



**AFTER DOMESTIC HELP TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19, BONEY KAPOOR WARNS AGAINST "RUMOURS AND PANIC"**

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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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*20 returning from Guwahati*

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 19 MAY:**

Twenty Sikkimese students stranded in the North East for the past two months, were evacuated from Guwahati on Tuesday and have begun their journey home.

While 12 students were in Aizawl, eight were stranded in Guwahati and left together for Sikkim at 8:50 AM. It is added that after documentation and verification, Sikkim House, Guwahati provided them refreshments, sanitizers and face masks.

The students thanked Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] and Sikkim House, Guwahati for making all arrangements for their safe evacuation.

*BS Panth speaks to Union Civil Aviation Minister, requests early resumption of flights from Pakyong*

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 19 MAY:**

Tourism & Civil Aviation Minister, BS Panth, in a telephonic conversation with Union Minister for Civil Aviation, Hardeep Singh Puri, yesterday, urged him to expedite the resumption of flights from Pakyong now that the airport has been upgraded and all components, the lack of which, had led to the suspension of flights, have been incorporated there.

Speaking to this correspondent, Mr Panth informed that he has briefed the Union Minister about the issues which had held up the required civil works at the airport and about how those problems have now been resolved and how the airport has been ready for flights since January but is yet to resume operations.

SpiceJet, the only carrier allowed to operate in Sikkim, had suspended operations here in June last year citing landing strip limitations and unfavourable weather conditions.

Pakyong Airport falls under category 2C of Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) norms and now meets all the specifications.

During the conversation, the Union Minister is reported to have informed that his Ministry was in consultation with the Airports Authority India and has explored introduction of Instrument Landing System (ILS) and Required Navigation Performance-Authorization Required (RNP-AR) with the help of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

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## Stranded students begin journey home from Bangalore



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 19 MAY:**

Around 1,054 Sikkimese students stranded in Bangalore, Karnataka, began their journey home today in a coordinated effort between the Governments of Sikkim and Karnataka.

It is informed that they are being brought home in a special train.

The stranded students gathered at HMT Ground, Bangalore, where the Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister, Dr CN Ashwath Narayan, arrived to them off.

Chief Minister, PS Tamang [Golay], called Dr Ashwath over the phone and thanked him for all the support extended by the Government of Karnataka.

In a Facebook post today, the CM wrote, "I would like to extend my gratitude to the Deputy

Chief Minister of Karnataka Dr C.N. Ashwath Narayan and the Karnataka Government for the support they have provided to our stranded Sikkimese in Karnataka. Your co-operation at this time of pandemic is deeply appreciated."

## Complaints surface about inconsistencies in management of quarantine centres

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 19 MAY:**

As more and more returning Sikkimese go into facility quarantine, complaints have been emerging about the management and services which point towards inconsistencies in the management of these facilities.

Given the stress on social-distancing and the established fear of Novel Coronavirus, most of these complaints reaching us at SummitTimes have been about social distancing norms not being properly implemented in some quarantine facilities.

What this points out is that there is no stan-

dardized operating procedure handed out to the facilities.

Summit Times received a complaint from a person housed in a quarantine facility, wherein it was mentioned that social distancing norms are not being properly followed in the mess.

The letter complains of people in the facility having to touch the same serving spoon in the mess where they are being served in common buffet.

"Are they not aware of how the virus can spread by touching the contaminated surfaces?" the letter questions.

This is not consistent

with reports from most other quarantine centres where people are being served their meals and refreshments in their rooms to ensure minimal contact with others.

The complainant also mentions that they have seen very little medical intervention in the quarantine facility and residents have to "plead" for basic protective gear like masks and hand sanitizers.

In another message received recently, a Sikkimese who had returned to the State and opted for paid quarantine had complained of having to share a hotel room.

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## Agri Minister promotes 'terrace farming' in urban areas to make Sikkim self reliant

**GIALSHING, 19 MAY [IPR]:** Minister LN Sharma chaired an interactive program organized by the Agriculture, Horticulture and KVK, West Sikkim at Chumbung Secondary School.

The Minister was accompanied by the Area MLA Soreng-Chakung, Aditya Golay; Jacob Khaling, Political Secretary to the CM; R Telang, Principal Secretary (Agriculture Department) along with District HoDs of Agriculture, Horticulture, AH&VS, KVK, Fisheries and other departments.

The Minister, in his address, mentioned that the during these perilous times of COVID pandemic the only thing which has kept us safe was the cooperative discipline of the public which was seen during the lockdown period.

He mentioned that



the state of Sikkim has had no cases due to the collective efforts of the administration and also the general public.

He informed that the state needs to be self-reliant in order to survive these pandemic which all have realized and hence the Government is working to great lengths in making this a success via various policies, schemes and incentives targeted to fulfill the gaps of the farming community in creating surplus produc-

es in the state.

The Minister mentioned the importance of the 'Terrace farming' which would be useful for all who have buildings with open terrace and how this facilities could be used by the individual residing in urban environment to become self-reliant and sufficient in terms of growing their own crops and consuming themselves.

He mentioned that the state of Sikkim needs to

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## Collect only tuition fees, Delhi HC tells 2 private schools

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19 (PTI):**

The Delhi High Court has directed two private schools here not to collect from students any amount other than the tuition fees that too as per rates prevailing prior to October 31 last year.

Justice Rajiv Shukla also directed the schools, both in south Delhi, to pay salaries of staff and teachers at rates presently prevailing.

The directions came on the schools' plea challenging the Directorate of Education's (DoE) April 22 finding, that the two institutions had illegally hiked fees and compelled parents to pay that along with arrears, and its recommendation to lodge an FIR against the management and seal the premises.

The court issued notice to the Delhi government, the police and the DoE on the plea and sought their stand by June 8.

It asked the school management or officials to join the police investigation into authenticity of some e-mails sent to the two schools allegedly by the DoE allowing them to hike their fees.

The DoE has lodged a complaint with police regarding the e-mails, the court noted and directed the Cyber Cell to file a report with regard to genuineness of the e-mails.

The court further directed the police that, meanwhile, no coercive steps be taken against the schools' management till the next date of hearing on June 8.

## COVID-19 cases reach 1,01,139; death toll touches 3,163

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19 (PTI):**

The number of coronavirus cases crossed the one lakh mark in the country on Tuesday, while the death toll due to the infection touched 3,163, according to the Union Health Ministry.

A total of 134 deaths and 4,970 COVID-19 cases were reported in the country in the past 24 hours since 8 pm on Monday, it said.

The total number of coronavirus cases has risen to 1,01,139, the ministry said.

The number of active COVID-19 cases stood at 58,802 while 39,173 people have recovered and one patient has migrated, it said.

"Thus, around 38.73 per cent patients have recovered so far," a senior health ministry official said.

The total confirmed cases include foreigners.

Of the 134 deaths reported since Monday morning, 51 were in Maharashtra, 35 in Gujarat, 14 in Uttar Pradesh, eight in Delhi, seven in Rajasthan, six in West Bengal, four in Madhya Pradesh, three in Tamil Nadu, two each in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, and one each in Bihar and Telangana.

Of the 3,163 fatalities, Maharashtra tops tally with 1,249 deaths. Gujarat comes second with 694 deaths, followed by Madhya Pradesh at 252,

West Bengal at 244, Delhi at 168, Rajasthan at 138, Uttar Pradesh at 118, Tamil Nadu at 81 and Andhra Pradesh at 50.

The death toll reached 37 each in Karnataka and Punjab and 35 in Telangana.

Jammu and Kashmir has reported 15 fatalities due to the disease, Haryana has 14 deaths while Bihar has registered nine and Kerala and Odisha each have reported four deaths.

Jharkhand, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh each have recorded three COVID-19 fatalities, while Assam has reported two deaths. Meghalaya, Uttarakhand and Puducherry have reported one fatality each, according to the data provided by the ministry.

According to the ministry's website, more than 70 per cent of the deaths are due to comorbidities, the existence of multiple disorders in the same person.

According to the health ministry's data updated in the morning, the highest number of confirmed cases in the country are from Maharashtra at 35,058, followed by Tamil Nadu at 11,760, Gujarat at 11,745, Delhi at 10,054, Rajasthan at 5,507, Madhya Pradesh at 5,236 and Uttar Pradesh at 4,605.

The number of

COVID-19 cases has gone up to 2,825 in West Bengal, 2,474 in Andhra Pradesh and 1,980 in Punjab.

It has risen to 1,597 in Telangana, 1,391 in Bihar, 1,289 in Jammu and Kashmir, 1,246 in Karnataka and 928 in Haryana.

Odisha has reported 876 coronavirus infection cases so far, while Kerala has 630 cases. A total of 223 people have been infected with the virus in Jharkhand and 196 in Chandigarh.

Tripura has reported 167 cases, Assam has 107, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh have 93 cases each, Himachal Pradesh has 90 and Ladakh has registered 43 cases so far.

Goa has reported 38 COVID-19 cases, while the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has registered 33 infections.

Puducherry has registered 18 cases, Meghalaya has 13 and Manipur has seven cases. Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Dadar and Nagar Haveli have reported a case each till now.

"814 cases are being reassigned to states," the ministry said on its website, adding "our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR".

State-wise distribution is subject to further verification and reconciliation, it said.

## Railways runs its most powerful Made in India locomotive



**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

**(PTI):** The Indian Railways' most powerful 12000 HP Made in India locomotive made its maiden commercial run between Deen Dayal Upadhaya and Shivpur stations in Uttar Pradesh on Monday, the national transporter said.

Built by French company Alstom under the government's Make in India programme at the Railways' Madhepura factory in Bihar, these engines are the highest-powered locomotives that will run on Indian rails.

All 800 of these locos are being manufactured indigenously while they have been designed at the company's engineering centre in Bengaluru.

The first train, consisting of 118 wagons, using the locomotive departed from Deen Dayal Upadhaya Station at 2:08 pm for Dhanbad division of East Central Railway.

"The locomotive is capable of working on railway tracks with conventional OHE lines as well as on Dedicated Freight corridors with high rise OHE lines. The locomotive has air-conditioned driver cabs on either side.

"It is equipped with regenerative braking system which provides substantial energy savings during operations. These high horse power locomotives will help to decongest the saturated tracks by improving

average speed of freight trains," the statement from Railways said.

As part of the largest Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) project of the Indian Railways, the Ministry of Railways and Alstom inked a Joint Venture worth Rs 25,000 crore in 2015.

The overall project is for manufacturing of 800 double-section electric locomotives of 12000 HP for freight service and its associated maintenance for a period of 11 years.

The scope also includes setting up of a manufacturing plant at Madhepura (Bihar) for building the e-locomotives and two maintenance depots at Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh and Nagpur, Maharashtra.



# Minister confers with farmers at Mabong-Sengang

**GYALSHING, 19 MAY [IPR]:** An interaction program of farmers with Minister Lok Nath Sharma, organized by the Agriculture, Horticulture and KVK was held at the Community Hall, Mabong-Sengang, West Sikkim.

The program was chaired by the Minister in the presence of area MLA Salghari-Zoom Sunita Gajmer accompanied by R Telang, Principal Secretary (Agriculture Department).

The Minister, in his address, stated that the State government's early precautionary steps ceased the pandemic from reaching the state.

He also thanked the public for their obedience during the

lockdown period. HM in his interaction with the farmers and the public present at the community hall mentioned that the state is keen to help the farmers in these harsh times. He informed that the times has changed and due the COVID19 when everything is under lockdown the only essential things needed for humans to survive are the agricultural produces which everyone needs to consume every day. Hence, farmers are the backbone for the human race in order to survive this pandemic.

The Minister encouraged the farmers by mentioning that the state is keen to support them via various incentives,

schemes and policies directed for their aid. He also informed that the farming community engaged in progressive farming need to be able to shoulder the responsibilities given by the state to be self-reliant and sustainable.

He further acknowledged the monetary contributions of the farmers and the rural populous towards the CMRF during the pandemic and urged them to support the state by giving their harvest in plentiful so that they can be used to feed the urban citizens of Sikkim.

Ms Gajmer also under similar lines urged the public of Mabong Sengang to use

the incentives productively and unitedly.

