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Summit **TIMES**

Vol 05 | Issue 107 | Gangtok | Sunday | 26 April 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

RT-PCR Mobile Testing Booth inaugurated at Rangpo

RANGPO, 25 APR (IPR): Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Dr MK Sharma, inaugurated the Mobile Testing Booth for RT-PCR at Rangpo today.

It was informed that the booth was donated by wife of the Chief Minister, Krishna Rai.

The Minister was accompanied by DG cum Secretary Health, CMO East, Director Monitoring and Tracking, Director CMS, Officers of Engineering Section Health, Officers from District Hospital Singtam, Team IEC and MO and his team from Rangpo PHC, SDM Rangpo, SDPO, SHO and officers of line departments.

The team made a joint inspection of Rangpo check-post and Goli Ground, which has been identified as the tentative screening site once the lockdown is lifted.



CM thanks 5-year-old for contributing to CMRF

GANGTOK, 25 APR (IPR): Chief Minister, PS Tamang (Golay) has extended immense gratitude and appreciation towards 5-year-old Shiddi Sharma hailing from Mamring in South Sikkim who had donated her piggy bank to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund on 14 April.

In a letter written by the CM in recognition of Ms Shiddi's noble gesture, he has conveyed great pride over receiving the contribution formally made by the 5-year-old after breaking her piggy bank in order to support the State govern-

ment's effort to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

While admiring her love and dedication for the people of Sikkim at such a minor age, the CM has quoted receiving the contribution from the youngest citizen of the State as a "historic moment" for all.

It may be mentioned that Shiddi Sharma from Mamring has donated Rs. 642 to the CM's Relief Fund after breaking her piggy bank. The contribution was formally handed over to the CM by MP Lok Sabha, Indra Hang Subba, at Samman Bhawan on 14 April.

Standalone shops of cell phones, garments, hardware allowed to open during lockdown, but not markets

NEW DELHI, APR 25 (PTI): Neighbourhood and standalone shops, including those selling garments, mobile phones, hardware and stationery items have been allowed to open but those located in market places, malls and COVID-19 hotspots and containment zones, will continue to remain shut till May 3.

In rural areas, all shops, except those in single and multi-brand shopping malls, are allowed to open.

However, a Home Ministry official said the final decision of whether to allow the additional shops to open or not will be taken by the state governments and Union Territory administrations depending on their respective COVID-19 situation.

While allowing opening of more shops, a

move seen as a relief to people who have been under lockdown since March 24, the government order issued on Friday night said the shops will be functioning with 50 per cent of workforce and after adhering strictly to precautions which include social distancing and wearing of masks.

The Union Home Ministry also said malls, liquor and cigarette shops, sale of non-essential items through e-commerce platforms continue to remain shut.

Restaurants, hair salons and barber shops will not be allowed to open as these render services and do not fall under the shop category.

Amending its April 15 order, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said in the Friday night order that "all shops, including

turn to pg02

According to Indian Council of Medical Research [ICMR], RT-PCR test of throat and/or nasal swab is the confirmatory test for detection of COVID-19 at an early stage. These take around five to six hours to show the results.

The RT-PCR mobile testing booth at Rangpo, therefore, will be a collection centre and samples

taken will then be sent to Siliguri for testing.

Meanwhile, in his daily bulletin, Health Secretary, Dr PT Bhutia, said that rapid testing kits, which also the State has ordered, are yet to be authenticated and when the state receives the authenticated rapid testing kits the department will start using them.

It may be mentioned that following issues raised by some states regarding the efficacy of rapid testing kits, ICMR had written to Chief Secretaries of all states on 22 April informing them that "these kits [rapid testing kits] cannot replace the RT-PCR test diagnosis for COVID-19 cases."

2 new COVID-19 cases in Ladakh

LEH, APR 25 (PTI): Two persons tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Ladakh on Saturday, taking the number of confirmed cases in the Union territory to 20, an official said.

The number of active COVID-19 cases in Ladakh are four and all of them are stable. Sixteen patients have recovered and were discharged from hospitals, the official said.

A new case was reported from Bogdang village in Nubra area of Leh district, and the other from Sankoo in Kargil district, said Rigzin Samphel, commissioner secretary (health).

The family members of the two have been shifted to quarantine centres. The person in Sankoo had a travel history to Iran and had reached Delhi on February 26 before travelling to Leh on March 5, Samphel said.

The person in Bogdang had a travel history to Gujarat and had reached Chandigarh on February 2. He had reached Thoise in Nubra on March 9. The samples of all the co-passengers will be collected and tested, according to the official.

The area of Sankoo is already under containment and contact tracing will be carried out. Moreover, 500 samples from Bogdang will be sent for testing, he said.

Meanwhile, Leh District Magistrate Sachin Kumar issued an order declaring Bogdang as a containment area.

7 BJP MLAs contribute towards CM's Relief fund, appreciate State Govt

GANGTOK, 25 APR (IPR): Seven MLAs of the Bharatiya Janata Party (Sikkim) called on the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at his residence this afternoon to show solidarity for COVID-19 situation and also praised his leadership for initiating people-centric development.

The MLAs contributed a cheque of Rs 50,000 each from their salary to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

The MLAs appreciated the work done by the state government and

extended support to the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister thanked them and assured full co-operation to work together for the development of the state.

