel uncovers UK's hostile threats assessment body

BY ADITI KHANNA

LONDON, MAR 18 (PTI): UK Home Secretary Priti Patel has publicly confirmed the existence of an organisation established to assess the threat of hostile state activity and inform the UK government's response.

The Joint State Threats Assessment Team (JSTAT) was created in 2017 in response to the increased and evolving threat the UK faces from hostile states such as Russia but has functioned under cover until this week. But the Indian-origin Cabinet minister has decided to remove the covers from the undercover outfit to function more actively across different government departments.

"We continue to face a very real and serious threat from states who seek to undermine and destabilise this country to pursue their own agendas, said Patel.

"It is vital that we continue to gain a deeper understanding of the wide-range of threats we face in order to take robust action to protect our national security. JSTAT



has enhanced our capabilities and understanding of the state-based threats we face and will continue to do so in order to protect us at home and abroad, she said.

Based inside MI5's headquarters in London, the independent unit of intelligence specialists provides early warnings and advice to the government on potential threats by hostile states including the deployment of spies, assassinations, attempts to disrupt elections and cyber attacks. Patel said

the decision to publicly unveil JSTAT has been taken in order to maximise its utility to the national security community, enabling greater engagement with stakeholders, industry and academics.

It will also allow for broader communication of the threats to government departments and agencies, as well as partners across the private and charitable sectors, ensuring they have access to information to better protect themselves.

Meghalaya govt shuts tourist spots



SHILLONG, MAR 18 (PTI): The Meghalaya government on Wednesday decided to shut tourist spots in the state as part of its measures to prevent any possible transmission and outbreak of novel coronavirus.

"All tourist spots in the state of Meghalaya including parks and recreational areas are hereby advised to close till March 31," the order said.

The state's preparedness to tackle COVID-19 was also reviewed by Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma at a meeting

during which he asked deputy commissioners to screen all people entering their districts.

State Health minister AL Hek and Home Minister Lahkmen Rymbui were also present at the review meeting.

The chief minister gave the instructions via video conferencing to the deputy commissioners and medical officers of the districts.

"The situation in the world and other parts of the country is alarming and there is a need to be serious but without creat-

ing panic," Conrad said in a statement. Participation of local headman and community besides closely monitoring the situation in the state for the next 15 days is crucial, he said.

The meeting also discussed need for medical volunteers, stocking of essential commodities, and setting up of isolation wards, testing centres and control rooms.

The need for spreading awareness on hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and social distancing was also discussed in the meeting.

No document to be collected during NPR update: govt

NEW DELHI, MAR 18 (PTI): No document will be collected from anyone during the exercise to be carried out to update the National Population Register, Union minister Nityanand Rai said on Wednesday.

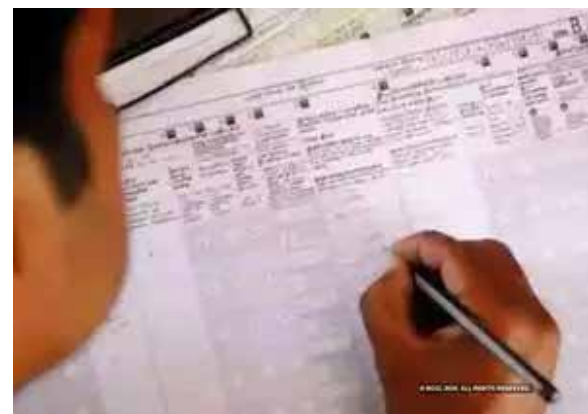
Rai also said in Rajya Sabha that till now, the central government has not taken any decision to prepare the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) at the national level.

"No document is to be collected during the updation of NPR 2020," Rai, the Union Minister of State for Home, said replying to a written question.

The NPR data will be collected along with the house-listing phase of the census to be conducted from April 1 to September 30.

Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh are some of the non-BJP ruled states which have apprehensions about the NPR and are critical towards the exercise.

The objective of up-



dating the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country. The database would contain demographic and biometric particulars.

The notification for the house-listing phase of census and NPR exercise came recently amid furor over the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

The data for NPR was last collected in 2010 along with the house-listing phase of Census 2011. Updation of this data was done in 2015 by conducting door-to-door surveys.

While updating the register in 2015, the government asked details

like Aadhaar and mobile numbers.

This time, information related to driving licence and voter ID card may also be gathered, officials said, adding that PAN card details will not be collected as part of this exercise. Questions related to place of parents' birth are voluntary to answer, the government had said.

For NPR, a usual resident is defined as a person who has resided in a local area for the past six months or more, or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months.

The law compulsorily seeks to register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card.

What coronavirus symptoms should I look for, and when do I call the doctor? A doctor answers 4 questions