She stressed that the Government of Sikkim understands the needs of the rural populous hence they have come at their door steps to help them in every way possible.

Mr Telang in his brief address mentioned that the department is keen to help the farmers who are willing to work hard. He also informed about the different schemes of the department suitable for them and urged them to use it wisely in order to multiply their produces. He also mentioned that Sikkim as an organic state has a lot of potential which the farmers

need to understand and utilize in due time.

During the program, the Minister declared that the demands placed by the Mabong Sengang GPU in regards to the Milk Collection Center at Sengang; the Stockman Center at Mabong and Water Harvesting Tank at Mabong was also sanctioned.

The Minister along with Area MLA Salghari-Zoom distributed Power Tillers and HDP pipes by Agriculture Department; 1000L Poly Tanks and HDP pipes by Horticulture Department; Chaff Cutter and Backyard Poultry by the AH&VS Department to the beneficiaries.

## Police recover 4 lost smartphones

**REBYNA RANA**

**GANGTOK, 19 MAY:**

CID Branch of Sikkim Police has recovered four lost smartphones whose owners had given up hope of getting their devices back. Amidst the gloom of COVID-19, the news came as a pleasant surprise for the owners of the phones. The phones were lost at Pakyong, Gangtok and nearby areas.

"Technical Surveillance along with coordinated human efforts is a must in such cases as it takes a long time and dedicated efforts to track and recover such phones," said SP CID,

Manish Verma.

The owners thanked the department as some of the phones were of high end category and expensive, and the personal data of the users were also stored in these lost phones.

Although it is tough to trace the missing phones due to manipulation or inactivity, but we have an efficient team which performs through his hard work, added Mr Verma and congratulated his team. He appealed to general public to immediately report in the nearest police station in case of missing or stolen phones.

## Multivitamins distributed to frontline workers



**GANGTOK, 19 MAY:** Unit Head of Zuvintas Pharma, Deepak Varma, presented multivita-

mins to the frontline workers of Rangpo, Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

## HC grants bail to convict in Nido Tania death case

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19 (PTI):**

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday granted bail to one of the four persons convicted by a trial court for beating to death 19-year-old Nido Tania, a student from Arunachal Pradesh, in January 2014.

Justice Suresh K Kait granted interim bail for three months to Farman, the main accused who was awarded 10 years jail term, subject to his furnishing a personal bond of Rs 10,000 before the Jail Superintendent.

The high court noted that the convict has "already undergone around seven years of jail term out of the 10 year sentence awarded by the trial court" in September last year.

The CBI, which had investigated the case, opposed the bail plea saying his plea for regular bail was dismissed by the high court on March 23 and there are serious allegations against the applicant/appellant and the application deserves to be dismissed.

Tania, son of former Congress MLA from Arunachal Pradesh Nido Pavitra, was beaten up by several shopkeepers

in Lajpat Nagar on January 29, 2014, after he had an altercation with them when they made fun of his hairstyle. Doctors at AIIMS declared him 'brought dead' the next day.

The incident had evoked outrage among the people of the Northeast living in the national capital who had alleged that police had failed to protect him and thereafter, the case was handed over to CBI.

The other three convicts in the case were -- Pawan, Sunder Singh and Sunny Uppal.

During the filing of the charge sheet, the CBI had dropped murder charges against the accused, saying Tania's killing was not premeditated but a result of an altercation.

The trial court had convicted and awarded varying jail terms to the four under IPC sections 304 (punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 34 (common intention).

Pawan and Surender, were sentenced to seven years and a fine of Rs 20,000, while Sunny Pal, was sentenced to three years.

## 90 migrant workers leave from Soreng

**RUDRA KAUSHIK**

**GYALSHING, 19 MAY:**

The Sikkim Government helped 90 migrant workers stranded at various locations of Soreng Subdivision, West Sikkim, to leave for their home states today. They left for Siliguri in three SNT buses from Soreng.

The migrant workers, mostly natives of West Bengal and some from Bihar were stranded at various places of Soreng Subdivision since the lockdown came into force in the state. It was informed that they would head for their native places from Siliguri.

SNT department had arranged food and water for the migrant workers at the place of departure.

Political Secretary to the Chief Minister, Jacob Khaling met the migrant workers today, spoke to them, inquired



about their wellbeing and wished them a safe journey.

Some workers shared that they did not have to endure any kind of hardship during the lockdown as the government had arranged free food and other essential items for them.

Some workers expressed that there was no

problem staying in Sikkim till the lockdown was over but they wanted to be with their families in the harsh situations in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

A worker informed that he had come to West Sikkim in search of work leaving behind his wife and his infant daughter at home. He added that he should

be with his family in these testing times.

"We are happy that we are returning home and we will be with our near and dear ones soon. We will not forget the goodwill and hospitality of Sikkimese people. We thank Sikkim government for arranging for our transportation," the workers said.

## 'My angel': man who became face of India's stranded helped home by stranger

**AMRIT DHILLON**

**NEW DELHI, 19 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]:**

A photograph of a migrant labourer, his face contorted with anguish as he sits on the roadside in Delhi speaking to his wife about their sick baby boy, has come to symbolise the ordeal of India's daily wage workers; penniless, and unable to get home to their families because of the lockdown.

Rampukar Pandit, a construction worker in the Indian capital, had heard that his 11-month-old son was seriously unwell. With no public transport to reach his home in Begusarai in Bihar, 1,200 km (745 miles) away, he started walking. He reached Nizamuddin Bridge where, exhausted and hungry, he could go no further.

Atul Yadav, a photographer with the Press Trust of India, was heading home from work on 11 May when he saw Pandit, 38, sobbing his heart out. Pandit refused his offer of biscuits and water, saying food would "choke" him because he couldn't eat while his son was unwell. "He was so emotional I had to stop shooting. He had been sitting on the road for three days," said Yadav.

"We labourers don't belong to any country," Pandit told Yadav. "All I want is to go home and see my son."

Later that evening, he reached a nearby police station. He was still waiting for the police to help when a group of well-wishers, having seen Yadav's tweet about Pandit, arrived in the area and managed to find him at the station.

By now, he was full of grief. His wife, Bimal Devi, had just called to say their son had died. One of the well-wishers, a woman, paid for and arranged for his train ticket home. "He wept with gratitude at strangers helping him," said Yadav.

Yadav's photograph illustrates the anguish of millions of migrant labourers in India who are desperate to get home to their families. After waiting in vain for the government to provide them with

transport (belatedly some trains are now being laid on for them) they have embarked on astonishing odysseys, from cities all over the country, journeys that have left Indians transfixed and distressed.



Whether by truck, bicycle, auto-rickshaw or on foot, they have been heading out under their own steam, some making journeys of nearly 1,000 km to reach home. Hunger, thirst, and the scorching heat of the Indian summer are slowing them down. Some have died of exhaustion and sunstroke. Last week a group of 16 who fell asleep on a railway line they had believed was not being used were killed by a goods train.

"If I am to die, I want to die with my parents," said one young daily wage labourer leaving Indore, a city in Madhya Pradesh.

An auto-rickshaw driver fleeing Mumbai said: "Even if I starve in the village, I will never come back. My children needed medicines and food and I wasn't able to do anything."

Every day the exodus continues. The residents of Dharavi slum in Mumbai are fleeing in their thousands every day. With living conditions that make it almost impossible to escape the contagion and more than 1,100 confirmed cases of COVID-19, many people feel they are sitting ducks.

Yadav, 44, has been documenting their plight for the past few weeks, ever since India's lockdown began on 25 March. He has

been taken aback at the response to his image of Pandit. It has been splashed all over Indian news outlets and social media.

He is getting calls from California and New York, both about his

photograph and from people who want to help Pandit. "In my career so far, this is the photograph that has best shown one person's pain," he said.

Pandit reached Bihar last Wednesday and was put into a quarantine centre. There, he developed a temperature and headaches and was sent to hospital, where he has tested negative for Covid-19.

On the government's inaction towards workers separated from their families, Pandit said he was not surprised. "I am a nobody, I'm like an ant, my life doesn't matter. The government is only concerned with filling the stomachs of the rich," he said.

Pandit cannot wait to reach his home and family. Once there, he plans never to return to Delhi or go to any other city for work, even though he has no land or any other means of support. "However I manage, I will manage. My family and my parents will be with me. That's enough for me," he said.

If he does ever return to Delhi, though, it will be to meet the woman who paid for his ticket and booked it for him. Before leaving, she gave him her address lest he needed further help to get home. "I would like to meet her again. She was my angel," he said.

### Complaints surface..

"How can we maintain social distance when we are compelled to share one room? How can we maintain self-isolation if this is the case?" she wrote in her message.

She sent a photo of the room where two beds can be seen stuck together and added that the beds are not even one metre apart.

Responding to a query from Summit Times, she informed that the person she was sharing the room with had also travelled in the same bus. On being told that, this could be the reason why they were asked to share a room, she said that it should have been made clear from the beginning.

"Actually we thought that we would be provided a single room where we need not have to share. Actually authorities should clarify this.. cos everyone is confused and everyone thinks in paid quarantine we get single room with no roommate," she said further adding that there is no clarity on how people are being allotted rooms.

While some of her friends were provided single rooms, others were being asked to share rooms.

It should be added here that there are also reports of other quarantine facilities functioning properly and residents being satisfied, and even impressed, with the facilities and services provided.

Clearly, while the need to quarantine and also the standard operating procedure to be followed at quarantine centres is a health issue, when Health Department officials were contacted they said that the management of quarantine facilities was being looked after by the District Administration. It is unclear whether medical advice has been taken on how these centres should be managed.

### BS Panth..

Minister Panth urged the Union Minister to direct SpicJet to resume flights and even consider the option of inviting Indigo to begin operation in Sikkim as well.

Minister Panth said that he was feeling optimistic following assurances received from Mr Puri.

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### Agri Minister..

understand the concept of Terrace Farming and practice themselves while foreseeing the future. He also informed that since food is the basic necessity one has to understand the role played by the farming community whilst encouraging them. He also mentioned that the farmers need to understand that the Government is ever ready to help them.

MLA Soreng Chakung in his brief address mentioned that the youths need to look at agriculture with a different perspective and learn the modern technologies to become sustainable. He also mentioned that various products of the farms can be sold strategically if they can explore modern avenues to market them. He also thanked the farmers for their services during the pandemic and urged them to continue investing their labor in the fields so as to support the state via their products.

The Political Secretary to the CM also mentioned that the farming community has had an important impact on the state which they have all seen during the lockdown situation. He mentioned that the state under the guidance of the CM has been giving priority to the rural sector, hence the farming community should seize the opportunity, work harder and create avenues for themselves wherein the state government would support them in every aspect.

The Principal Secretary mentioned that the state has been able to sell vegetables worth lakhs during the lockdown period which has been possible only due to the involvement and participation of the farmers. He also mentioned that the mindset of the public needs to change in order to achieve greater things and this would only be possible if they allow themselves to think out of the box. He also spoke on the plan and scheme of introducing organic seed production by identifying villages suited for the particular crop and making them seed village so that those seeds could be used by farmers providing them economic stability.

During the interaction program the Minister along with the distinguished guests distributed Power Tillers and HDP pipes by Agriculture Department; 1000L Poly Tanks and HDP pipes by Horticulture Department; Chaff Cutter and Backyard Poultry by the AH&VS Department to the beneficiaries.

## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

**Contact: 9800201335**

### LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Roadside 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



## UP govt asks Priyanka Gandhi to provide buses to DMs of Gzb, Noida

**LUCKNOW, MAY 19 (PTI):** The Uttar Pradesh government Tuesday asked Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to provide buses for carrying migrants to the district magistrates of Ghaziabad and Noida, as the war of words over the issue seemed to be subsiding.

In a letter written to Vadra's private secretary, UP's Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awasthi said, "As per your letter dated May 19, you have expressed your inability to provide buses in Lucknow, and want to provide them in Ghaziabad and Noida."

"Please provide 500 buses to the District Magistrate, Ghaziabad, by 12.00 noon. The DM Ghaziabad has been informed about this. The district administration will receive all the buses and utilise them, he said.