The MLAs present were MLA, DR Thapa, Burtuk, MLA, KB Rai, Chujachen, MLA, TT Bhutia, Barfung, MLA, Farwanti Tamang, Melli, MLA, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, Dzongu, MLA, Raj Kumari Thapa, Yangyang and MLA, Karma Sonam Lepcha, Rinchenpong.



COVID-19 death toll rises to 779, no. cases climbs to 24,942 in India: Union health ministry

NEW DELHI, APR 25 (PTI): The death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 779 and the number of cases climbed to 24,942 in the country on Saturday, registering an increase of 56 deaths and 1,490 cases since Friday evening, according to the Union health ministry.

The 56 deaths were the maximum reported in the country in a span of 24 hours, the ministry said.

The number of active COVID-19 cases stood at 18,953, while 5,209 people have been cured and discharged, and one

patient has migrated, it added.

"So far, around 20.88 per cent people have recovered in the country," the ministry said.

The total number of cases includes 111 foreign nationals.

Of the 56 deaths reported since Friday evening, 18 were in Maharashtra, 15 in Gujarat, nine in Madhya Pradesh, three each in Delhi and West Bengal, two each in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh and one each in Punjab and Kerala.

Of the total 779

COVID-19 deaths, Maharashtra accounts for the highest number of 301 fatalities, followed by Gujarat (127), Madhya Pradesh (92), Delhi (53), Andhra Pradesh (31) and Rajasthan (27).

The death toll reached 26 in Uttar Pradesh as well as in Telangana, 22 in Tamil Nadu, while Karnataka and West Bengal have reported 18 deaths each, the ministry said.

Punjab has registered 17 fatalities so far, Jammu and Kashmir five, Kerala four, while Jharkhand and Haryana have recorded three COVID-19

deaths each.

Bihar has reported two coronavirus deaths, while Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Assam have reported a fatality each, according to the ministry data.

There has been a lag in the Union health ministry figures, compared to the number of deaths announced by the states, which officials attribute to procedural delays in assigning the cases to individual states.

According to the health ministry data updated in the evening, the highest num-

ber of confirmed cases in the country is from Maharashtra at 6,817, followed by Gujarat (2,815), Delhi (2,514), Rajasthan (2,034), Madhya Pradesh (1,952) and Uttar Pradesh (1,778).

The number of COVID-19 cases has gone up to 21,755 in Tamil Nadu, 1,061 in Andhra Pradesh and 984 in Telangana.

The number of cases has risen to 571 in West Bengal, 489 in Karnataka, 454 in Jammu and Kashmir, 451 in Kerala, 298 in Punjab and 272 in Haryana.

Bihar has reported 228 coronavirus cases, while Odisha has 94. Fifty-nine people have been infected with the virus in Jharkhand and 48 in Uttarakhand.

Himachal Pradesh has 40 cases, while Chhattisgarh and Assam have registered 36 infections each.

Chandigarh has 28 cases, while there are 27 COVID-19 patients in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Twenty coronavirus cases have been reported from Ladakh, 12 from Meghalaya, while

Goa and Puducherry have registered seven COVID-19 cases each.

Manipur and Tripura have two coronavirus patients each, while Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have reported a case each.

"Forty-nine cases are being assigned to states for contact tracing. Our figures are being reconciled with that of the ICMR," the ministry said on its website.

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

Agriculture Minister visits Pakyong farmers

NAMCHEYBONG/PAKYONG, 25 APR (IPR): Minister Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma carried out extensive field inspections and interacted with the farmers under Pakyong Sub Division, today. Minister Sharma was also accompanied by the Secretary Horticulture, MT Sherpa, CEO Sikkim Organic Mission, Dr S Anbalagan, Director Horticulture, Padam Subba and Sr. Officials and field staff.

The field inspection began from Chota Singtam under Aho Yangtam GPU and interacted with the farmers and members associated with Ranikhola Farmers Producers Organization (FPO). He visited farms of a Progressive Farmer, DP Sapkota who elaborated his inspirational achievements in farming and described methods of farming accomplished in his private land with proper planning and dedications.

Minister Sharma inspected the production in the field and shown his keen interest to know hardships, scientific techniques, timings and plannings that can be adopted by other farmers to achieve success in lucrative profession of Agriculture.

Minister also informed about the pro-



vision of financial grant implemented by the state government in recent development to support farmers under FPOs to enhance productivity.

Thereafter, Minister Sharma visited maize field at Kungshi ward under Namcheybong GPU.

Subsequently, the visiting team inspected floriculture farm of Kalu Hang Subba and interact-

ed with the local florists at Bashilakha. Minister Sharma took stock of the quantity of the production, mode of marketing before lockdown and the loss of cut flowers during ongoing COVID-19 crisis. He also informed that the senior officers of Director level of the Horticulture Department have come forward for grading and packaging of flowers at

office to ensure its marketing through online home delivery system.

He also shared the government's planning to compensate loss of flower growers, possibly. Minister Sharma also expressed gratitude to the farmers for their outstanding contributions and acknowledged their hardships to meet up the requirement of vegetables at the time of crisis. He

also stressed on the need to grow vegetables and adopt agriculture by every section of the society.