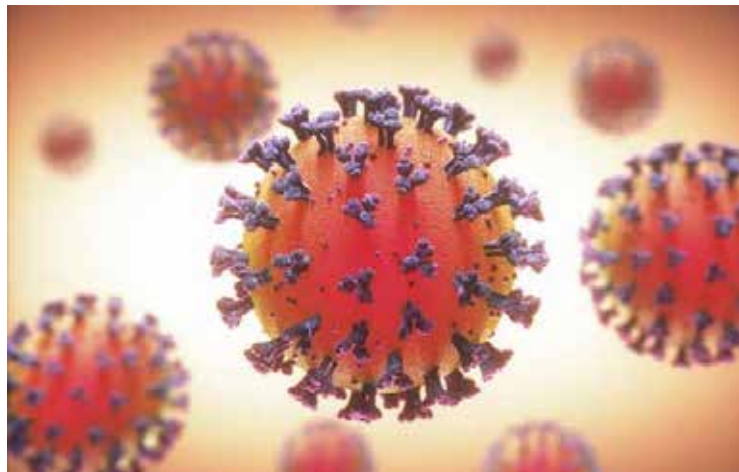
WILLIAM PETRI
theconversation.com

1. WHAT SYMPTOMS SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

People should suspect that they might have COVID-19 if they are experiencing fever, cough and/or shortness of breath. These symptoms, however, are also symptoms of other illnesses. For example, the nation is still in the middle of a flu epidemic, and fever and cough are also symptoms of flu. It is most likely that you have flu or other respiratory illness. So, it is important to pay attention to symptoms but to also know they will not necessarily mean that you have COVID-19.

2. WHEN SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR?

If your have fever, cough and/or shortness of breath, call



your doctor. Do not just show up; it is very important to call first. Most doctors' offices will have ways to isolate someone who potentially has COVID-19. Your doctor's office will likely ask screening questions on the phone and will provide instructions about what to do when you arrive.

3. I'VE HAVE A RUNNY NOSE AND SNIFFLES. COULD THIS CORONAVIRUS?

A runny nose or nasal congestion would not be likely to be COVID-19.

4. WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE?


The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention recommends that you put on a face mask before you enter your doctor's office or other health care facility.

Your doctor or health care provider would likely test for flu first, because the country is in the middle of a flu epidemic. If the flu test is negative then you will be tested for COVID-19, especially if you have risk factors. That would include having traveled to a country or area of the U.S. with sustained person-to-person transmission, or having been in contact with someone with COVID-19.


This likely will change as soon as COVID-19 tests are more available – at that time everyone with a fever and cough will be tested.

[the writer is Professor of Medicine, University of Virginia]



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.

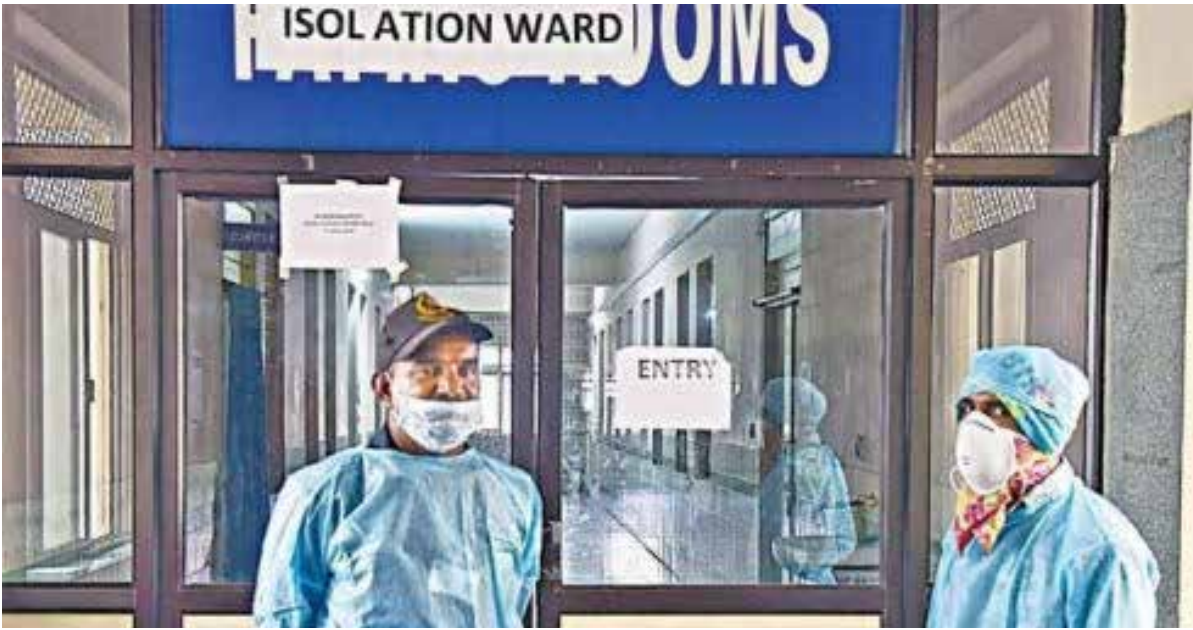
<p>Symptoms of nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<p>Precautions to Prevent nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand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

Books being distributed to those in isolation in Wayanad

WAYANAD (KER), MAR 18 (PTI): Close on heels of releasing multi-lingual pamphlets on the dos and don'ts on coronavirus, the Wayanad district administration has launched yet another innovative scheme of distributing books and periodicals among those under home quarantine in the district.

“This is a kind of positive gesture on our part towards those who are under isolation. We are trying to send out a humanitarian message to these people that the whole society is with them and that it is for the sake of the society they are being put on home quarantine,” district Collector Dr Adeela Abdulla told PTI.

The whole exercise is done under a scheme -“Donate-a- book”- wherein anyone can donate books and periodicals to their panchayats.



The books would be delivered to those under isolation through a mechanism via the panchayat concerned, she said.

Panchayat sources said there has been a good response to the scheme in the district and the people in isolation had also taken the

“read-and-relax” project in good spirit.

With an objective to reach out to the tourists from around the globe reaching the tourist hotspot of Wayanad and aimed at creating an awareness among labourers from different parts of India, the district administration

had on Tuesday last released leaflets on Covid-19 in three foreign and six Indian languages.