The buses should be provided at Kaushambi and Sahibabad bus stands, he said in the letter.

He also said, "500 buses should be provided to the District Magistrate of Gautam Buddh Nagar at the ground near the Expo Mart."

Directions have been issued to the district magistrates to utilise the buses immediately after checking the permit, fitness, insurance, driving licences of the drivers and details of the conductors, Awasthi said.

## SC refuses to transfer cases to CBI, grants protection to Arnab Goswami for 3 weeks

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19 (PTI):** The Supreme Court Tuesday refused to transfer to CBI the criminal cases lodged against Republic TV Editor in-Chief Arnab Goswami for alleged defamatory news show telecast on April 21 in connection with the Palghar mob-lynching case.

Observing that Journalistic freedom lies at the core of freedom of speech and expression, the top court quashed all other FIRs except the initial one, which was registered at Nagpur and subsequently transferred to Mumbai for joint investigation with the complaint of the journalist regarding the alleged assault on him.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah Goswami asked Goswami to seek quashing of FIR before competent court and protected him from coercive action for next 3-weeks.

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# Suicides increase in an epidemic

**PRIYANKA SAURABH**

**U**N Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued an alert urging the international community to put more effort to protect those facing increasing mental pressures. Every 40 seconds, somewhere in the world, someone takes his own life. The main causes of suicide are unemployment, terrible illness, family strife, struggle in marital life, poverty, mental disorder, failure in examination, in love. There are failures, economic disputes, political situations. Men commit more suicide than women. Similarly, a mental disorder due to mental disorder, extreme anxiety, mental instability, neurological, always suffering from the feeling of inferiority, being surrounded by despair, being overly emotional, angry or slave to desires, etc. are the major mental disorders under which a person commits suicide. It does. An addict commits suicide even when unable to keep pace with social life due to a plethora of personal defects such as alcoholism, gambling, sexual assault, or criminal acts.

But today there are some cases around the world where people take their own lives due to fear of Covid-19 infection, social stigma, isolation, depression, anxiety, emotional

imbalance, economic shutdown, lack and inappropriate knowledge, financial and future insecurity. Have been With the recent suicide reports, we can estimate the impact of this virus on the incidence of suicide worldwide. The United Nations report also mentions the 'Lancet Commission' warning on global mental health and sustainable development, according to which many people who manage themselves properly in the past may also face difficulties because of the epidemic. Many types of pressures have arisen due to this. There are many uncertainties before people and addiction to alcohol (alcohol), drugs, tobacco, and online games to handle themselves in these situations are increasing. There is something different from before due to increasing suicides during the course Today, the first reason is social isolation or distance which is very important to avoid corona today, but this separation creates a lot of concern among the citizens.

Today people of all ages are surrounded by depression and loneliness. Due to which, suicidal thoughts are overflowing in them sitting empty. Isolation disrupts normal social life and causes psychological fear and feeling trapped indefinitely. The advice of working from home has restricted our social life. The lockdown of

the worldwide economic recession has led to insecurity leading to panic over the emerging economic crisis, massive unemployment, poverty, and homelessness, possibly increasing the risk of suicide or increasing suicide attempts in such patients. Will increase. Stress, anxiety, and pressure in medical health professionals are at their peak today. 50 Percent of medical staff in British hospitals are ill. In London, a young nurse took her own life while treating Covid-19 patients, social exclusion and discrimination have also added some cases to the Covid-19 suicide list. For example, the first Covid-19 suicide case in Bangladesh, where a 36-year-old man committed suicide due to social avoidance by neighbors and to prevent the virus in his community.

Indeed, the increasing trend of suicide is purely a sociological phenomenon. Today, the person is stealing from the harsh truths of his life and filling himself with frustration and discontent. Sociology of suicide suggests that a person's frustration begins with the stress that leads him to suicide. It is surprising that in a religious and spiritual-rich country like India, about one-third of the total population is living in a state of severe depression. There is a need to set limits on Covid-19 related news

from local, national, international, social, and digital platforms to evacuate people from emotional distress and all of which should be authentic from the WHO. Today, we need to maintain connectedness and solidarity despite physical distance. Individuals with suicidal thoughts, panic and stress disorder, low self-esteem, and low self-worth are easily susceptible to paranoid thinking such as suicide in a viral epidemic. We need to look at the causes of suicide very carefully, where people often say 'I am tired of life', 'No one loves me', 'Leave me alone' and so on.

On suspecting such behavior in person, we can bring people struggling with suicidal tendencies to feel loved and protected. Social rehabilitation is needed for social rehabilitation, there is a need to implement Tele counseling with a 24 × 7 crisis response service for emotional, mental, and behavioral support. The person should be given psychological help and care. The state can seek help from non-governmental organizations as well as religious missionaries for this purpose. Strengthening the existing National Mental Health Program and District Mental Health Program, as well as focusing on training resources and streamlining funds may be some other ways to fight depression and suicide. Long-

term solutions such as helping unemployed people, finding meaningful work, or sending trainers to communities to identify people at risk of a mental health crisis are critical.

Suicide is preventable. People who are contemplating suicide often warn about their distress. We can spend time with our families, connect with friends on social media, and they will continue to engage in mindfulness activities until we all win this battle. These figures of the death toll, of course, are scary, but this trend can be stopped. For this, it is necessary to understand the reasons behind suicide and work in that direction. Life is very sweet, do not let death conquer it under any circumstances. If someone around you seems to be frustrated with life, then take a little time and try to bring hope in his life again. The World Health Organization has declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as a 'public health emergency of international concern' and defined it as a worldwide pandemic. The streak of stress on the forehead of the world has deepened due to the continuously spreading disease, which is also affecting the mental health of the people. The UN Health Agency has prepared guidelines to understand the importance of protecting mental health.

## Chinese man abducted as toddler 32 years ago reunited with parents

**EMMA GRAHAM-HARRISON**

**LONDON, 19 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]:** A Chinese man who was stolen from his family as a toddler has been reunited with his parents after 32 years.

Mao Yin was snatched in 1988 when he was walking home from nursery with his father, aged just two and half. His parents finally embraced him again on Monday afternoon, in the western city of Xi'an, where he was born.

After Mao vanished, his mother Li Jingzhi quit her job and launched a decades-long search for her son, that included sending out over 100,000 flyers, and appearing on numerous television shows.

That long campaign helped 29 other families find their own missing children, but it was only in late April this year that a tip-off led to her own son.

In late April, police received information about a boy from Xi'an who had been sold to a family just over 600km (370 miles) away, for 6,000 yuan. A DNA test confirmed Mao Yin's identity.

"I would like to thank the tens of thousands of people who helped us," Li told Xinhua news agency. "I can't believe that after helping 29 missing children find their families,



lies, I am able to find my own son."

Renamed Gu Ninging, he had been brought up in the city of Mianyang, without any idea that he was the target of a decades-long search.

He now plans to spend several days with his parents, before returning home to deal with the implications of having his life turned upside down overnight. "To be honest, I'm not quite sure about the future yet," he told Xinhua news agency.

Child abduction has been a problem in China for decades. Some of the children snatched from their parents have been directly exploited by adult criminals and coerced into begging, pick-

pocketing, forced labour or the sex trade. Others feed a market for adoptees, both among Chinese couples who want to have a son, and from orphanages seeking the large donations that foreign adoptive parents are obliged to make.

In the last year alone, Chinese authorities have reunited over 6,300 snatched children with their families using DNA tests, Xinhua reported.

But that is probably just a tiny fraction of the children who have gone missing. The Chinese government does not provide figures, but the US state department has estimated that 20,000 children are abducted annually, or 400 a week, according to the BBC.

## Kota family opens up kitchen to the needy amid lockdown

**KOTA (R'THAN), MAY 19 (PTI):** Richa and her mother-in-law are busy cooking food for nearly 400 needy people, while her husband and father-in-law are making arrangements for packaging and distribution.

This has been a regular day scene for the Jain family of Kota's Dadabari area since March 22, when the Janata curfew was announced and Richa decided to put the idea of helping the needy before her family. A postgraduate in social work, Richa thought of doing her bit after hearing about so many people going hungry due to the lockdown.

She asked her family if they could start feeding the needy with the money saved for the big party they had planned on her daughter's fourth birthday.

Her husband Chanchal Jain, an insurance officer, mother-in-law Gayatri Jain and father-in-law Pawan Jain welcomed the idea and the family decided that everyday the women would

cook food while the men would take care of arranging ration, packing meals and distribution.

As the news spread about Ghar ki Rasoi' (home kitchen), name Richa gave to the initiative, serving food to people in slum areas, many Samaritans came forward and started contributing to keep the kitchen running.

As we started cooking food at home and distributing meal packets among the needy at CAD circle and other slum areas of the city, help started pouring in with handsome contribution for the continuity of food distribution from 'Ghar Ki Rasoi', Richa said.

I and my mother-in-law cook the food while my husband and father-in-law make the packets and distribute them among the needy, she said, claiming they distribute nearly 400 meal packets every day.

Many people and groups, including the Kota Super Moms headed by Kritika Shringi and Abhilesha Club of

women and also some neighbours, have come forward with funds for the Ghar Ki Rasoi' to strengthen the mission of helping people in these difficult times, Richa said.

The food packets were also being distributed to coaching students stuck in hostels and PGs due to the lockdown but most of them have now left for their native places, she said. We are also supplying free food packets on call and if required dry ration bags are also given to the needy people, Richa said.

She said 35-40 food packets from the Ghar ki Rasoi' are also being sent for patients in Bharat Vikas Parishad hospital in the morning and evening.

We had planned a big party on the fourth birthday of my daughter Khiyati on April 30 but it did not seem possible due to the lockdown and my wife proposed to use the money saved for the party for this noble cause, Richa's husband, Chanchal Jain, said.

## Ruskin Bond turns 86, Speaking Tiger brings out book

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19 (PTI):**

Popular author Ruskin Bond turned 86 on Tuesday and to celebrate the occasion, Speaking Tiger has brought out his new book which is about his adventures on boats, trains and planes.

In "Hop On: My Adventures on Boats, Trains and Planes", Bond narrates some of his memorable travel adventures from his childhood.

With illustrations by Samrat Halder and published by Speaking Tiger's children's imprint Talking Cub, the book takes readers on a journey with young Bond that is as hilarious as is wonderful.

It was released in an e-book format on his 86th birthday.

Wishing Bond a very happy birthday, Sudeshna Shome Ghosh, Publisher and Editor of Talking Cub, said, "We are delighted to be celebrating it by releasing this sweet and charming



book. Ruskin Bond is the gentlest, loveliest of writers and we do hope you will join us in wishing him, and celebrate it as well, by reading his new book and exploring all his writings on this day."

One night, Bond dreamt he was an engine driver. He was in a smart blue uniform, and was driving a toy train up the hills. Everyone was enjoying the ride when suddenly he woke up.

"But in my mind, I was on the train, so I quickly sat down to write about some eventful journeys I have had," said Bond about how he conceived the idea of the book.

Every year on his

birthday, Bond used to spend time in the evening at his favourite bookstore, Cambridge in Mussoorie, with hundreds of children and adults and cut a cake.

Bond was born in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh, and grew up in Jamnagar, Dehradun, New Delhi and Shimla. As a young man, he spent four years in the Channel Islands and London. He returned to India in 1955. He now lives in Landour, Mussoorie with his adopted family.


At the age of eight, Bond escaped his jail-like boarding school in the hills and went on to live with his father in Delhi. His time in the capital was filled with

books, visits to the cinema, music, and walks and conversations with his father - a dream life for a curious and wildly imaginative boy, which turns tragic all too soon.

His first novel "The Room on the Roof", written when he was 17, received the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957. Since then, Bond has written a number of novellas, essays, poems and children's books.

He has also written over 500 short stories and articles that have appeared in magazines and anthologies. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1993, the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014.


Some of Bond's other titles published by Talking Cub include "When I Was a Boy: Scenes and Stories from My Childhood", "Friends in Wild Places: Birds, Beasts and Other Companions" and "The Book of Crazy Mischiefs" (co-edited with Jerry Pinto).