Afterwards, the inspection team visited integrated farm of Nar Bahadur Subba at Bashilakha ward. A progressive Farmer, Fip Raj Subba expressed gratitude to the state government for providing agricultural inputs and technical supports to

encourage farmers of the locality.

Minister, in his interaction, urged FPOs to be more proactive to carry out marketing, seed development and to ensure chain of supply of farmers Produce to National and International level in future period.

Later, He also visited Fruits Orchards of a Progressive Farmer, Saroj Rai

at Jagati/Rai Gaon under Namcheybong GPU. Minister Sharma also took stock of dairy farming in the locality and assured to establish a Stockman centre in near future.

Minister Sharma concluded daylong field inspection after his visit at National Research Centre for Orchids at Pakyong

along with the concerned Area MLA of Rhenock

Constituency, Bishnu Kumar Khatiwara. Minister Sharma interacted with the Director NRCO, Dr Rampal and took stock of the activities being undertaken by the institute and its contributions to the farmers & the rural population. They also visited different polyhouses of conservation of varieties of orchids.

Hamro Chahari Ashram first anniv celebration postponed

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 APR:

Hamro Chahari has decided to postpone its program to commemorate the first year of the establishment of the Hamro Chahari Ashram which was scheduled to be held in September at Mumbai.

A press release informs that this was decided during a meeting of



the executive committee held today via video conferencing.

The program was to be held under the social campaign of the Nepali-Gorkha Seva Samiti to commemorate the first

year of the establishment of the Hamro Chahari Ashram.

In this meeting organized by members of Mumbai and Sikkim, it was also decided to publish a souvenir of Hamro Chahari.

For the publication of the souvenir, Hamro Chahari consultant and author, Hira Chhetri was entrusted with the main

responsibility while Kamal Singh, Vikas Dutraj and Ramsinh Tiruva were given the responsibility of marketing, advertising, printing, etc.

Convener Sakun Singh Rai and Swastika Chhetri were given the responsibility of preparing the report after collecting details of organizational activity, accounts etc. Residential

manager Parek Vishwakarma was given the responsibility of collecting the complete biography and photo of the entire members.

Similarly, the second residential manager, Prem Shah has been entrusted with the responsibility of informing the guests of the ashram. On the other hand, Keshav Sapkota, the representa-

tive of Sikkim, was given the responsibility to form a temporary committee of the souvenir at the regional level to organize the composition, advertisement and good news etc. Thakur Prasad Adhikari was given the responsibility of other information resources.

Govt must plan to bring home jawans posted outside: SPYF

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 APR:

Sikkim Progressive Youth Forum has requested the state government to make arrangements for bringing home IRBn jawans and other armed forces who are currently posted outside Sikkim.

In a press release issued today, SPYF has said, "Their families here in Sikkim are expecting Govt's strategy for those who are willing to come home to meet their families. Some among them have been out of the state for two years or more and they were planning to come back home this

summer."

According to SPYF, there are cases where in the jawans want to return home because they have new born children, sick parents, or some other unavoidable situation.

"Similar to the plans laid out to the students, patients and other ordinary citizens stranded outside let there be a plan for the IRBn who are posted at Delhi discharging their duties and other armed forces posted at various places across the country," the release states.

Minister convenes meeting with North District Task Force

MANGAN, 25 APR (IPR): Minister for Roads and Bridges-cum- Area MLA (Lachen- Mangan) Samsud Lepcha convened a meeting with the District Task Force of North Sikkim here at conference hall of District Collector, North, Tenzing T Kaleon today.

The sole objective behind holding the meeting was to take the stock of the prepared level maintain by the District Task Force and deliberate upon better coordination among front line workers in containment of COVID-19 epidemic.

During the meeting, Minister took brief note

of the problems that are being face by district task force, facilities which are available in the district, Distribution Relief Package and the suggestion from concerned heads, on top of that he has assured that all the problems which he had noticed during the meeting would be placed before the state government as to address the problems

Some of the main agenda of the meeting are DCSO/North was asked to ensure buffer stock of the essential commodities as monsoon is approaching. Further those drivers who go to Siliguri for procure-



ment of essential commodities must remain at the 'TRANSIT CAMP' established at Mangan and Chungthang, North Sikkim.

Any shopkeeper those found any kind of

price hike on essential commodities at period of lockdown will be dealt with stringent sections of law simultaneously Sr. SP/North. MEO/MNP and other concerned officer were asked to keep

vigil against any kind of black marking. Maintaining social distance and wearing of face marks is mandatory in the public places. Everyone including general people has been asked to download

"Aarogya Setu Application" in their mobile phones.

Lastly, Minister thanked each and every one working on frontline to combat this pandemic COVID-19 and appealed to the general public to supplement their courage and cooperation to overcome through this global crisis.

Standalone shops of cell phones, garments, hardware allowed to open during lockdown, but not markets

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neighbourhood shops and standalone shops, shops in residential complexes, within the limits of municipal corporations and municipalities, registered under the the Shops and Establishment Act of the respective State and UT" will be allowed to open during the lockdown.

The ministry also said shops located in registered markets located outside the municipal corporations and municipalities can open after following the drill of social distancing and wear-

ing of masks but with 50 per cent of strength.

However, single and multi-brands shall continue to remain closed in these areas also.