Conceived and created in association with Totem Resource Centre, which translated the content into different languages, it was a first-of-its-kind in the efforts

to contain the spread of coronavirus in Kerala.

Foreign languages in which the pamphlets were printed are German, Spanish and French.

Besides Malayalam, the other Indian languages in which the leaflets were printed include Assamese, Hindi, Bengali, Telugu and Tamil.

US Open tennis championship could be postponed by coronavirus

NEW YORK, MAR 18 (AFP): The US Tennis Association acknowledged Tuesday that developments in the coronavirus pandemic could dictate moving the US Open, now scheduled to start in August.

But the American federation said it wouldn't determine any new date for its flagship Grand Slam without consulting the other major championship organizers, the

International Tennis Federation and the ATP and WTA tours.

“We recognize that such a decision should not be made unilaterally,” the USTA said in a statement -- a scarcely veiled jab at the French Tennis Federation which announced earlier Tuesday it was moving the second Grand Slam of the year, the French Open, to September 20-October 4.

In postponing the event originally scheduled for May 24-June 7, the French Federation apparently declined to con-

sult other stakeholders in the sport.

The chosen dates, one week after the current scheduled conclusion of the US Open, caught the ATP and WTA by surprise.

They conflict with the Laver Cup in Boston, where Europe's top players are scheduled to take on a World team. Roger Federer has already committed to the event.

The US Open, the final Grand Slam on the calendar, is scheduled to run August 24-September 13 at the Billie Jean King Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows, New York.

“The USTA is continuing to plan for the 2020 US Open and is not at this time implementing any changes to the schedule,” the USTA said.

“These are unprecedented times, though, and we are assessing all of our options, including the possibility of moving the tournament to a later date.

When Kohli's aggressive celebrations during 2018-19 tour made Langer feel like a punching bag

NEW DELHI, MAR 18 (PTI): Australian coach Justin Langer has revealed that he felt like a “punching bag” after Virat Kohli's aggressive celebrations during India's 2018-19 tour while also calling out the “double standards” when it comes to sledging in cricket.

India, led by Kohli, enjoyed an unprecedented summer Down Under, winning the Border Gavaskar Trophy 3-1, their first-ever Test series win on the Australian soil. It was followed by a 2-1 victory in the ODIs, while the T20 series ended in a 1-1 draw.

During the series, Australia, who were determined to patch up their severely dented image in the wake of the ball-tampering scandal, had decided to not engage with the Indian captain verbally during the series.

However, Kohli's on-field antics angered Langer but he could not be expressive about it.

“I remember that afternoon (feeling) like a punching bag. We can't fight back because it felt like we had our hands behind our backs and we just had to take it,” Langer said in Amazon's recently released docu-series titled ‘The Test’. “You must be feeling the double standards the way their captain is carrying on and we sort of have to be careful. Imagine if we behaved two out of ten (of) that,” he said.

Langar asked his players to take on Kohli but warned the hosts not to cross the line between banter and abuse. “There is a difference between abuse and banter. There is no room for abuse. We don't need to abuse him but there is banter where you stick up for your mate.”

On day four of the second Test at Perth, Kohli and his Australian counterpart Tim Paine were involved in a verbal spat. That was time Paine thought he had enough.

Sensex plummets over 1,200 pts; Nifty below 8,700

MUMBAI, MAR 18 (PTI): Equity benchmark Sensex plunged over 1,200 points in afternoon session on Wednesday as global markets failed to hold on to early gains and resumed their downward spiral.

The rupee too receded from morning highs depreciating 5 paise to 74.29 against US dollar.

Investor gloom returned despite signals of massive stimulus packages by federal governments, traders said.

The BSE barometer oscillated over 1,600 points in a highly volatile session. It was trading 1,227.65 points or 4.01 per cent lower at 29,351.44 at 1230 hours.

Similarly, the boarder Nifty plunged nearly 500 points from the day's high, trading 343.85 points, or 3.83 per cent, down at 8,623.20.

IndusInd Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, tanking over 32 per cent. Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Bank, SBI and Titan were also trad-

ing significantly lower.

According to traders, domestic equities failed to hold on to early gains as concerns over an economic recession continued to hammer investor sentiment.

Market participants were on edge as slowdown fear is leading company heads to plead for billions in government help to prevent them going under, experts said.

Before market hours this morning, S&P Global Ratings lowered India's economic growth forecast to 5.2 per cent for 2020, saying the global economy is entering a recession amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The agency had earlier projected a growth rate of 5.7 per cent during the 2020 calendar.

Asia-Pacific economic growth in 2020 will more than halve to less than 3 per cent as the “global economy enters a recession”, S&P said in a statement.

Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul and Ja-

pan too plunged up to 5 per cent. Global stocks opened higher as hopes of economic stimuli from governments gave some temporary respite to the increasing woes of investors.

US stocks recovered in overnight trade after reports that US President Donald Trump will ask Congress to approve a massive USD 850 billion emergency spending package to contain the growing economic damage from the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic that will include a payroll tax cut and a bailout for airlines.

The number of deaths around the world linked to Covid-19 has topped 7,400, with over 1,80,000 infections recorded globally so far.

In India, the number of infected cases stood at 130, as per union health ministry log.

Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell over 1.53 per cent to USD 28.29 per barrel.

Kiwi teams move to Australia to avoid coronavirus fallout

WELLINGTON, MAR 18 (AP): New Zealand's professional rugby league and soccer clubs have chosen to become sporting exiles in the hope of continuing to play in Australian leagues during the coronavirus pandemic.