**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.

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



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



## Instead of Bans, Practice Better Management

*To stop things is a short-term measure*

A super-cyclone kissed Sikkim today and soon the monsoons will be upon the State as well. Among the many routine orders which will get passed will be the one ordering a stop on all ongoing construction works and unloading of construction materials on roadsides. While such control mechanisms are welcome, they are reflective of how little the State has learnt and prioritised its defence against monsoon-related calamities. The practice of ordering a halt on constructions is welcome because construction sites are invariably poorly managed tinder boxes with the potential to amplify the damage that rains can wreak. Given that most roadsides already have buildings on them, new constructions are coming up behind these, and this requires for construction material to be dumped on the road and then carried by the head-load to the sites. Most of the drains run along the roads, and sand and stone chips flow fast when it rains and add to the debris content of slush which routinely tear up tarmac and clog drains. Trucks dripping construction material on the highway are potential disasters in the making as well and travel could become more relaxed without them on the roads at this time of the year. Construction sites with their rudimentary safety measures are other accidents in the making during wet weather that the State can do without.

For all these reasons, the direction to stop all construction works during monsoons is welcome. But it is not enough and is too knee-jerk. To begin with, these need to happen in time, when the norwesters have become a regular phenomenon instead of waiting till the monsoon is upon the State. The decision that construction related works should desist with the arrival of monsoons was taken some years back, but every year, the order gets issued only after the rains have already wreaked some damage. If the state is looking at long-term mitigation efforts as far as constructions are concerned, then the ban should be lifted and instead of that builders should be required to make their sites monsoon-proof. This would entail storing of all construction related material on site with proper care taken to ensure that none of it joins a water courses. A relaxation can be made to accommodate the time taken between unloading on the road side to transfer to work site. Take a drive along the highway and one will invariably come across orphaned sand and stone chip dunes, the lockdown notwithstanding, probably left over from a completed construction as well. They lie unattended and pose a larger danger than kitchen waste which shares the road side with it. A ban on construction during monsoons is a short-term measure that Sikkim has been taking for the past decade, it is time that its officers prescribed and monitored the construction habits better. That will make the town safer than a row of incomplete buildings awaiting the dry winters. What cannot be ignored either that it is not just constructions, but also finishing works which require better material management, and when the focus is on “stopping” construction works, loopholes are found and potential risks continue to remain present, which is why the focus has to be on improved oversights and construction practices.

### WRITE US:

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## If you're not getting enough nature during the lockdown, try bringing it indoors with these simple hacks

KEVIN NUTE  
*theconversation.com*

Pandemics change everything, including the way we design buildings.

After the 1918 Spanish flu and the scourge of tuberculosis, there was a push for “healthier” buildings, “full of light and air,” as the Swiss architect Le Corbusier put it. This translated into the clean lines and white surfaces of what came to be known as the “International Style” of architecture. The hygienic qualities of these modernist buildings were generally more aesthetic than real, but designs such as Alvar Aalto's competition-winning Paimio sanatorium did provide the abundance of light and air recommended by Le Corbusier.

The COVID-19 crisis is likely to change building design again. Its health effects have not only been physical but also psychological. Our early ancestors evolved mostly outside in constantly changing natural environments. Yet the indoor spaces where we now spend much of our lives separate us from that world. One of the lessons of the current lockdowns is that we may need to change that.

### NATURE'S CALMING EFFECTS

Walks in the park, hikes in the forest and strolls along the beach are known to relieve stress. Spending time in nature also improves our ability to focus, and there's even evidence that it helps us to heal physically as well.

For most of us, the recent lockdowns have led to an unprecedented shrinking of our worlds. Even under normal circumstances, however, our ability to spend time outdoors is often limited by work, family responsibilities or a simple lack of mobility. People in the United States, for example, already spent almost 90% of their time indoors long before the current crisis.

Interior plants can help, as can pets. But neither of these seems to have quite the same restorative effects as contact with wild nature, which alone has the capacity to evoke the sublime, a sense of being in the presence of something much larger than ourselves.

Wherever you happen to live, though, the Earth's largest wilderness, its atmosphere, is only the thickness of a pane of glass away. And although buildings

are typically designed to keep the weather out, there are powerful reasons to welcome its movement into our homes – the most important being that it seems to have a unique capacity to calm us.

Moving light patterns reflected from a wind-disturbed water surface, of the kind we typically see under boats and bridges, for example, have been shown to have a significant calming effect on heart rate, and can also help to keep us alert.

More recent work has suggested that this kind



of familiar natural movement makes us feel connected to the present moment, in a way that mimics meditative practices such as mindfulness, but without requiring our active attention.

As someone who teaches and writes about architecture, I've spent the last two decades looking at how nature can be more effectively brought into our buildings, beyond just buying fish tanks and potted plants.

A number of buildings already successfully bring the movements of the weather indoors. I first encountered these in Japan, where designers such as Kengo Kuma and Toshihito Yokouchi have produced stunning indoor environments animated by the natural movements of the sun, wind and rain. **'LET THE SUN COME IN, LET THE WIND COME IN'**

Designing all buildings this way would clearly take a great deal of money and time. But there are simple ways that you can create such effects in your own home right now, and at minimal cost. All of the following examples were created for less than US\$50 using existing residential windows and balconies.

Placing an insect screen and a net curtain outside a window, for example, will generate moiré patterns that change as the wind varies. This works even on overcast days, but in direct sun the moiré patterns are also cast as moving shadows on interior surfaces.

If you have a deck or balcony that receives direct sunlight, the wind-generated movements of foliage can be projected onto a translucent shade or blind to make them seem part of the interior.

If the foliage is far enough away, wind-animated images of the sun can also be cast on indoor surfaces.

You can also project wind-animated reflected sunlight onto indoor surfaces by placing a shallow tray of water on a sun-facing balcony. This effect can even be recreated at night by directing an external security light onto the water surface. The same setup can also project ripples

caused by rain.

Rather than thinking of the weather as an adversary that we need to shield ourselves from, then, it might be better to consider it a friend and welcome it back into our homes – particularly if we're going to be spending a lot more more time there in the future.

On the subject of mistaking the weather as a foe, the late-20th century Indian mystic Osho used the following metaphor to describe the folly of trying to protect ourselves from all of life's uncertainties:

“Existence is trying from everywhere to reach you, but you are closed. Not a single window is open. You have filled even small cracks in the wall out of fear, for the sake of security. This is not security, this is suicide. Open all the doors, all the windows. Let the sun come in, let the wind come in, let the rain come in.”

We might do well, it seems, to also heed Osho's advice in the design of our homes.

*[the writer is Assistant Professor of Architecture, University of Hawaii]*



## Delirium, depression, anxiety, PTSD – the less discussed effects of COVID-19

JONATHAN ROGERS & EDWARD CHESNEY  
*theconversation.com*

Cough, fever, loss of sense of smell ... these are the symptoms of COVID-19 that we all know about. But did you know that confusion affects 20% or more of patients in hospital with COVID-19? Or that previous coronavirus outbreaks have been linked to high rates of mental illness in the aftermath?

As psychiatrists working in a general hospital, we are used to seeing patients with depression, desire to self-harm, dementia and psychosis. What we noticed when COVID-19 started was that we were being referred a lot of patients who were disorientated, confused and sometimes hallucinating. Taken together, these are hallmarks of a condition known as delirium.

Delirium is a short-term confused state resulting from illnesses such as COVID-19. Patients can change within as little as a few hours and not know where they are or what is happening to them. Add to this the paranoia and visual hallucinations that many encounter and you can see why it can be a pretty frightening experience.

### LEARNING FROM THE PAST

There have been two previous outbreaks of severe coronavirus in-

fections: severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) starting in 2002, and Middle East respiratory syndrome (Mers) in 2012. When patients were unwell with these infections, more than 25% experienced symptoms such as poor concentration, confusion and rapid fluctuations in mood – all of which suggest a delirium. From the early data we have, it looks as though the figures are similar for patients in hospital with COVID-19.

If delirium is a short-term state, why does it matter? Patients who have delirium are at least twice as likely to die in hospital. Patients who develop delirium while in hospital remain in hospital for about a week longer than other patients. This means that there could be real problems in freeing up beds for new patients.

Obviously, we don't have long-term data for COVID-19, but looking at past epidemics can give us some idea of what to look out for in the next few months and years. When patients with Sars and Mers were assessed a few months later, 15% had depression and 15% had an anxiety disorder. Mental illness is common, though, so it's hard to know how many of these people had longstanding problems or were struggling for other reasons.

What was really striking, though,

was that rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were more than 30%. This is huge and hard to attribute to anything except the experience of the infection and its treatment. Fatigue also seemed to be a big problem: 19% of patients were still reporting this even months after “recovering”.

We have to be careful in applying these findings to the current pandemic because all these results are from patients in hospital and we know that most patients with COVID-19 can be safely treated at home. You also can't add up the numbers for each disorder as many patients may have presented with more than one.

Interestingly, there seemed to be a few groups that were at higher risk of developing mental illness after infection. It is not surprising that those who had a more severe physical illness and those who had lost a loved one tended to have a poorer psychological outcome. What we did not expect to find was that three studies identified healthcare workers as being at higher risk of subsequent mental illness.

### THE HEALTH SERVICE NEEDS TO BE PREPARED

Whatever the cause, we need to be prepared. But interventions need to be evidence-based and – crucially

– should avoid making things worse. Psychological debriefing, where a therapist encourages you to talk through a traumatic event in detail, sounds sensible, but there is convincing evidence that it might actually make things worse, increasing the risk of subsequent mental illness.

There are many possible reasons why people develop these problems and your guess may be as good as ours. It might be that the virus affects the brain directly or that the body's immune system goes into overdrive. Equally likely is that psychiatric consequences are the result of being socially isolated or the psychological trauma of having a severe illness.

What we should be doing is screening for delirium, identifying these patients as seriously unwell and using treatments that we know are both safe and effective.

Fortunately, we can expect that most people who suffer from COVID-19 will not have a mental illness in the aftermath. However, for those who do, there needs to be psychiatric help available and support in returning to the workplace.

*[Jonathan Rogers is Wellcome Trust Clinical Fellow in Psychiatry, UCL; Edward Chesney is Clinical Research Fellow, King's College London]*



# Assam COVID-19 fatalities rise to 4; total cases now 115

**GUWAHATI, MAY 18 (PTI):** Two people died of COVID-19 in Assam and 15 fresh cases were reported on Monday, taking the total number of deaths to four and coronavirus cases to 115 in the state, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

A person died on Monday night before he was tested positive and a 71-year-old man, who was suffering from neck cancer and tested positive last week after returning from Mumbai by bus last week, died due to respiratory distress during the day, the minister said.

Both the patients died in Guwahati Medical College Hospital.

Besides these two deaths, a Tablighi Jamaat returnee from Hailakandi had died at Silchar Medical College and Hospital and a 16-year old girl who was also detected to be positive after she died in B Barooah Cancer Hospital in Guwahati.

Meanwhile, seven positive cases were reported from Guwahati and one of them died, three from Sarusajai Quarantine Facility and three others who were contacts of a migrant worker who had tested



positive last week, the Minister said.

The migrant labourer worked in a potato godown in Fancy Bazaar area, the commercial hub of the city, and subsequently 15 others in contact with him also tested positive last week.

A total of 19 people are now positive from the potato godown area and several areas of the commercial hub have been declared as a containment zone. Eight other cases were reported in the state during the day with four from Golaghat, two from Cachar and one each from Nagaon and Jorhat.

Of the 115 positive

cases in the state, there are 68 active cases, three deaths, two migrated out and 41 have been cured and discharged from the hospital, the minister said. "There is, however, no need to panic as most of the cases detected positive are from quarantine camp and so far community transmission has not taken place", he said.

The health department has conducted community surveillance in 16,000 villages so far and not a single case has been detected, he said.

"The COVID-19 tally will increase in the state but success of Assam's COVID-19 management will depend on the strict

quarantine system adopted and it will spread to the community, only if this fails," the minister said.

The state has adopted the policy of "ruthless quarantine with big heart", which implies that all coming from outside will have to undergo "strict quarantine and the government will take care of them", he said.