"All shops registered under the the Shops and Establishment Act of the respective State/UT, including shops in residential complexes and market complexes, except shops in multi-brand and single brand malls, outside the limits of municipal corporations and municipalities, with 50 per cent strength of workers with wearing of masks and social distancing be-

ing mandatory" will be allowed to function, the order said.

In a statement on Saturday, the Home Ministry said the order implies that in rural areas, all shops, except those in shopping malls are allowed to open.

In urban areas, all standalone shops, neighbourhood shops and shops in residential complexes are allowed to open.

Shops in markets and market complexes and shopping malls are not allowed to open.

"It is clarified that

sale by e-commerce companies will continue to be permitted for essential goods only," the order said and also added that sale of liquor and other items continues to be prohibited as specified in the national directives for COVID-19 management.

The ministry said that liquor shops were given licence under the Excise Act of the states and the establishments thrown open from Saturday were covered under the Shops and Establishment Act of the states.

Sale of cigarettes,

gutka are continue to be prohibited during the lockdown.

"As specified in the consolidated revised guidelines, these shops will not be permitted to open in areas, whether rural or urban, which are declared as containment zones by respective States and Union Territories," the statement said.

The lockdown was first announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24 in a bid to combat the coronavirus pandemic. It was further extended till May 3.

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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).

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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

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4 refrigerated vans launched to transfer farmers' produce

GANGTOK, 25 APR (IPR): The Department of Horticulture, Government of Sikkim distributed Four Refrigerated Vans to the Self Help Groups (SHGs) of identified Model Village and SIMFED for the transportation of Farmers Produce in the State of Sikkim. The Minister for Agriculture and Horticulture, Lok Nath Sharma flagged off the well-equipped Refrigerated Vans from Krishi Bhan, Gangtok today.



Out of the four vehicles, Minister Sharma handed over one each vehicle to the Tundong Self Help Group from Ringhim Nampatam, North District; Lower Kamrang Labour Cooperative Society from Mamley Kamrang, South District, Sikkim Vegetables Growers Association from Bermiok Berthang, West District and Sikkim State Cooperative Supply and Marketing Federations Ltd. (SIMFED), Gangtok.

While interacting with the Media Persons, Minister Sharma congratulated the SHGs & SIMFED and urged SHGs to collect farmers produce from their Model Village and clusters of their peripheries in coordination of concerned Farmer Producers Organization (FPOs) and to carry out marketing in their respective districts. Minister Sharma informed that the Refrigerated Vans are well equipped with technical facilities to sustain life of perishable vegetables

after collecting from the farmers. The state government has handedover refrigerated light weight fabricated vehicle of Rs. 17 (Seventeen) Lakhs to each SHG, which has storage capacity of thirteen hundred kilograms with external AC system that works even when the vehicle is not running or started. He also urged SHGs to utilise vehicles only for the transportation and Marketing of Farmers Produce and not

to misuse against its dedicated purpose. He also said that, already more than thirty vehicles are in the field with FPOs and this additional refrigerated van will strengthen the marketing of farmers produce at large as envisioned by the Chief Minister of Sikkim, PS Tamang to benefit the farmers in all districts. Later, the Minister interacted with the senior officials who have been working for packaging

of flowers and selling through online delivery system aap "Mitho" which receives online order from the customers. Minister congratulated and appreciated Senior officers and staff for coming forward and setting a historic record for grading and packaging of the flowers in the office during lockdown period to ensure marketing of the flowers from different parts of the state.



Contractor contributes Rs 16 lakh to CMRF

GANGTOK, 25 APR (IPR): Class 1 AA Government Contractor, Tashi Gyalpo Bhutia (Bhaichung) called on the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang at his residence this evening and presented a cheque of Rs. 15,99,999 for the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to sup-

port the government's effort in fighting COVID-19

The Chief Minister on behalf of the Government expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the generous contribution in the time of crisis.

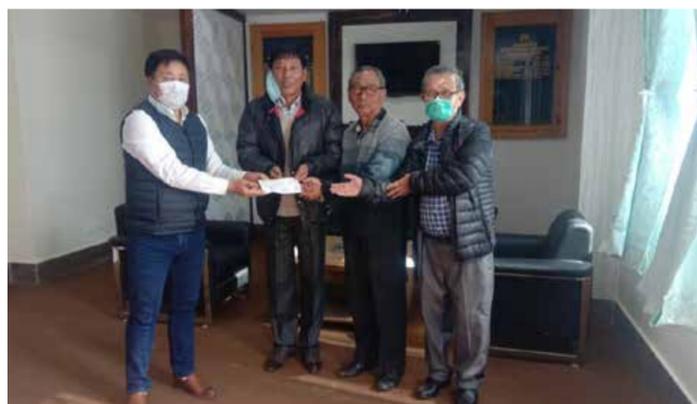
SGREWA contributes towards CM's Relief Fund

MANGAN, 25 APR (IPR): Sikkim Government Retired Employees Welfare Association [SGREWA], North District, Mangan met with the Minister, Roads and Bridges Department at the Chamber of the District Collector, North Tenzing T Kaleon, DAC, North Sikkim, Mangan this afternoon and contributed Rs 51,000 towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund in order to support the government's effort to fight

against the global crisis of COVID-19.