The New Zealand Warriors played in Newcastle, Australia last weekend in the first round of Australia's National Rugby League season and have chosen not to return to New Zealand in the immediate future. The NRL has said no further matches will be played in New Zealand because of requirements that all travelers arriving in the country self-isolate for 14 days.

The Wellington Phoenix, New Zealand's only professional soccer team, have agreed to move to Australia and undergo 14 days of isolation from Wednesday in order to continue playing in the A-League.

Team officials made the decision after receiving confirmation from Australian health officials that players will be able to train together while in isolation. All of the Phoenix's remaining matches this season will be played in Australia.

“The decision to travel to Sydney in an attempt to complete this

season was made as a club,” general manager David Dome told the Stuff news website.

“We have discussed this among ourselves, consulted with health professionals and government bodies in Australia and New Zealand and taken all possible precautions to ensure those traveling are given the best protection possible.

“We are also conscious that the situation is constantly evolving and it may all change again tomorrow, but we are making this decision with the best information we have available at this time.”

Lower-tier and community-level sporting competitions have been suspended in Australia, but the NRL and the A-League intend to continue their seasons in empty stadiums, without fans. There are doubts that even this will be feasible as more stringent restrictions are imposed on public gatherings.

Meanwhile, New Zealand's rugby union says it hopes to have plans for a series of derby matches between its Super Rugby teams by the end of the week. The Super Rugby season, which involves teams from five countries, has been suspend-

ed. NZR chief executive Mark Robinson said an alternative domestic competition was being discussed with New Zealand's five franchises.

“We've got 10-12 weeks to look to provide some rugby product for our fans,” Robinson told Sky Sports. We're in regular dialogue with (the New Zealand teams) on a daily basis. New Zealand already has limitations on public gatherings which would likely force matches into closed stadiums.

“There's a lot of restrictions around what people can do at the moment, so we're very mindful about what our fans want and this is a fresh opportunity. We've got to take the positive from it and make something exciting from it,” Robinson said.

Most sports have shut down in Australia and New Zealand to avoid the spread of the coronavirus, including the cancellation of finals in professional basketball and cricket leagues.

While a domestic netball competition is continuing in empty stadiums in New Zealand, local club sports competitions have been postponed and horse racing meetings are taking place on closed tracks without bettors.

Odisha FC part ways with coach Josep Gombau



BHUBANESWAR, MAR 18 (PTI): ISL side Odisha FC and coach Josep Gombau on Wednesday decided to amicably part ways due to the Spaniard's familial obligations.

Club President Rohan Sharma said, “Some things in life are more important than football. I'd like to thank Coach Gombau and his coaching staff from the bot-

tom of my heart for all that they have done for the club.

“The whole coaching staff was such a positive influence for the club. No matter where they all go in life they will always have a home in Odisha,” he added.

Gombau had joined Odisha FC (earlier Delhi Dynamos) ahead of the fifth season in 2018. He

continued for the second consecutive season in 2019-20 and took OFC close to the playoffs spot.

“It wasn't an easy decision to make. I have enjoyed my time at Odisha and I am proud of what I built there. It is with some regret that I can't finish what I started, but I will always be rooting for the success of Odisha FC,” Gombau said.

Coronavirus bigger than cricket, needs to be taken very seriously, says Paine; backs sporting cancellations

MELBOURNE, MAR 18 (PTI): Australian Test captain Tim Paine on Wednesday said the threat of COVID-19 pandemic is bigger than the game of cricket and needs to be taken seriously, justifying the suspension of almost all the ongoing action to contain the deadly outbreak.

The disease, which has so far claimed almost 8,000 lives and infected close to 2,00,000 people globally, has led to the cancellation or postponement of sports events across the globe.

“As hard as it is for all cricketers at the moment I think it is time that we take a break. I know it's even harder this time of year when you've got finals and trophies are on the line and it's all there to be won but this is bigger than us, bigger than the game of cricket but it's something that needs to be taken very seriously,” Paine said in a video posted in twitter.

“I hope that we're all back playing the game we love and going about our lives the way we want to as soon as possible but in the meantime, please take care of yourselves, take care of others and let's ride this out together.”

In Australia, the three-ODI series



against New Zealand was called off, while the upcoming three-T20 International series in New Zealand, starting March 24 was also postponed. The remainder of the Sheffield Shield competition has been cancelled too.

The Australian women's cricket team, which won the T20 World Cup recently, also had its limited-overs tour of South Africa cancelled.

“There's no doubt it's been a big week for our cricket community.

Some decisions have been made in the best interests of our country and our most vulnerable people. One of those decisions has been to cancel all cricket. I realise that's tough but it's something we should all take very seriously,” Paine said.

“I would certainly love to be playing with Tasmania right now in the hunt for a Sheffield Shield final and there's no doubt our Australian men's team would love to be in Hobart trying

to win the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy and certainly our female world champion team would love to be in South Africa. But we're not, and for very very good reason.”

Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar also took to twitter to educate the people about the steps they need to take during the ongoing health crisis.

“We are all worried due to the coronavirus. There are few things which I can keep in mind like stay away from public places as it can spread from one person to other, stay away from people with symptoms of flu.

“See a doctor if you show symptoms or call the helpline number, wash hands with soap as many times as possible in flowing water and don't go by hearsay. It can happen to anybody and don't ignore it,” he said.