People are keen to return to their homes "and this is quite natural but we appeal to them to space out their travel so that we can provide them with the best quarantine facilities", he said.

The minister said that so far 48,000 people have returned to the state and

more will come but "if they all come together, it will be difficult to provide them with quality quarantine facilities, which will pose a problem leading to possible community transmission of the disease".

The state government was likely to incur an expenditure of Rs 300 crore for quarantine of one lakh people and to provide financial assistance to four lakh people from Assam staying in other states under Assam Cares, he said.

The Assam government is negotiating with the World Bank in this regard and "it will help us considerably, if it works out", Sarma said.

## 9 migrant labourers killed in road accident in Bihar

**BHAGALPUR, MAY 19 (PTI):** Nine migrant labourers were killed on Tuesday when the truck carrying them overturned in an attempt to avert a head-on collision with a bus in Bihar's Bhagalpur district, police said.

The incident took place around 6 am on National Highway-31 near Ambho Chowk, Naugachhia Superintendent of Police Nidhi Rani said.

The workers, all males, had started their journey on bicycles six

days ago from Kolkata and they might have boarded the truck somewhere en route, the officer said.

The driver and cleaner of the truck, which was coming from West Bengal via Katihar district in Bihar, fled from the spot, she said.

Identities of some of the labourers have been ascertained from official documents, Rani said, adding that they hailed from East and West Champaran districts.

Some of the passengers of the bus, which was on its way to Banka from Darbhanga, received minor injuries and were administered first aid at a nearby hospital, she said.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar expressed grief over the incident and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakh for the kin of each of the victims, an official release said.

He also appealed to people not to travel on foot or on railway tracks.

## Mortician tests COVID-19 positive in Howrah

**KOLKATA, MAY 19 (PTI):** A mortician working at a crematorium in Shibpur area of Howrah city has tested positive for novel coronavirus infection, a state health department official said on Tuesday. The burning ghat is one of the facilities where bodies of patients who died of COVID-19 are being cremated, he said.

The man, employed by the Howrah Municipal Corporation, has been hospitalised while seven people who work with him and three death sub-registrars of the Shibpur burning ghat were sent for home quarantine.

"One mortician working in Shibpur burning ghat has tested positive for COVID-19. We have advised 10 people

who work there to go for home quarantine," the official said.

Meanwhile, around 20 personnel of the Howrah City Police posted at the Shibpur police station have also tested positive since last week, he added.

"They are undergoing treatment at different hospitals.

We have sanitised the police station and taken all precautionary measures to contain further spread of the disease," a senior officer of the force said.

Till Monday, West Bengal has 172 COVID-19 deaths and at least 2,825 confirmed cases.

There are also 72 deaths due to comorbidity conditions where novel coronavirus was incidental.

## Spitting at workplace punishable with fine: Govt

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19 (PTI):** Spitting at workplace will be punishable with fine, the Personnel Ministry has said, citing the national directives for COVID-19 management.

In an order issued to all central government departments, it has asked their heads to ensure strict compliance of this and other directives in this regard.

This order is likely to bring about changes in and around government and private work places, where one can easily spot stains of 'pan' and 'gutka' spitted at some of the corners of walls or areas not frequented by many employees/public.

"Spitting in public and work places shall be punishable with fine, as may be prescribed in accordance with its laws, rules and regulations by the state/union territory local authority," said

the national directives issued by the Home Ministry and shared by the Personnel Ministry with all central government departments. It said wearing 'face cover' is compulsory in all public and work places.

In additional directives for the work places, the ministry said as far as possible, the practice from work from home should be followed.

"Staggering of work/business hours shall be followed in offices, work places, shops, markets and industrial and commercial establishments. Provision for thermal scanning, hand wash and sanitiser will be made at all entry and exit points and common areas," the directives said.

Frequent sanitization of the entire workplace, common facilities and all points which come into human contact e.g. door

handles etc., shall be ensured, including between shifts, it said.

"All persons in charge of work places shall ensure social distancing through adequate distance between workers, adequate gaps between shifts, staggering the lunch breaks of staff, etc," the directive said. The Centre on Monday asked 50 per cent of its junior employees, below the level of deputy secretary, to join work in office.

Till now, only 33 per cent of such employees were asked to attend office due to the novel coronavirus lockdown.

Central government employees were asked to work from home due to the lockdown that came into force from March 25.

All officers of the level of deputy secretary and above have already been asked to attend office on all working days.

## Fresh chance for students to apply for JEE-MAINS

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19 (PTI):** Students whose plans to study abroad have been affected due to COVID-19 will get a fresh chance to apply for JEE-Mains, the entrance exam for engineering colleges, the HRD Minister announced on Tuesday.

In view of representations received from various Indian students who were scheduled to join colleges abroad but are now keen to pursue their studies in India due to changed circumstances arising out of COVID-19, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has decided to give an opportunity, HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said.

The application window for Joint Entrance Exam (JEE-Mains), which opened today, will have to be completed by May 24.

Students who were not able to complete their application form due to other reasons can also make use of this opportunity, NTA Director Vineet Joshi said.

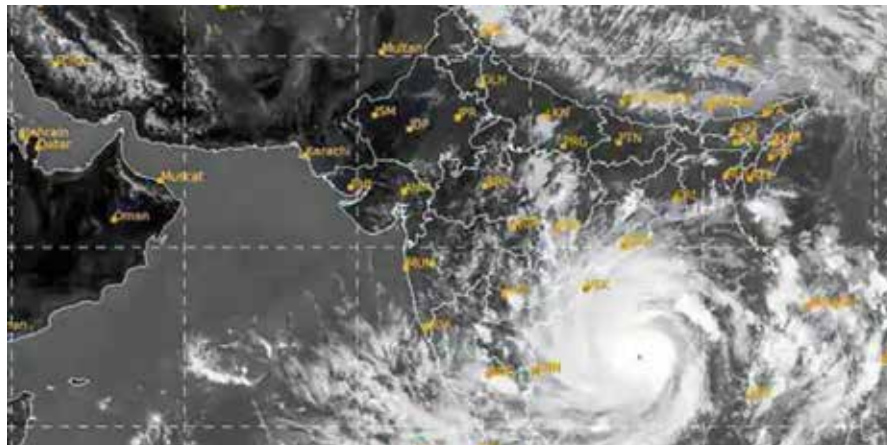
The exam will be held across the country from July 18-23.

## Assam issues 'high alert' on cyclone 'Amphan'

**GUWAHATI, MAY 19 (PTI):** The Assam government on Tuesday issued a "high alert" over cyclone 'Amphan' and directed the state disaster management authority to set up a control room to deal with the situation.

Quoting the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna said there is a strong likelihood of widespread effect of the cyclone in Assam, especially in west Assam districts.

"In view of the above, you are requested to ensure that both preventive and response systems are put on high alert to avoid any loss of life and property," he said in an "Extremely Urgent" message to all division commissioners, district



deputy commissioners and state disaster management authority.

He also directed the officials concerned to keep the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) informed for their services whenever necessary.

"CEO, ASDMA may like to consider putting a control room in place for

this," Krishna said.

In its latest bulletin, the Indian Meteorological Department has predicted very heavy rainfalls in the western districts of Assam on Thursday.

"Light to moderate rainfall at most places with heavy to very heavy falls at a few places over the western districts of

Assam and Meghalaya on 21st May," it said.

The severe cyclonic storm over the west-central Bay of Bengal was on Tuesday afternoon hurtling towards the Indian shores in West Bengal and Odisha where lakhs of people were evacuated from vulnerable areas, officials said.

## Migration of labourers hits bakery units in Mumbai

**MUMBAI, MAY 19 (PTI):** The bakery business in Mumbai has been badly hit as a number of migrant labourers have gone back to their native places amid the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

Some of those in the business fear that if this situation continues for some more time, there may be shortage of bakery products in the city.

During a visit to 'Metro Bakery' in Kurla area, its owner Habib Ansari was found busy making toast and khari (a fluffy baked snack) along with his son-in-law and two labourers.

"I have completely shut one of my bakery outlets while I am running this unit with only four people, including myself. I am in this business since last four decades but never saw such a situation in my life," Ansari told PTI.

He said their output has been reduced to just a few kilograms from 400 to 500 kgs of products which they used to make earlier in a day. "We requested our labourers not to leave, but they did



not listen and fled by paying double the amount to a truck driver," he claimed.

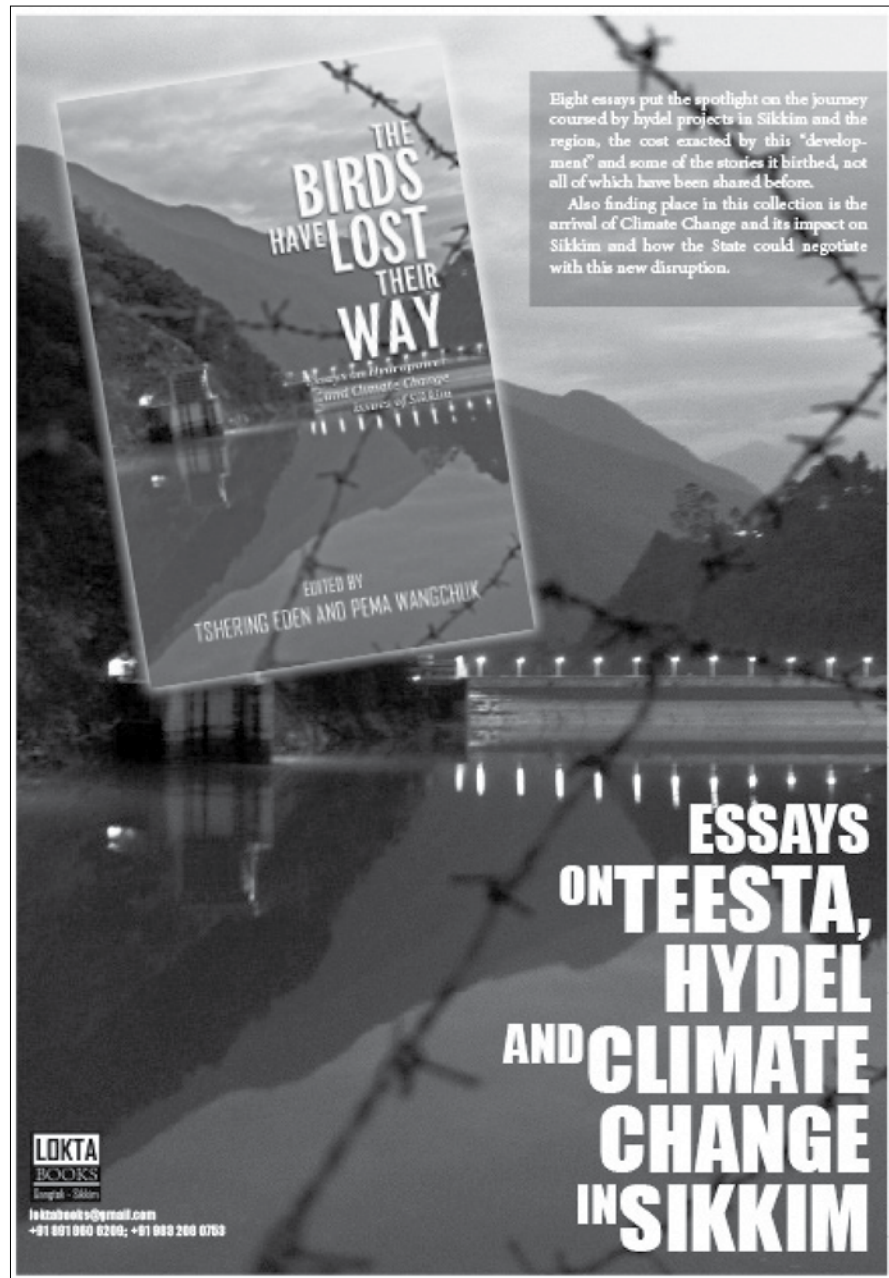
Khurshid Ansari, who has a bakery at Mumbra in neighbouring Thane district, said seven to eight bakeries have closed in the area in a week's time since labourers started leaving for their native places in Uttar Pradesh.

"Earlier, there were nearly 35 workers in my bakery, but now it is closed," he said.