Similarly, Ezera Tamang of Pakshep has donated Rs 15,000, Rinzing Wangdi Bhutia of Mangan has contributed Rs 55,555 and Riwang Lepcha of Meyong towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund

The Minister thanked all of them on behalf of the government for his kind gesture and generous contribution.



Burglary attempt in Saha's ancestral home in Slg

KOLKATA, APR 25 (PTI): Indian Test wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha on Saturday said his locked ancestral house in Siliguri was the target of a burglary attempt on Friday. Saha's uncles, who live nearby at Shaktigarh

area of the city, foiled the attempt and alerted the police. The miscreants, numbering around six, fled off in their car.

"It's really unfortunate. We only had heard about burglary during our childhood

days... Hopefully, police will look into the matter," Saha, who lives with his family in south Kolkata, said.

Saha's elder brother works in Mumbai, while his parents, who had come here for a vacation,

are stuck due to the nationwide lockdown.

"Apparently the miscreants knew about this and attempted the burglary by entering through back door around 2am on Friday. But his uncles who stay in the near-

by locality shouted and alerted the police," Saha's childhood coach Jayanta Bhowmick said.

All the houses are fitted with CCTV and police are looking into the matter.

Ready to cooperate with Indian agencies: Chinese suppliers of rapid test kits

NEW DELHI, APR 25 (PTI): Two Chinese pharma companies, which supplied 5.5 lakh rapid testing kits for COVID-19 to India, said they are ready to cooperate with Indian agencies looking into allegations of poor accuracy of their products.

In separate statements, Guongzhou Wondfo Biotech and Livzon Diagnostics said they follow strict quality control of their products, asserting that specified guidelines must be followed in storage of the kits as well in their usages to get accurate results.

India's apex medical research body ICMR on Tuesday advised states to stop using the rapid antibody test kits for next two days till it examines their quality follow-

ing complaints that they are not fully effective in detecting coronavirus infection.

Last week, India procured 5.5 lakh rapid antibody test kits from these two Chinese firms and they were distributed to several states reporting rising cases of coronavirus infection.

While Guongzhou Wondfo Biotech supplied 3 lakh test kits, Livzon Diagnostics delivered 2.5 lakh.

Livzon Diagnostics, in its statement said: "We are shocked to receive negative reports from India related to poor accuracy of COVID 19 rapid testing kits made in China including our brand. We have shown great concern on this issue, and we are willing to coordinate with the related government depart-

ments for investigation."

The company said it fulfilled all required quality control standards prescribed by Chinese government and that the company has been exporting the product to at least 10 countries including Brazil, Peru, Columbia and several European nations.

"The test kits should be stored at a temperature between 2 and 30 degree celsius and should not be frozen... If the storage temperature is too high, the accuracy of the test may be influenced," it said.

In its statement, Guongzhou Wondfo Biotech said the company has been exporting the kits to more than 70 countries and that the product was validated and approved by the ICMR

through National Institute of Virology in Pune.

"In the process of exporting the products to overseas countries, Wondfo fully cooperates with relevant health authorities in each country to carry out various verifications on the sensitivity and specificity of our products," it said.

The statements by the two companies were released to the media by an official of the Chinese embassy here.

At present, the government hospitals have

been using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests to detect coronavirus from throat or nasal swab samples of people. These take around five to six hours to show the results.

In the rapid antibody tests, the blood samples of suspected patients are taken, and it normally takes around 15-30 minutes to give the result.

India has been facing severe shortage of testing kits in view of rising cases of the coronavirus.

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Teesta-V Power Station, Balutar, Singtam, East Sikkim

NOTICE

It is for information of the General Public that entering into river bed in and around this area is dangerous for human life. All are hereby informed and advised that:-

01. It is dangerous to enter into river bed for any activity specially during monsoon season which falls during the month of April to October, because during this period water level of Teesta river remains very high. Besides this during the lean period i.e. w.e.f. November to March, water is usually not released from the dam but if required, the water can be released into the river after blowing the hooter from the dam.
02. Water can be released any time throughout the year from NHPC Teesta Dikchu Dam/NHPC Teesta V Balutar Power Station as per inflow in the Teesta river.
03. Any construction activities which are undertaken in the river bed by the Govt. Department/Other agencies should be pre-informed to District Collector (East) well in advance. However, regulation of water at Teesta dam will be done by Sl. No. 2 and preventive steps/precautions are to be taken only by the work executing agencies. They are requested to keep in touch with local authorities while executing the work to avoid any mishappening.
04. If anybody enters into the river bed ignoring these instructions, it will be purely at his own risk. Further, if any incident takes place NHPC will not be responsible.