“...by understading how it spreads we can defeat it,” added the batting great, who joined WHO's #SafeHandsChallenge to promote the importance of washing hands amid the coronavirus outbreak.

In India, the deadly disease has infected 147 people so far and killed three.

NKorea's Kim admits troubled medical system amid virus fears

SEOUL, MAR 18 (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un acknowledged that his country lacks modern medical facilities and called for urgent improvements, state media said Wednesday, in a rare assessment of the North's health care system that comes amid worries about the coronavirus in the impoverished country.

Outside experts say a coronavirus epidemic in the North could be devastating due to its chronic lack of medical supplies and outdated health care infrastructure. Kim's comments were made during a ceremony Tuesday marking the start of construction on a new hospital.

North Korea has engaged in an intense campaign to guard against the new virus, though it has steadfastly maintained that no one has been sickened, a claim many foreign experts doubt. During a groundbreaking ceremony for a modern general hospital in Pyongyang, the capital, Kim said it's crucial for the state's efforts to be directed "to prop up the field of public health, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency, or KCNA.

It cited Kim as saying the construction must be completed before October's 75th founding anniversary of the ruling Workers' Party.

Kim said the ruling party decided on building the hospital during a key party meeting in late December and was working to have it finished in the shortest time. In an unusual admission on a troubled state system, Kim also said, Frankly speaking, our party ... criticized in a heart-aching manner the fact that there is not a modern medical and health care facility even in our capital city, according to KCNA.

Kim appears to be using the hospital construction to burnish his image as a leader caring about public livelihoods at a time when his country is grappling with international sanctions amid stalled nuclear diplomacy with the United States, said Ahn Kyung-su, head of the Seoul-based private Research Center of DPRK Health and Welfare.

He said North Korea has several modern general hospitals in Pyongyang but an analysis of construction drawings for the new hospital shown in KCNA photos suggested it would be the most sophisticated hospital in North Korea when it's built. In a report to the World Health Organization, North Korea said it had 135 general and other major hospitals throughout the country as of 2017, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

Some observers said North Korea may have hurried the hospital's construction since China reported the first cases of the new disease in December. While the new coronavirus can be deadly, particularly for the elderly and people with other health problems, for most people it causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough.

Aus warns citizens not to travel abroad; cases surge to 454

BY NATASHA CHAKU

MELBOURNE, MAR 18 (PTI): Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Wednesday warned its citizens not to travel abroad and banned "non-essential" gatherings of 100 people or more as the government declared the deadly coronavirus, that has infected over 450 people in the country, a "human biosecurity emergency".

Prime Minister Morrison on Wednesday said Australians should abandon all overseas travel because of the coronavirus epidemic. There have been 40 new cases since Tuesday.

Of the 454 confirmed cases in Australia, 43 have recovered and 5 have died from the COVID-19, according to the official figures.

Morrison declared a national "human biosecurity emergency" and ordered a halt to "non-essential" indoor gatherings of more than 100 people, on top of an existing ban on outdoor events of more than 500.

He said, "We haven't seen this sort of thing in Australia since the end of the First World War. This is a once-in-a-100-year-type event," Morrison said.

"Life is changing in Australia, as it is changing all around the world. Life is going to continue to change. The travel advice to every Australian is do not travel abroad. Do not go overseas."

Restaurants, pubs, bars, sports clubs, RSLs and other venues are all set to be hit with patron limits, forcing some to temporarily cease trad-



ing, move to take-away only operations or shut down.

However, schools across the country were still to remain open.

Morrison said Australia should prepare for "at least six months" of disruption as health authorities attempt to get on top of the coronavirus.

"For those of you thinking about going overseas for the school holidays, don't. Don't go overseas," he said.

Morrison said there would be no short-term, quick fix to deal with the COVID-19 crisis in Australia, and warned that "tens of thousands of jobs" could be lost.

Responding to the panic buying, the prime minister urged the public to "Stop hoarding."

"I can't be more blunt about it. Stop it. It is not sensible, it is not helpful and it has been one of the most disappointing things I have seen in Australian behaviour in response to this crisis," he said.

On Wednesday, the New South Wales recorded a massive jump in new 59 cases as travellers returned from overseas. The cases jumped from 210 to 269 in the past 24 hours, according to the media reports here.

Queensland's total number of confirmed cases stood at 94.

State Premier Annastacia Pa-

laszczuk said it is now "a different world" from just last week.

For Victoria, the Premier Daniel Andrew said the government could also ban gatherings of fewer than 100 people, noting he could not rule out further changes.

Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton said the spike in cases has been due to people who have travelled overseas.

Sutton said that the transmission in Victoria was not because of community transition like Italy.

Sutton has continued to urge people to wash their hands, socially distance and stay home if they are unwell. "These are critical measures

to be applied regardless of the 100 and 500 threshold, he said. In Western Australia, Health Minister Roger Cook said four new coronavirus cases have been confirmed overnight, taking the State's total to 35.

McGowan also condemned panic buyers in supermarkets as "jerks, drongos and bloody idiots."

He said there was "plenty of food to go round" and no need for people to buy in excessive quantities.

The outbreak, which first emerged in China's Wuhan city last year, has marched across the globe, infecting 198,006 people and killing 7,948, according to a tracker maintained by the Johns Hopkins

IMF rejects crisis-hit Venezuela's request for \$5 bn virus aid



The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday rejected economically devastated Venezuela's request for a \$5 billion loan to help it cope with the onslaught of coronavirus on the country that an aid agency warned is as prepared as war-torn Syria.