Businessman Haroon Siddique said earlier he used to supply yeast ((a leavening agent used in baking) to about 70 bakeries in Mumbai.

"But, in the last one week, 61 bakeries have stopped production and the units closed after labourers left the city," he said.

Mushtaq Khan, who runs 'Baker's Fresh' outlet in suburban Goregaon, told PTI over phone that they are unable to meet customers' demands as the production has gone down due to shortage of labourers. "Many labourers left without informing us or taking their salary. If we do not get labourers in the coming days, consumers may find it difficult to get bakery products," he said.



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## Help pours in for distance runner Godbole

**NAGPUR, MAY 18 (PTI):** Indian distance runner Prajakta Godbole, who was struggling to make a living due to the coronavirus-forced national lockdown, has finally got the much needed support from the state authorities.

PTI had highlighted the plight of Prajakta, who resides at Sirsapeth slum here, during the lockdown. Her father is a paralytic and mother was rendered jobless.

The help was rendered by Shiv Sena, which is currently one of the ruling parties in the Maharashtra government.

Shiv Sena Nagpur city chief Prakash Jadhav told PTI that after party president and Chief Minister Udhav Thackrey came to know about Godbole, it was conveyed to him to do the needful through their office bearers (Sam-park Pramukhs).

"A few days ago, we provided ration and a small amount of Rs 16,000 to the athlete (Godbole). We will keep in contact with her and provide all possible help," Jadhav said on Tuesday.

Prajakta represented Indian Universities in the 5000m race at the World University Games in Italy in 2019. She clocked 18:23.92 and could not qualify for the final round.

## I want to be like Imran Khan, says captain Babar Azam

**KARACHI, MAY 19 (PTI):** Babar Azam wants to take a leaf out of Imran Khan's aggressive captaincy and besides cricket, he is also brushing up his English to become a "complete leader" like the World Cup-winning all-rounder.

Last week, the star batsman took over the reins of Pakistan's white-ball cricket after being appointed as the ODI skipper.

Azam, who was one of the world's leading batsmen across formats last year and already the T20 skipper, replaced wicket-keeper batsman Sarfaraz Ahmed as the ODI captain for the 2020-21 season.

"Imran Khan was a very aggressive captain and I want to be like him. It is not an easy job captaining the Pakistan team but I am learning from my seniors and I have also had captaincy experience since my under-19 days," Azam said.

He said that to be a complete captain one must be able to interact comfortably with the media and express oneself properly in front of an audience. "These days I am also taking English classes besides focussing on my batting," he said on Monday.

The 25-year-old Babar said he was not satisfied with Pakistan's current standing in international cricket.

"I am not happy with where we stand and I want to see this team go up in the rankings." Babar said captaincy would be a challenge for him but it would not affect his batting.

# Fans torn as Spanish football prepares to begin recovery without them

**MADRID, MAY 19 (AFP):** La Liga's proposed restart next month has left fans juggling the excitement of football's return and the disappointment it will resume without them.

More than two months after the coronavirus pandemic halted the season in Spain, players have begun training in small groups as they aim to be as ready as possible for the planned reboot on June 12.

Yet goals, saves and tackles will all be greeted by silence or at best, artificial cheers approved by authorities to be pumped out of a sound system.

Even for Sevilla against Real Betis, the usually-heart thumping Andalusian derby that encapsulates the importance of supporters more than any other Spanish fixture, the atmosphere will be non-existent on the first weekend back.

But for clubs, there is a financial necessity given La Liga president Javier Tebas has estimated cancelling the season could cost them 1 billion euros (1.08 billion).

"People need their dose



of football," Adolfo Barbero, a commentator on Movistar, Spain's primary football broadcaster, told AFP.

"There is that want for fans to go to matches but for many now, the priority is to play. They want to see 22 guys, a ball and a green pitch, the rest will be for afterwards."

For fans, there is an acceptance that the sport returning in muted form is better than it not coming back at all.

"We understand that football without fans is not the football we want," says Jose Manuel Mateo, president of Aficiones Unidas, an association of fans from different clubs.

"But given the exceptional nature of the situation, we have no choice but to accept it."

"I don't think football can afford just to wait or stand still until there is a vaccine,

which guarantees safety," Mateo added.

According to La Liga, playing without fans is not without cost too as clubs surrender considerable sums in matchday revenue.

But finishing the remaining 11 rounds of the season and completing European competitions would limit losses to around 303 million euros, a third of the figure contemplated

for cancellation.

- 'WITHOUT FANS IT'S NOT FOOTBALL' -

Resumption allows players to return to work and staff too, many of whom have had their wages cut in recent weeks.

"Many families also depend on football for income, it's not only the players," Mateo said.

Playing the last eleven days of the league "behind closed doors is a way to save the season," admits Gerardo Tocino, president of the Real Madrid fans' club, La Gran Familia.

"Those of us who really feel the colours of a club, what we seek is the best for the team, even if that means seeing your players through a screen."

But for others, sacrificing supporters was a solution found too easily and the worry is that over the coming weeks and months, the game will find ways to adapt. Instead of being missed, fans could feel less needed than ever.

"Without fans in the stands it's not football, it's reality TV or televised training,

but not football," says Emilio Abejon, secretary general of the Federation of Spanish Soccer Shareholders and Partners (FASFE).

"The country is allowing tourism to stop, which is the biggest business in Spain, but not football." Abejon, a fan of Atletico Madrid, points out that a significant part of the 1.3 per cent contribution football makes to Spain's GDP is "the business around football like bars, restaurants, shops", all of which will remain closed.

"If football cannot return under reasonable conditions, which we believe to be with people in the stands, it should not return at all," said Abejon.

Joseba Combarro, president of the Eskozia La Brava, the most important supporters' club in Eibar, says the only option should have been cancellation.

"We understand we cannot go to the stadium due to the risk of infection," said Combarro. "But the players share the same risk as the fans, the risk is for everyone. The league should be suspended."

## UN: Civilian deaths by Taliban and Afghan forces on the rise



**KABUL, MAY 19 (AP):** The United Nations on Tuesday called for an immediate reduction of violence in Afghanistan, warning that civilian deaths by both the Taliban and Afghan security forces are on the increase.

The UN mission also expressed concern about stepped-up attacks and brutality of the Islamic State group.

A horrific attack last week at a maternity hospital in the Afghan capital has not been claimed by any group, but the United States said it bears all the hallmarks of Afghanistan's IS affiliate targeting the country's minority Shiites in a neighbourhood of Kabul that IS militants have repeatedly attacked in the past.

The Taliban denied involvement in the maternity hospital attack, which killed 24 people, including two infants and several new mothers.

The UN report blamed the Taliban for killing 208 civilians last month and also said that operations by Afghan forces in April had killed 172 civilians.

Civilians are often caught in the crossfire of the fighting and Afghan forces say they are targeting the insurgents, not civilians, in anti-militant operations.

Parties have committed to finding a peaceful solution and should protect the lives of all Afghans and not jeopardize

people's hope for an end to the war, said Deborah Lyons, the UN chief's special representative to Afghanistan.

She added that intra-Afghan peace negotiations need to start as soon as possible."

The UN's call for an end to violence comes as Washington's special peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, began another round of talks with the Taliban to press them to start talking to the newly reconciled Afghan political leadership in Kabul and implement an immediate reduction in violence, said the US State Department.

Khalilzad, who is the architect of a US-Taliban deal signed in February, has been trying to salvage the agreement and jump-start intra-Afghan negotiations between the Taliban and the Kabul government.

A power-sharing agreement on Sunday between President Ashraf Ghani and his rival, Abdullah Abdullah, ended months of wrangling and raised expectations that the next round of the US-Taliban peace deal, which calls for negotiations between the Taliban and Afghan leaders, can start.

The Taliban have said a permanent cease-fire would be on the agenda but have been critical of repeated delays in the promised prisoner release, which is to be com-

pleted before talks begin.

The US State Department statement said Khalilzad would meet with the Taliban in Qatar, where the insurgents maintain a political office, and would press for steps necessary to commence intra-Afghan negotiations, including a significant reduction of violence.

Khalilzad will also visit Kabul.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who said in March that the US would cut USD 1 billion in US aid to Afghanistan unless Ghani and Andullah resolved their differences, has bemoaned the time lost to their bickering.

The United States remains committed to supporting the desire of the Afghan people and the international community for a political settlement that ends the 40-year conflict and ensures Afghanistan never again serves as a platform for international terrorism, the State Department statement said.

The US-Taliban deal provides for the withdrawal of US and NATO troops, but only if the Taliban live up to their end to battle other militant groups, such as the Islamic State affiliate.

The increasingly brutal IS attacks seem to have given urgency to US efforts to get the Taliban into a coordinated battle against the group.

## East Bengal players, official asked to 'vacate' flats

**KOLKATA, MAY 19 (PTI):** Some East Bengal players, including foreign recruits, and physical trainer Carlos Nodar, who are still stuck here amid the coronavirus-forced national lockdown, have been asked to "vacate their flats" provided by sponsors Quess Corp.

Most of East Bengal's foreign players have left home but a few are still here along with the Spaniard Nodar who had preferred to stay back.

"This is the worst thing to happen. Where

will we go now especially when there's nationwide lockdown in force," a player told PTI, confirming the development.

"There is no way we can vacate at this point of time but the management is just ignoring our calls. Let's wait and watch."

The Bangalore-based Quess group, which is exiting the club on May 31, had last month activated the Force Majeure clause, citing COVID-19 pandemic, to terminate all the contracts with

effect from May 1. The players had approached the Football Players' Association of India.

No top official from the Quess Corp was available for a reaction but the East Bengal players said they have received a message from the 'QEBFC admin team' which has circulated the message.

"As per notification from the owners of the residential accommodations in Rosedale, Uni-world and other residences, we will be handing over the apartments to the

respective owners by 25th May, 2020," read the message purportedly sent by Quess management.

"From 18th May 2020, we will start to clean, repair and sanitise all the vacated apartments. Those who have personal belongings lying in the apartments please try and collect it by 20th May, 2020. QEBFC (Quess East Bengal Football Club) will not be responsible for any loss of your personal belongings which are in your respective apartments."

## We have improved against fast bowling due to Raghu, says Kohli on throwdown specialist

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19 (PTI):** Throwdown specialist D Raghavendra's ability to ratchet up speeds in excess of 150-155 kmph with the sidearm enormously contributed to Indian batsmen's improvement against fast bowling in recent years, acknowledges skipper Virat Kohli.

The sidearm is a cricketing equipment that is shaped like a long spoon, with its far end designed to hold and hurl the ball at great speeds.

"I believe the improvement this team has shown while playing fast bowling since 2013 has been because of Raghu," Kohli said during an Instagram Live session with Bangladesh star Tamim Iqbal.

"He has good concepts about footwork, bat movement of players. He has improved his skills so much that from sidearm he easily hurls the balls at 155 kmph. "After playing Raghu in nets, when you go into the match, you feel there is a lot of time," Kohli added.

It is no surprise that Raghavendra has been a crucial member of the Indian cricket team's support staff for years now. Kohli said he never had self doubts at any time, including while engineering those big chases in high-pressure international matches.

"To be honest, I never doubted myself in game situations. Everyone who is human has doubts and weaknesses. Have their negatives. So in practice during tours, if you haven't had a good session you feel you don't have that flow. "Yes, doubts creep in then and it's at the back of your mind. Key is to keep going and get into that zone till you feel that it was just distraction. If I believe I am good enough, then I am good enough."

The prolific scorer added, "Best part about match situation is that you don't need to think so much. You react to situations knowing your role.

"Negative voices always come off

the field when you are not in competition mode."

The master of chases, Kohli said in his childhood, while watching India games, he would often go to sleep thinking that he could have helped the team to victory.

"Honestly, when I was a kid, I used to watch India games and see them lose I would go to sleep thinking I could have won that match. If I am chasing 380, I never feel that you can't achieve it."

"In 2011 in Hobart, we had to chase 340 in 40 overs to qualify. At the break I told (Suresh) Raina that we will approach this match as two 20 over games. 40 overs is a big duration. Let's first play 20 and see how many runs are scored and then play another T20 game."