Issued in Public Interest

SAVE ENERGY FOR BENEFIT OF SELF AND NATION

What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

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

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For Labour

Because not enough is being said on their behalf

So, as far as official statistics go, there are around 12,000 migrant workers in East Sikkim alone. We see them around often, but don't always notice them. They made it to the headlines when the lockdown did not factor them in and pushed through one of the most severe shutdowns in the world with no provision for them and drove them in the thousands to walk hundreds of kilometers to the only security they knew – their homes. They might be out of work at present, but most other times, they labour on tasks which are necessary, but would not have the necessary workforce had it not been for their privations which draw them away from home to worksites across the country. They power development with their sweat, are often humiliated and yet they persevere. Had it not been for them, the planners who chart development for the country would have seen their projections stuck on the drawing board and never delivered on ground. Take a look around, the sewage line does not get laid only because there is a budget for it, but because there are stomachs desperate enough to work through cold, wet nights to lay them. Cardamom is not a cash crop just because Sikkim has progressive farmers, but because there are backs willing to take loads by the maund after they have harvested a crop which, let's accept it, few here have any actual understanding of. Gangtok's highways would not be neatly parted of their overnight sludge, had an entire army of labourers not been at hand to begin clearing the debris at the break of dawn. Trekking is possible not only because Sikkim is pretty, but because realities are quite ugly for some making them carry loads wearing slippers and plastic shoes up trails where even the tougher trekkers slip despite their better shod feet.

And still, they do not figure anywhere in the pecking order and in most cases, don't even get to enjoy the infrastructure they build. The manner in which they were treated when the lockdown began and the tokenism they have received since then is a continuation of the denials that is their share. Unfortunately, they also make easy targets, often denied even of their due remunerations. We read reports of Indian stuck in the Middle East, not paid their dues and unable even to afford an air ticket home, and we offer them the wrong response – clucking our tongues in sympathy when we should have been raging against the systems which allow such denials. Sikkim got a taste of such inhumanity in the wake of the 18 Sept earthquake when choppers evacuated the management and officers, but labourers at hydel and other construction sites had to foot it across dangerous terrain. Many of them complained of not having received their dues and only few of them had any plans of returning. They fled with their lives, leaving behind their earnings. It is unlikely that anyone even attempted to trace them down later and clear their dues. They are probably being exploited somewhere else now and were among the thousands who were left stranded and largely abandoned.

The anonymity in which the labour force works and fades away is an unfortunate reality, and one that needs to be addressed. Not just because they deserve better, but also because we need to be better. The maltreatment is not just a governmental failing, but more a societal shortcoming. It is because we, as consumers, do not pay enough heed to basic human rights that the labour, as a class, gets denied. The West now has the luxury to pay attention to such issues which the developing world still looks at as distractions. When we celebrate laws banning bonded labour and child labour in India, we should perhaps thank buyers in the West who put pressure on manufacturers to become more humane. The pressure for better protections and more genuine safeguards have to come from the lay people, who themselves have to deliver better as well. The government fixes the minimum wage, but apart from government employ, how many other workplaces offer them? How many domestic servants, even discounting meals, are volunteered such remuneration? And yet there are people willing to work for less, willing to look the other way despite a law [of minimum wage] being broken. The labour force does not require a more compassionate government, it requires fellow citizens who notice them, listen to them, respect them and when the situation demands, speaks for them.

WRITE US:

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

Five novels with a real sense of place to explore from your living room

CHRISTINE BERBERICH
theconversation.com

Everybody knows the concept of “desert island books”, the novels you might pack if you were going to be marooned on a desert island. Thanks to the pandemic, many of us are indeed now marooned, except that instead of lazing on palm-fringed beaches, we're in lockdown – in urban apartment blocks, suburban terraced houses or village homes.

A good book can help us forget about the world around us and also substitute our longing for pastures greener. It can take us from our sofa to the beaches of Thailand (as in Alex Garland's *The Beach*) or to the streets of New York (as in Paul Auster's *City of Glass*).

So, as someone who researches and teaches literature, I've chosen five novels that allow me to be elsewhere in my mind, whether that's a glorious English countryside setting, the streets of a European metropolis, or the urban sprawl of an unnamed Indian city.

KAZUO ISHIGURO: THE REMAINS OF THE DAY

The *Remains of the Day* tells the story of Stevens, the aged butler of Darlington Hall, and his ill-judged life choices that saw him being involved, albeit only on the fringes, with British fascism in the interwar years.

This allusion to British fascism in particular is something that makes this novel stand out: it is a subject matter not often discussed or even taught.

But at the moment, I can particularly take solace in Ishiguro's beautiful descriptions of the countryside that Stevens – unused to the freedom of travel – encounters during his journey across south-west England: “What I saw was principally field upon field rolling off into the far distance. The land rose and fell gently, and the fields were bordered by hedges and trees ... It was a fine feeling indeed to be standing up there like that, with the sound of summer all around one and a light breeze on one's face.”

As the lockdown drags on, this is a feeling I am longing for.

W.G. SEBALD: THE EMIGRANTS

This collection of four novellas is predominantly set in England and Germany but also offers glimpses of the US, Egypt, Belgium and Switzerland. Focusing on a different protagonist in each

novella, Sebald portrays how the long shadows of the second world war have affected individuals – but also how Germany has engaged with its troubled past.

His descriptions of the town of Kissingen's illuminated spa gardens, with “Chinese lanterns strung across the avenues, shedding colourful magical light” and “the fountains in front of the Regent's building” jetting “silver and gold alternately” conjure up images of times gone by and a town as yet untroubled by the scourge of antisemitism.

Sebald's narrative is a collage of fiction, biogra-

Modiano evocatively recreates the twilight atmosphere of Paris under occupation.

ROHINTON MISTRY, A FINE BALANCE

A *Fine Balance* is a sprawling narrative that takes the reader all the way to the Indian subcontinent.