President Nicolas Maduro made the request earlier Tuesday but, in a statement hours later, the Washington-based institution indirectly cited a dispute over Maduro's leadership in denying his petition.

In a letter to IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva, Maduro said a \$5 billion loan from the IMF's Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI) "will contribute significantly to strengthening our detection and response systems."

It was the country's first loan request to the IMF since 2001.

"Unfortunately, the Fund is not in a position to consider this request," because there is "no clarity" on international recognition of the country's government, the Washington-based institution said in a statement.

"As we have mentioned before,

IMF engagement with member countries is predicated on official government recognition by the international community, as reflected in the IMF's membership. There is no clarity on recognition at this time," the statement said.

More than 50 countries including the United States have not recognized Maduro for more than a year, after switching allegiance to opposition leader Juan Guaido who declared himself acting president.

Guaido branded Maduro a usurper over the president's 2018 re-election in polls widely seen as fraudulent.

But US sanctions and other international pressures have failed to dislodge Maduro, who is backed by Venezuela's creditors China and Russia and retains the support of the powerful military.

- Five years of crisis -

The RFI from which Maduro sought the assistance is a mechanism by which all IMF member countries can get financial assistance without the need to have a full-fledged economic program in place.

Venezuela's health system is in tatters after five years of economic and political crisis that has sent millions of people fleeing for lack of basic staples.

"We hardly have five percent of the medicine stocks we need," Douglas Leon Natera, head of the Venezuelan Medical Federation, told AFP earlier.

Jan Egeland, general secretary of the Norwegian Refugee Council, placed Venezuela in the same category as war-torn Syria and Yemen in its preparedness.

Like those countries, "there will be carnage" when the virus reaches parts of Venezuela given that "health systems have collapsed," warned Egeland.

The country has 33 reported coronavirus cases, according to John Hopkins' global tally, and Maduro has ordered a lockdown in the capital Caracas and six other states.

"At this crucial moment and aware of the high level of contagion of this disease, we will continue to take rapid and vigorous measures" to stop the advance of the pandemic, Maduro wrote in his letter to Georgieva.

"We are convinced that in permanent coordination with the WHO (World Health Organization) and the support among the countries of the world, we will be able to overcome this difficult situation."

Security forces on motorcycles and in vehicles are patrolling the streets of the capital to enforce the containment measures and ensure only food stores remain open.

The country has banned flights to and from Europe, as well as Colombia, Panama and the Dominican Republic. It has also suspended school and university classes as well as sports events.

103-year-old Iran woman survives coronavirus: report



TEHRAN, MAR 18 (AFP):

A 103-year-old woman in Iran has recovered after being infected with the new coronavirus, state media reported, despite overwhelming evidence the elderly are most at risk from the disease.

The unnamed woman had been hospitalised in the central city of Semnan for about a week, IRNA news agency said.

But she was "discharged after making a complete recovery", Semnan University of Medical Sciences head Navid Danayi was quoted as saying by IRNA late Tuesday.

The woman was the second elderly patient in Iran to have survived the disease.

The other was a 91-year-old man from Kerman, in the southeast of Iran, the news agency said.

After being sick for three days, he recovered on Monday despite having pre-existing medical conditions including high blood pressure and asthma, it added.

The report did not say how the pair were treated.

Since Iran announced its first deaths on Febru-

ary 19, the novel coronavirus has spread to all of the country's 31 provinces and killed nearly 1,000 people.

The elderly are the most vulnerable to the disease, which first emerged in China late last year.

The World Health Organization this month estimated the novel coronavirus kills 3.4 per cent of all those infected.

But for people aged over 80 the fatality rate was 21.9 per cent, according to a report the WHO carried out with the Chinese authorities.

Greek police use tear gas on migrants at Turkish border

THESSALONIKI (GREECE), MAR 18 (AP): Clashes broke out overnight on Greece's border with Turkey early Wednesday, after 500 migrants attempted to break down a border fence and enter Greece.

Greek police said they used tear gas to repel the push to break down the fence south of the Kastanies border crossing.

They said Turkish authorities also fired tear gas at the Greek border. The clashes began at 2 a.m. and lasted for roughly two hours.

An estimated 2,000 migrants are still camped out on the Greek-Turkish border, weeks after Turkey declared its borders to Europe open and encouraged migrants and refugees living in the

country to try crossing into European Union member Greece.

Tens of thousands of people headed to the border despite Greece's insistence that its eastern border, which is also the EU's external border, was shut.

The move came after months of threats by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he

would open his borders and allow millions of refugees into Europe unless the EU provided more support for refugee care in Turkey.

The EU says it is adhering to a 2016 deal with Turkey under which it provides billions of euros in funds in return for Turkey caring for more than 3.5 million refugees from neighboring Syria.

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LUCK OF THE IRISH! ! The star, Jenny McCarthy practices social distancing by celebrating St. Patrick's Day via video chat with a friend in Los Angeles.

'Black Widow' delayed amid coronavirus pandemic



LOS ANGELES, MAR 18 (PTI): "Black Widow", starring Scarlett Johansson, has been pulled by Marvel Studios in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

The Cate Shortland-directed film, which was scheduled to be released on May 1, is delayed until further notice, reported Deadline.

With two biggest movie chains, AMC and Regal, shutting down for possibly close to two months, it was an inevitable decision by

the makers.