Arguably one of the best batsmen to have played the game, Kohli said he had to change his approach to batting to suit his requirement, which comprised playing the ball along the ground instead of going over the top.

"I changed because I wanted to hit all around the ground. The static position was making my options limited. My basic funda of batting is that if your hips are in perfect position then you can play any shot. Static position wasn't working well for me.

"But it works for a lot of players. Like Sachin Tendulkar had a static stance all his life and he never had a problem. His technique was far superior with excellent hand eye coordination.

"For me I had to change it accordingly to suit my needs. I tried little, little things in my batting as you would never know if you don't try."

Continuing, he said unless a player tries out new things in match situations, he would never be able to perfect them. "... So my advice is even if you try a lot in practice do try out new things in one or two games to check if it works or not.

## Ibrahimovic statue to remain in Malmo despite vandalism

**WASHINGTON, MAY 19 (AP):** The much-vandalized statue of Zlatan Ibrahimovic is staying in Malmo. Where, exactly, remains to be seen.

Committee members from the Swedish city's council met Monday to discuss proposals from local citizens about where to move the statue of the soccer player from its current location outside the stadium.

The 500-kilogram (1,100-pound), 3-meter (9-foot-10) bronze statue has been repeatedly attacked since Ibrahimovic became a part-owner in Hammarby, a Stockholm-based team and a rival of the striker's boyhood club of Malmo. The most recent act of vandalism saw the statue cut off at the ankles, leading to it being removed in early January for repairs and put in a secret location.

The sculpture stays in Malmo, said Frida Trollmyr, the city's deputy mayor for culture and sports. Zlatan Ibrahimovic is a son of Malmo, this is where he belongs.

Trollmyr said there would now be a process to determine the specific location where the statue will be placed. A final decision will be made in June.



# China offers farmers cash to give up wildlife trade



Farmers in China are being offered cash to quit breeding exotic animals as pressure grows to crack down on the illegal wildlife trade that has been blamed for the coronavirus outbreak.

Authorities have for the first time pledged to buy out breeders in an attempt to curb the practice, animal rights activists say.

China has in recent months banned the sale of wild animals for food, citing the risk of diseases spreading to humans, but the trade remains legal for other purposes -- including research and

traditional medicine.

The deadly coronavirus -- first reported in the central Chinese city of Wuhan -- is widely believed to have passed from bats to people before spreading worldwide. Two central provinces have outlined details of a buyout programme to help farmers switch to alternative livelihoods.

Hunan on Friday set out a compensation scheme to persuade breeders to rear other livestock or produce tea and herbal medicines.

Authorities will evaluate farms and inventories and offer a one-off

payment of 120 yuan (\$16) per kilogram of rat snake, king ratsnake and cobra, while a kilogram of bamboo rat will fetch 75 yuan.

A civet cat -- the animal believed to have carried Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) to humans in another coronavirus outbreak nearly two decades ago -- would fetch 600 yuan.

Neighbouring Jiangxi province has also released plans to help farmers dispose of animals, as well as financial aid. The state-run Jiangxi Daily newspaper reported last week that the

province has more than 2,300 licensed breeders, mostly rearing wild animals for food.

Their stock is worth about 1.6 billion yuan (\$225 million), the report said. Both Jiangxi and Hunan border Hubei, the province where the coronavirus first emerged in December.

Animal rights group Humane Society International (HSI) said Hunan and Jiangxi are "major wildlife breeding provinces", with Jiangxi seeing a rapid expansion of the trade over the last decade.

Revenues from

breeding reached 10 billion yuan in 2018, it said.

HSI China policy specialist Peter Li told AFP that similar plans should be rolled out across the country. But he cautioned that Hunan's proposals leave room for farmers to continue breeding exotic creatures as long as the animals are not sent to food markets.

The province's plan also does not include many wild animals bred for fur, traditional Chinese medicine or entertainment.

Although Beijing implemented measures to ban the trade and consumption of wild animals after the SARS outbreak, these failed to bring the trade to a halt.

Li said Chinese authorities are nevertheless now moving in the right direction.

"In the past 20 years, a lot of people have been telling the Chinese government to buy out certain wildlife breeding operations -- for example bear farming," he said.

"This is the first time that the Chinese government actually decided to do it, which opens a precedent... (for when) other production needs to be phased out."

## WHO to review virus response as Trump renews attack

The World Health Organization said it would launch an independent review of its response to the coronavirus pandemic but President Donald Trump renewed his attack on the global body, branding it a "puppet of China" and threatening a permanent freeze on US funding.

Washington is locked in an increasingly bitter spat with Beijing over the new coronavirus pandemic and has also taken aim at the WHO, which on Monday kicked off its first-ever virtual assembly.

A resolution tabled by the European Union called for an "impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation" of the international response to the pandemic, which has so far infected nearly 4.8 million people and killed more than 317,000.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus acknowledged there had been shortcomings and told the virtual assembly he welcomed calls for a review.

"I will initiate an independent evaluation at the earliest appropriate moment to review experience gained and lessons learned, and to make recommendations to improve national and global pandemic preparedness and response," he said.

"But one thing is abundantly clear. The world must never be the same.

"We do not need a review to tell us that we must all do everything in our power to ensure this never happens again," Tedros said.

A wide range of country leaders and health ministers hailed the WHO's efforts but US health secretary Alex Azar said its "failure" to obtain and provide vital information on COVID-19 had cost lives.

"We must be frank about one of the primary reasons this outbreak spun out of control: there was a failure by this organisation to obtain the information that the world needed, and that failure cost many lives," Azar said in a video address to the WHO's main annual meeting.

"Puppet of China" - Washington has suspended its funding to the health body, accusing it of being too close to Bei-



jing, and covering up and mismanaging the pandemic.

"In an apparent attempt to conceal this outbreak, at least one member state made a mockery of their transparency obligations, with tremendous costs for the entire world," said Azar, pointing the finger at Beijing.

The outbreak, which emerged in China late last year, has killed and infected more people in the United States than in any other country by far.

Later Monday, Trump threatened to permanently freeze US funding to the WHO and reconsider its membership unless "substantive improvements" were made within the next 30 days.

"The only way forward for the World Health Organization is if it can actually demonstrate independence from China," Trump said in a letter to the WHO chief.

"They're a puppet of China, they're China-centric to put it nicer," he said earlier at the White House. "They gave us a lot of bad advice."

Trump has accused the WHO of blindly taking the word of China, where the SARS-CoV-2 virus was first detected.

Critics say Trump, who had earlier praised China's response, is trying to divert attention from his handling of the pandemic in the United States, which has suffered by far the highest death toll.

The annual World Health Assembly (WHA) has this year been trimmed from the usual three weeks to just two days, and is focusing solely on the pandemic.

- 'Contradictory strategies' -

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the assembly the COVID-19 crisis was a

"wake-up call". "Deadly global threats require a new unity and solidarity," he said.

"We have seen some solidarity, but very little unity, in our response to COVID-19. Different countries have followed different, sometimes contradictory, strategies and we are all paying a heavy price."

The UN head said many countries had ignored the WHO's recommendations.

"As a result, the virus has spread across the world and is now moving into the global South, where its impact may be even more devastating, and we are risking further spikes and waves," Guterres said.

Protecting developing countries was not a matter of charity but of enlightened self-interest, he said. "We are as strong as the weakest health systems," he warned.

Guterres said lessons learned from COVID-19 would be essential for tackling future crises but called for an immediate focus on unity to get through the present emergency.

"Either we get through this pandemic together, or we fail. Either we stand together, or we fall apart."

Despite growing tensions between the world's two largest economies, member states hoped the WHA would adopt a resolution aimed at fashioning a joint response, including commitments on equitable access to potential treatments and vaccines.

Chinese President Xi Jinping voiced support for a joint approach, vowing in his address to make any vaccine his country developed available for all and offered \$2 billion in aid.

China currently has five potential vaccines in clinical trials.

## Trump tells WHO to demonstrate 'independence' from China; warns permanent freeze of funding

BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, MAY 19 (PTI): US President Donald Trump has warned the WHO that he would reconsider America's membership in the UN health body and "permanently freeze" the funding to it if it does not demonstrate its "independence" from China in the next 30 days.

On April 14, President Trump halted America's funding of up to USD 500 million annually to the World Health Organisation while a review is being done to assess its role in "severely mismanaging and covering up" the spread of the deadly coronavirus when it first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

In a four-page letter to WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom, Trump said, "It is clear the repeated missteps by you and your organisation in responding to the pandemic have been extremely costly for the world. The only way forward for the WHO is if it can actually demonstrate independence from China."

My administration has already started discussions with you on how to reform the organisation. But action is needed quickly. We do not have time to waste, he wrote in his three-page letter.

President Trump tweeted the letter late on Monday night.

That is why it is my duty, as President of the United States, to inform you that, if the WHO does not commit to major substantive improvements within the next 30 days, I will make my temporary

freeze of United States funding to the WHO permanent and reconsider our membership in the organisation, Trump said.

"I cannot allow American taxpayer dollars to continue to finance an organisation that, in its present state, is so clearly not serving America's interests, he added.

In his letter dated May 18, Trump alleged that the WHO has failed to publicly call on China to allow for an independent investigation into the origins of the virus, despite the recent endorsement for doing so by its own Emergency Committee.

On Monday, Chinese President Xi Jinping dispelled the criticism of secrecy and cover-up, saying "all along, we have acted with openness, transparency and responsibility. We have provided information to WHO and relevant countries in a most timely fashion."

Trump has accused China of covering up, while Australia and the European Union have called for more transparency in China's COVID-19 control efforts including an independent inquiry into the origins of the virus.

More than 300,000 people have died due to the coronavirus pandemic and over 4.8 million people infected around the world. The US is the worst-hit country with over 90,000 deaths and over 1.5 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, according to Johns Hopkins University.

## New York City could begin some re-opening only around "first half of June": Mayor de Blasio



BY YOSHITA SINGH

NEW YORK, MAY 19 (PTI): New York City, hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, is still weeks away from a phased re-opening by the first half of June, Mayor Bill de Blasio has said, as authorities are trying to meet all the seven health-related measures necessary for such a step.

New York City, the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US, has 191,073 coronavirus cases and 15,983 confirmed COVID-19 deaths, which are deaths following positive COVID-19 laboratory tests.

There's no way we're getting to the City and State indicators before June at this rate. So, June is the first opportunity the first half of June is the first opportunity to relax anything, de Blasio said Monday at a press briefing.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has said that regions across the state will have to meet seven criteria before they will be allowed to gradually re-open businesses and institutions.

The seven metrics that will define whether a region can re-open businesses are decline in total hospitalisations,

decline in deaths measured by the three-day rolling average of daily new hospital deaths not exceeding 5, fewer than two new hospitalisations per 100,000 residents, hospital bed capacity regions must have at least 30 per cent of their total hospital beds available before a phased re-opening, availability of 30 percent of ICU beds in a region, diagnostic testing capacity and contact tracing capacity.

Another 4,823 are probable deaths, where the cause is reported as "COVID-19" or equivalent, but no positive laboratory test.

Blasio said the city has made progress in some criteria but in the requirements for number of available hospital beds and number of ICU beds we need to go farther, but we're getting close to those goals.

And I think there's a point in the first half of June when we'll meet those. He emphasised that the city will evaluate very carefully regarding if and when it is ready to open up.

We've got to then make decisions on exactly which restrictions to loosen up, exactly how,

and we have to be confident that when we're doing it, we can hold the line. We do not want to reduce restrictions and suddenly see an upsurge that puts us right back in a situation where we have to close down. So there's a real subtle balance that needs to be struck.

But if the question is do we believe we'll meet all seven state indicators? Yes. When? First half of June, he said.

New York state's six regions - Central New York, the North Country, Finger Lakes, Southern Tier, Western New York and Mohawk Valley Regions - have met all seven metrics required to begin phase one of the state's regional phased reopening plan.

These regions have begun opening businesses over the weekend for phase one, which includes construction; manufacturing and wholesale supply chain; retail for curbside pickup and drop-off or in-store pickup; and agriculture, forestry and fishing.