Set initially in 1975 during the emergency government period and then during the chaotic times of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, Mistry's novel focuses on the lives of four central characters whose lives are on a downward spiral, from poverty to outright destitution and, ultimately, death.

Mistry does not whitewash the reality of urban poverty in India. His narrative does not hide away from disease or overcrowded slums with “rough shacks” standing “beyond the railroad fence, alongside a ditch running with raw sewage”. His are not places where we might want to be. But as readers, we become utterly engrossed in his characters' lives – we hope with them, we fear for them and, at the end, we cry for them.

ELENA FERRANTE, MY BRILLIANT FRIEND

Elena Ferrante's novels take me straight to my favourite city of Napoli. Starting with *My Brilliant Friend*, the four novels chart the intensive relationship between two girls, Elena “Lenù” Greco and Raffaella “Lila” Cerullo, who grow up in a poor neighbourhood in the 1950s.

Reading Ferrante's sprawling narrative conjures up images of Napoli and makes me feel like I am standing in the Piazza del Plebiscito or having an espresso in the historic Caffè Gambrinus. Together with Lenù, I can see Vesuvio across the Bay of Naples, the “delicate pastel-colored shape, at whose base the whitish stones of the city were piled up, with the earth-coloured slice of the Castel dell'Ovo, and the sea.”

I can feel, hear and smell Napoli around me. Reading about the city might not be as good as being there in person; but, at the moment, it is a close second.

Of course, books can't stop a global pandemic. But, for a short while, they can let us forget the world around us and, instead, transport us to different places, allowing us to at least travel in spirit.

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phy, autobiography, travel writing and philosophy. His prose is so full of quiet beauty and eloquence that it always helps me forget my surroundings and enter a quiet and contemplative “Sebaldian” space.

PATRICK MODIANO: THE SEARCH WARRANT

The *Search Warrant* pieces together the real-life story of Dora Bruder, a young Jewish girl who went missing in Paris in December 1941.

Modiano attempts to retrace Dora's movements across Paris and his book is full of evocative descriptions of quiet squares and bustling streets where she might have spent some time.

“In comparison with the Avenue de Saint-Mandé, the Avenue Picpus, on the right, is cold and desolate. Treeless, as I remember. Ah, the loneliness of returning on those Sunday evenings.”

From the first page it is clear that the city of Paris assumes the status of a character – and as readers we can follow the narrator's (and Dora's) movements on a map.

If we are familiar with Paris, we can picture where they are. By tracing Dora's possible steps,

Japan's capricious response to coronavirus could dent its international reputation

RA MASON
theconversation.com

The Japanese government's response to the coronavirus pandemic has been reactive, chaotic and lacking in clear leadership. Japan has effectively lost control of its attempts to isolate all suspected cases.

A full nationwide state of emergency was only declared on April 16, after cases rapidly expanded outside central metropolitan areas. The national emergency gave prefectures the powers to impose their own lockdown measures, but these are partial and not enforceable by law.

This followed ambiguous recommendations by the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for people across the country to practice the “three Cs”: avoiding closed spaces, concentrated gatherings and close contact.

But the government's coronavirus strategy might be more fittingly categorised by “three As”: arrogance, anxiety and atypical. This includes over-confidence in party protocol, anxiety over making sudden societal changes and indifference towards conventional advice from foreign peers.

In some ways, this mirrors a wider pattern of the Abe administration implementing policies at home that are out-of-sync with the image Japan has of itself as a leader on the world stage. These contradictions between foreign and domestic policy have led Japan capriciously to the brink of a coronavirus disaster.

Since Abe's return to power in 2012, Japan has set a foreign policy course aimed at regaining international prestige. This came partly as

a response to domestic perceptions that Japan had damaged its reputation over the course of more than two decades of stagnation. Abe's new agenda has been characterised by concepts of proactivity, promotion of an international rules-based system and regional leadership.

Why then, with so much at stake, has the response of his ruling Liberal Democratic Party to the coronavirus pandemic been so erratic?

ARROGANCE

This begins with Abe, who has strengthened his grip on power under the pretexts of strong leadership and national interest. Though often framed in patriotic rhetoric, measures introduced by the prime minister on information sharing, military expansion and media control have largely amounted to a reduction in civil liberties and the empowerment of Abe and his inner circle. This concentration of power promotes a discourse of Japanese exceptionalism focused on national pride at home and international prestige abroad.

But there is an arrogance here based on the fact that Abe's cabinet doesn't actually have popular approval among the Japanese public for its handling of the coronavirus response. The LDP only commands an overwhelming electoral advantage because of the broken and dysfunctional opposition, with no other party gaining far above 5% of the vote.

This has created a kind of hubris, where the ruling party acts unilaterally as if given a mandate by a huge majority of the people, due not least to the LDP's almost unbroken grip on power since 1955. In recent years government policies have only been

subjected to limited domestic media scrutiny.

ANXIETY

Japan has long been considered a socially conservative country. Generally speaking, this includes a high level of social awareness and anxiety about social perceptions. This acts as a disincentive for politicians to make sudden or sweeping changes for fear of upsetting the apple cart.

Most Japanese prioritise stability and safety, which is largely reflected in the generally cautious actions of their political leaders. Securing such stability and safety is not, conversely, assumed to require dramatic measures that drastically change daily life. There is evidence, for example, of citizens ignoring or only partially adhering to the comparatively sudden social distancing measures the government requested.