Marvel has also postponed Amy Adams-starrer "The Woman in the Window", a 20th Century title and "The Personal History of David Copperfield", featuring Dev Patel, from its Searchlight banner, which were supposed to debut on April 15 and May 8, respectively.

It is unclear when any of these films will be released.

Disney has already called off the release of "Mulan", "The New Mu-

stants" and "Antlers". Other studios have also postponed their releases in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, Paramount's "A Quiet Place Part II", Universal's "F9" and MGM's James Bond film "No Time to Die".

The outbreak, which first emerged in China's Wuhan city last year, has spread across the globe, infecting 198,006 people and killing 7,948, according to a tracker maintained by the Johns Hopkins University.

best way to ride this storm.

TIP: Turn to your favourite literary geniuses.

CANCER: What's happening on an individual level is bound to affect the collective, and vice versa. It's important to draw energetic boundaries that will help you differentiate between what's yours and what's not. Stay physically and energetically protected at all times. If what you're consuming by way of 'information' is causing anxiety, it's best to detach for a bit.

TIP: Draw physical and energetic boundaries.

LEO: The truth is, neither of us could have predicted this storm. Yet, the only way to ride it is by adapting and learning to go with the flow. What the cards are urging you to do: instead of succumbing to the general state of panic, make a conscious attempt to vibrate higher and remind those around you to choose happiness over gloom and doom.

TIP: Make a conscious attempt to vibrate higher.

VIRGO: But, what do *you* desire, Virgo? What's keeping you from having the conversation? Forget about the rules of dating and mating for a second. If you envision a life together with them, speak your truth. If the feelings are mutual, there is no reason they won't meet you halfway. Those who've been planning their wedding, an event or ceremony could be in a general state of panic.

Important to have honest expression in stand-up comedy: Amit Tandon

BY SHUBHA DUBEY

NEW DELHI, MAR 18 (PTI): A stand-up artiste cannot survive by telling stories that don't come from an honest place, says renowned comedian Amit Tandon.

An MBA and engineer by qualification, Tandon has established himself as one of the most popular names in the Indian stand-up comedy scene with his relatable style.

"The stories we tell are personal. If I try to tell stories that I feel will work in the market but don't belong to me, I will never connect with people. It's better to stay honest in my expression rather than try too hard to present something which I'm not," Tandon told PTI in an interview.

"The more honest you are, the better you connect with the audiences. I say the same thing to the stand-up aspirants that 'don't try to be like somebody else,'" he added.

With "Tandon: Family Tandoncies", Tandon became the third Indian stand-up artiste to have a Netflix special after Aditi Mittal and Vir Das.

He said it took him seven to eight months to come up with the hour-long act.

"There's a lot of pressure. It was the first time I was doing a one-hour special. The challenge was to write a story which leads to a proper ending. Usually, when we perform live, there is a set or two but for the special I had to switch from one set to another," he said.

His family is the focus of a lot of jokes that Tandon offers in the special but the

artiste said people at home are used to being at the receiving end of his humour.

"Now my family doesn't mind when I put them at the centre of my jokes. I don't tell my wife if I have a joke on her. She gets to know during the performance. But she doesn't say anything as this is my source of bread and butter," he quipped.

"Also, in my sets I don't look down

Delhi but today there are many.

"There has always been an audience for stand-up comedy but now people turn up for specific stand-up comedians. There are those who watch Zakir Khan, while others follow Kanan Gill, Kenny Sebastian or Anurag Bassi. We find more audiences thanks to our population," he said.

Tandon believes that while most of



on people. I don't call them stupid for being themselves. I believe anything that somebody is doing has a reason behind it. I try to bring that reason in my comedy."

He believes stand-up scene in India is maturing and the exposure has led to a star system where people turn up to watch their favourite comedians.

"It's similar to Bollywood. There are different genres. When I started in 2010, there would be one open mic in

the comedians are passionate about the topics they are dealing with, there are those who try to cash in on trends.

"If your topic is generic and you don't feel passionate about it, it won't work. Like political comedy. I know at least 15 people who do that, but 10 of them are doing that because the other five are doing well. So it won't work for them. If you do comedy with an honest opinion, it always works.

No fever but blahs: Tom Hanks shares health amid coronavirus scare



MELBOURNE, MAR 18 (PTI): Hollywood star Tom Hanks on Wednesday said he and his wife, actor Rita Wilson don't have fever but feel the "blahs" since their discharge from an Australian hospital after testing positive for the coronavirus.

The actors, both 63, checked out of a Gold Coast medical facility on Tuesday after spending a week in self-isolation.

Hanks took to Instagram to give an update, his first, after their release from the hospital. "Hey folks. Good News: One week after testing Positive, in self-isolation, the symptoms are much the same. No fever but the blahs," he said. The "Captain Phillips" star wrote how he and Wilson were spending their time under self-quarantine.

"Folding the laundry and doing the dishes leads to a nap on the couch.

"Bad news: My wife @ritawilson has won 6 straight hands of Gin Rummy and leads by 201 points. But I have learned not to spread my Vegemite so thick," he said. Sharing a picture of a corona type-

writer, he quipped, "I travelled here with a typewriter, one I used to love."

"We are all in this together. Flatten the curve. Hanx," he added. Wilson, also a singer-songwriter, shared a video of her singing her song "Broken Man" while recovering from COVID-19.

"Broken Man" by Rita Wilson. Written with Gary Burr. People aren't perfect. Gotta love them flaws and all," she captioned the four minute-long video.

Last week, Hanks revealed he and Wilson tested positive for COVID-19 in Australia, where the multiple Oscar winner was working on Baz Luhrmann's Elvis Presley biopic.