The total number of coronavirus cases in New York State stands at 351,371 with over 28,000 deaths.

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## After Domestic Help Tests Positive For COVID-19, Boney Kapoor Warns Against "Rumours And Panic"

A member of producer Boney Kapoor's domestic staff has tested positive for COVID-19 and has been moved into a quarantine centre in Mumbai, Mr Kapoor announced in a statement on Tuesday. The family and other household staff are "fine" and will quarantine themselves for the next two weeks per advice from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation or BMC, Mr Kapoor revealed. He also said that he was releasing the statement as a preventive measure against "rumours and panic." Boney Kapoor's two daughters, Janhvi and Khushi, are part of his household; the family live in Lokhandwala in Mumbai.

The domestic staffer, a 23-year-old man, was ill on Saturday and immediately isolated from the rest of the household, Boney Kapoor's statement revealed. When he tested positive, Mr Kapoor alerted his apartment complex authority who notified the BMC.

A version of the statement was posted by Janhvi Kapoor on her social media account: "I would like to inform that our house staff, Charan Sahu, aged 23 years, has tested positive for COVID-19. He was unwell on Saturday evening, was sent for test and kept in isolation. After receiving the test report, our Housing Society authorities were informed and then accordingly the BMC, who immediately started the process of getting him into a quarantine centre. My children,

our other staff at home and I, all are fine and none of us are showing any symptoms. In fact, we haven't left our home since the lockdown started," the statement read. The filmmaker said that he

ment, Janhvi Kapoor wrote that "staying at home" amid the coronavirus outbreak is "still the best solution."

Last month, a member of Sussanne Khan's sister Farah Khan Ali's house-



and his family have been "diligently following the instructions" given to them by the BMC and added they will be in "self-quarantine for the next 14 days". "All of us will be in self-quarantine for the next 14 days. We are thankful to Government of Maharashtra and BMC for their swift response," said Boney Kapoor in the statement.

He added: "I am sharing this information because it is important not to feed rumours and panic. We will take precautions as required. We are sure that Charan will recover and be back at home with us soon." Sharing the state-

hold tested positive for COVID-19. "An in-house staff of mine tested positive today and so am moving him to a facility. Have all tested at home today as well and are going to be quarantined. Be safe yet strong. This too shall pass," read Farah Khan Ali's tweet.

The number of coronavirus cases in India have crossed 1 lakh, with Maharashtra reporting over 35,000 cases. Earlier this month, music label T-Series' office building was sealed by the BMC after one of the caretakers tested positive for the virus, reported news agency PTI.

## Adam Sandler to star in and produce Netflix film Hustle'

**LOS ANGELES, MAY 19 (PTI):** Actor Adam Sandler is set to play the lead in Netflix movie Hustle, to be produced by LeBron James.

According to Variety, Wes Anderson's helmer Jeremiah Zagar is attached to direct from a script penned by Taylor Materne and Will Fetters.

Sandler is also at producing the project via his Happy Madison banner along with, Roth/Kirschbaum Films and LeBron James and Maverick Carter's Spring Hill Entertainment. In the film, San-

dler will play an American basketball scout who, after being fired, discovers a talented player abroad and decides to bring him to the US to prove that they both have the calibre to make it to the NBA.

Sandler's latest release was 2019 film Uncut Gems, which turned out to be one of his most critically-acclaimed performances till date and also earned him a Spirit Award.

His last project with Netflix was "Murder Mystery", co-starring Jennifer Aniston.

## BJ Novak to write, executive produce multi-cam comedy for HBO Max

**LOS ANGELES, MAY 19 (PTI):** "The Office" alum BJ Novak is set to work on a multi-camera comedy series from HBO Max.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the 40-year-old actor will write and executive produce the series, titled "Young People", which received a multi-script commitment at the streamer.

In the half-hour show, six twenty-somethings from very different backgrounds and perspectives find themselves sharing an apartment in Brooklyn. The show will

tackle friendship in the age of argument, connection in the age of disconnection, and the joys and anxieties of building a life in a gig-to-gig, date-to-date, month-to-month world where living like "young people" might be a transitional phase of life or might be permanent, as per the official logline.

Warner Bros. Television will produce the show.

The news comes weeks after it was announced that Novak will be developing an untitled anthology drama series at FX.

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## Megan Fox splits from husband Brian Austin Green



**LOS ANGELES, MAY 19 (PTI):** Actor Megan Fox and her husband Brian Austin Green have called it quits after close to 10 years of marriage.

Green, who married Fox in 2010 after dating for six years, shared the news during the latest episode of his podcast, "... With Brian Austin Green".

Talking about the photos of Fox, 34, with rapper Machine Gun Kelly that appeared over the weekend, Green said they have been "really been trying to sort of be apart" since the end of 2019. "I will always love her. And I know she will always love me and I know as far as a family (goes), what we have built is really cool and really special," the 46-year-old actor said.

Green shares three sons with Fox -- seven-year-old Noah, six-year-old Bodhi and three-year-old Journey -- and he said as a family, their focus is on the well-being of the children.

"As far as a family, what we've built is really cool and it's really special. So we de-

cided let's make sure that we don't lose that. Let's make sure that we're always friends with each other and we're a united front with the kids. "We'll do family vacations and holidays with the family and really make that a focus with the kids," he added.

The "Beverly Hills, 90210" alum said he had been feeling distant from Fox since late last year when she left the US to film "Midnight in the Switchgrass". When she returned, they had a discussion about their relationship. "She said, 'I realised when I was out of the country working alone that I feel more like myself and I liked myself better during that experience and I think that might be something worth trying for me'.

"I was shocked and I was upset about it but I can't be upset at her because she didn't ask to feel that way. It wasn't a choice she made, that's the way she honestly felt. We talked about it a little more and said let's separate for a bit... and so we did," Green said.



## FEELING SUMMERY!

Leonardo DiCaprio's girlfriend Camila Morrone grabbed fresh coconuts to go in Malibu, California.

## David Arquette returning as Sheriff Dewey Riley in 'Scream' reboot

**LOS ANGELES, MAY 19 (PTI):** Actor David Arquette is set to reprise his role as Sheriff Dewey Riley in the upcoming 'Scream' reboot.

With the new film, Spyglass Media Group is relaunching the 24-year-old franchise.



Arquette, who played the character in all the four previous installments, said he was excited to reunite with the 'Scream' family.

I am thrilled to be playing Dewey again and to reunite with my 'Scream' family, old and new. 'Scream' has been such a big part of my life, and for both the fans and myself, I look forward to honouring Wes Craven's legacy, the actor said in a statement to Deadline.

The makers are in talks to bring back more original cast members for the fifth 'Scream' movie. Ready or Not helmers Matthew Betti-

nelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett, also known as Radio Silence, are directing the reboot from a script written by James Vanderbilt and Guy Busick. Plot details are under the wraps, but production will begin later this year in Wilmington, North Carolina after safety protocols are in place.

The first 'Scream' movie released in 1996 with Neve Campbell starring as Sidney Prescott, the target of the Ghostface killer, whose look was inspired by the Edward Munch painting 'The Scream'. Courteney Cox and Arquette co-starred in all the four films, directed by Wes Craven

and written by Kevin Williamson.

Williamson is serving as the executive producer on the upcoming movie.

I'm excited to reteam with David and work with Jamie, Guy and Radio Silence on the next 'Scream'. Their take on the movie is both original, inventive and honours Wes' legacy in a wonderful way. Ready or Not' was my favorite horror film of last year and I can't wait to see what their amazing talents bring to the 'Scream' universe. I'm thrilled to be a part of it, he said.

### ARIES:

We're made of stardust and soil—a beautiful amalgam of heaven and earth. So why do we value one expression of our personality over the other? The cards are urging you to embrace both sides of your story. Both the sensual and the spiritual deserve to be honoured. Know that the portals of bliss can be accessed through acknowledging and embracing your own body temple.

Tip: Honour both the sensual and the spiritual aspects of your personality.

### TAURUS:

The old way of life no longer applies to the new narrative we are writing together as a collective. The lockdown is urging us to slow down, to be here now, and appreciate what the present is offering us. Yes, there are deadlines to meet and chores to complete. But all of these things can be done mindfully.

Tip: Adopt a new way of life.

### GEMINI:

The benefits of flirting are many—that rush of feel-good hormones is a thrill you're chasing at the moment. The cards are urging you to take charge of the situation and say what's on your mind (and in your heart). Maybe they are your forever. Maybe they're not. Don't let that stop you from exploring what you have in the now. Coupled Gemini, who said things have to get boring with the passage of time? If there is anybody who knows how to bring playfulness back on the table, it's you.

Tip: Slide into their DMs.

### CANCER:

Change is the only constant, Cancer, and you understand this cliché now more than ever before. You are not the same person

you were a year ago. You're not even the same person who went into house arrest a couple of months ago. The thing about transformation is that it can be rather daunting. Roll with it anyway knowing that everything is ultimately transpiring for your highest good. There will be moments when you will be tempted to put on the garb of invisibility or dull your sparkle to fit in.

Tip: Let go of the garb of invisibility.

### LEO:

"Assume the feeling of your wish fulfilled and observe the route that your attention follows." A Neville Goddard quote to inspire you to dream a little dream, Leo. To believe that you have the power to manifest what you desire despite what your external reality is showing you. Know that Spirit is working with you now and in every moment to help you co-create your best life. Some of you may feel inspired to update your vision board.

Tip: Dream a little dream.

### VIRGO:

Everything you experience in this lifetime is a choice, including the things you perceive as obstacles. Before you step into the physical plane of existence, you decide the challenges you will face in order to help your soul ascend. Therefore, the answers you seek are within you too, along with the tools required to transcend your circumstances. Remembering this will help you call your power back to you. What you're being asked to focus on right now: the soul lessons that are coming up.

Tip: Tap into the power of free will.

### LIBRA:

Shutting down is easy. Building walls around yourself?

Easier. You know what requires an insane amount of courage? Staying open despite the wounds; despite the past hurt. This is a time of inner alchemy for you, Libra, and you're understanding the importance of living vicariously through your heart.

Tip: You're learning to live vicariously through your heart.

### SCORPIO:

"Keep your focus on how you want to feel and let the Universe fill in the details," a powerful Esther Hicks quote to keep in mind when you find yourself doubting the Universal plan. The resources you require for the given project will come to you. It's not for you to ponder upon the how and the why. Your task is to merely stay in the vibration of what you are calling into your experience. Remember, you can't do everything on your own even though you sometimes believe you can. Ask for help if required and be open to receiving it when it comes along.

Tip: The abundant Universe will provide.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Let's talk about angel numbers, Sagittarius! If Google searches are to be believed, then '222' encourages you to seek balance or make a significant choice. While these interpretations may apply to those who have put the meaning out there, they may not hold true for where you are in your journey. The point is, you have a direct hotline with the Universe. Only you can understand what the signs and symbols mean for you. So, how does one access this consciousness?

Tip: Explore your direct connection with the divine.

### CAPRICORN:

You've been seeing the signs for a while now, Capricorn.

If they wanted to be in your life, they would have. If they wanted to make things work, they would have. So don't make excuses for other people. The fact that they are choosing not to be present should tell you everything you need to know about this connection. This brings us back to the basics—your relationship with yourself. If you're constantly seeking validation from people, there's some more inner work to be done.

Tip: Don't be oblivious to the signs.

### AQUARIUS:

We spend so much time weighing the pros and cons that we forget our first instinct. If you want to tell them how beautiful they are, how much you appreciate their presence and that their smile lights up your world, this is the time to do it. You'll be surprised by how they reciprocate your love. Coupled Aquarius, remember the first time you said the three magic words? They're just as powerful now as they were yesterday. Take a cue from your favourite rom-com and make your partner feel loved.

Tip: Say the three magic words.

### PISCES:

The trouble is, you sometimes forget how powerful you are. How magnificent you are. How gifted you are. It is your lack of self-worth that's keeping you from stepping into the spotlight and sharing your talents with the world. In doing so, you are being of disservice to yourself and those around you. Looking within is the need of the hour, Pisces. Some of you could even benefit from working with a therapist or soul coach.

Tip: Inner work is the need of the hour.