Wilson had given concerts in Sydney and Brisbane before testing positive.

Warner Bros shut down preproduction on the Elvis film after Hanks' diagnosis. Earlier this week, Luhrmann went into self-isolation, along with his family, after coming into contact with Hanks on the film sets.

Bong Joon-Ho would love to make a musical

LONDON, MAR 18 (PTI): Oscar-winning filmmaker Bong Joon-Ho is interested in making a musical in future. However, the "Parasite" director, who is fresh off from a historic haul at Academy Awards 2020, said his version of a musical would have to be "different".

"I would love to make a musical. Characters would begin singing, then think, 'Oh my God, f*** this, this is too cheesy,' and stop suddenly.

"There are amazing musical films, like 'Singin' In The Rain'. But when I watch them, I feel very embarrassed and start blushing. So it would have to be... different," Bong told Empire magazine.

A sensational class satire, "Parasite" shattered the 92-year Oscars history recently as it became the first non-English language film to earn the best picture trophy. It was also South Korea's first ever win.

The film also scooped Oscars in original screenplay, international film and directing for Bong, first ever for an Asian.

Bong will continue the "Parasite" saga in a TV series, which will expand on the universe that he created in the movie.

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ARIES: Given the general state of chaos, it will be easy to hit the panic button, lose your cool at the drop of a hat and blame others for how you are feeling. Take responsibility for where you are. Sharing space (even with your loved ones) isn't always easy. Keep your ego aside and see how you can work as a team. We're in this together, Aries!

TIP: We're in this together!

TAURUS: Look at you breaking old habits and turning your wounds into wisdom. You've come such a long way, Taurus! Don't fall into the old trap of worrying about the things you have zero control over. Use this time to step back emotionally, reassess your patterns, and bring light to the shadows. Remember, if you're struggling, it's okay to reach out for help. Your family or your flatmates will be more than happy to brew you a pot of ginger-lemon-honey tea and take your mind off what's weighing you down.

TIP: Turn your wounds into wisdom.

GEMINI: You can either complain about social distancing or adapt your schedule and adjust your attitude. Gemini, you're definitely in the mood to turn lemons into lemon tart. That library at home has been calling for your attention for some time now. Turn to your favourite literary geniuses for solace or learn a new skill that will enhance your CV. Channelling your inner geek is the

best way to ride this storm.

TIP: Turn to your favourite literary geniuses.

CANCER: What's happening on an individual level is bound to affect the collective, and vice versa. It's important to draw energetic boundaries that will help you differentiate between what's yours and what's not. Stay physically and energetically protected at all times. If what you're consuming by way of 'information' is causing anxiety, it's best to detach for a bit.

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LEO: The truth is, neither of us could have predicted this storm. Yet, the only way to ride it is by adapting and learning to go with the flow. What the cards are urging you to do: instead of succumbing to the general state of panic, make a conscious attempt to vibrate higher and remind those around you to choose happiness over gloom and doom.

TIP: Make a conscious attempt to vibrate higher.

VIRGO: But, what do *you* desire, Virgo? What's keeping you from having the conversation? Forget about the rules of dating and mating for a second. If you envision a life together with them, speak your truth. If the feelings are mutual, there is no reason they won't meet you halfway. Those who've been planning their wedding, an event or ceremony could be in a general state of panic.

TIP: Have the talk.

LIBRA: If there's anything your time away from the matrix is teaching you, it's that there's too much to do and too little time. Libra, you are a powerhouse of ideas at the moment and there's no putting that overactive imagination of yours to rest. Use this time wisely. Invest in projects that have been calling for your attention. Some of you may feel inspired to learn a new skill. Pick a book that will be your guiding light or look for courses in the virtual world.

TIP: Start something new!

SCORPIO: While those around you may be screaming their guts out about distancing, your inner introvert is secretly relieved. You're looking at your time off as a wonderful opportunity to turn inwards, water your garden, and start a dialogue with yourself about the things that matter. Things will get better eventually—this you trust. Use your voice to inform, educate, and show up for your fellow warriors in the best way you can.

TIP: Use your voice to inform and educate.

SAGITTARIUS: "I will remember the kisses, our lips raw with love, and how you gave me everything you had, and how I offered you what was left of me." Bukowski is a big mood in the Sagittarius HQ and you're in the mood to spend your time away from the matrix

nurturing your relationship with your special someone.

TIP: Use this time to nurture your relationship.

CAPRICORN: It's a 'find what you love and let it kill you' kind of week in the Capricorn headquarters. Allow yourself to be intoxicated by what you are creating. Immerse yourself in your art. You will find that there is no greater joy than expressing your innermost thoughts. But does that mean you are compromising on wealth and financial stability in the bargain? Anything but.

TIP: Immerse yourself in the process of creation.

Aquarius:

Given the general state of chaos in the world, your finances may have taken a hit. Now is not the time to take risky decisions. Put yourself on savings mode until the storm has passed, Aquarius. As for the money that is owed to you, trust that it will clear in due course of time. It's true that life is beginning to seem like an obstacle course.

TIP: You will find the light at the end of the tunnel.

PISCES: Old structures are falling away right this moment, making space for an energetic shift on a collective level. But that doesn't mean the transition to the new age is going to be devoid of chaos. As an empathetic and sensitive soul, you understand this on a deep level and are finding a way to keep your feet on the ground..

TIP: Establishing small, simple rituals is the key to consistency.