At the same time, Japan has a problem of indifference. Criminal incidents, such as violence or anti-social behaviour, can often go unreported. Instead, there is an expectation for people to practice social awareness and consideration for others through their own, socially conditioned, behaviour. This makes it hard for the government to demand further additional adherence to draconian measures because while some people are anxious about how they are socially perceived, they expect to take personal responsibility for their own actions.

There is also a degree of trepidation in Japanese society that guards against military-style emergency measures that are associated with Japan's wartime era.

In any case, there is already a de-

gree of deliberate distancing from strangers, and the wearing of face masks has long been commonplace. This could partly explain the initially slow spread of the virus. On the flip side, however, this could have led to a false sense of reassurance.

ATYPICAL

Japan has tended to adapt rather than adhere to international orthodoxies. This goes for politics, economics and society, and has proven effective in sustaining the country's economic strength and soft power esteem. However, it has also led politicians in Tokyo to believe that not following the advice, policies or behaviour of other leading powers may be warranted. Japan does things differently, they claim, for good reasons.

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is starting to look like a grave mistake. Japan is out of kilter with many of the countries, such as South Korea, Taiwan and EU states, that it might most need to cooperate with, both to stop the spread of the virus and address its economic impact.

The health concerns from such an atypical approach are obvious. But economically, too, everything from air travel to the Olympics and tourism have been negatively affected. Even compared to other battered global economies and healthcare systems, the prognosis for Japan is grim.

Ironically, then, the combination of disjointed domestic policies could also result in Japan taking an extra hit to the one thing its leader was doubtless hoping to preserve – its international reputation.

[the writer is Lecturer in International Relations and Japanese Foreign Policy, University of East Anglia]

BALA BONGKU**A
Unique
Festival
of
Western
Bhutan**

KARMA THINLEY

Bala Bongku, or Bjena Bongku, is a pre-Buddhist festival celebrated in Wangdue district of Western Bhutan. I was fortunate to participate in this festival last winter and since there does not appear to be any written documentation of this festival, will base my article on feedback received from senior monks and elders of the community.

A common belief held by the people is that Bala Bongku should be celebrated first, before any other festival and an interesting story was told to me to explain the festival's preeminence.

The story goes that in the early days, a shaman was on his way to a nearby village to conduct the 'Locho' festival. On the way, he encountered the main deity of the area who asked him where he was headed. Upon learning of his assignment, the deity commanded that the shaman return and celebrate Bongku first, and perform the rituals for Bala Bongku. It then dawned on the shaman that he was speaking to the main deity and hence hastened back to share this information with other villagers. Thereafter, Bala Bongku became the first festival to be celebrated in the calendar year.

Bala Bongku is celebrated at Bala Temple which was recently renovated. The monastery also now enjoys good road connectivity and has electricity facilitated by the Royal Bhutan Government and some private sponsorships.

The monastery was built in the memory of Ta-Cho-Ba-Ha-La, Guru Rinpoche's horse. That precious horse is believed to have died at the spot where the monastery now stands and the heart of the horse is believed to have been placed inside the main statute of the monastery by Ugyen Lama, the first appointed spiritual head of that temple.

The village near the monastery then received the name 'Bala Kha'.

The monastery is located atop a hill which looks like a sleeping horse's mouth. This also ties in with the Buddhist belief of a wish-fulfilling horse.

The monastery itself is also believed to be the winter residence of the main deity of the area who also has a summer residence at Jangsa Dzong in Khotakha village about 24KM from Bala village.

There is no telling when the festival started, but as I listened to the stories, I feel confident that the rituals could have existed since before the 8th century. Most of the elders traced the origins of the monastery to Lam Kathop Sithop. Later, I was told, it was upgraded by an abbot and by the 12th Desi, Wangzop/ Wangdue Dzongpoen Sigyel. Now the temple has been upgraded, building on works initiated by the head of the village, Dolung Lam, and the villagers. The villagers are now planning to start monastic education as well.

The Bala Bongku celebration was initially organized by the village headman every year on the 20th day of the twelfth month of the Bhutanese calendar. The rituals were led by a shaman and preceded by preparations which went on for three days. Through these three days, the shaman makes different offerings and serves meals to the main deity.

As per the oral tradition, the deity is a powerful one from somewhere between Tibet and the "land of Indian soil" who, in keeping with a prophesy, was invited from Tibet to the present village by Ap Phub Ngedup as his personal guardian deity or personal protector. In Buddhist tradition, it is believed that if we have good connections with such protectors we can attain prosperity and success in every field. Ap Phub Ngedup was a businessman who engaged in trade between Bhutan and Tibet. He guided the deity from Tibet, and when the deity saw the small ranges here in comparison to where he had come from, he said the mountains here looked the size of a Ra [goat], and their deity was named 'Radrap,' more popularly known as 'Sha Radrap' or 'Ap Radrap'. Ra is goat and Drap means ranges or mountain, and Sha in general is the name given to a collection

of four/ five villages. The charge of the area was given to the present deity and Ap Phub Ngedup himself promised to make offerings, a practice continued by the villagers through the centuries. They fear that if they fail to do so, something bad will happen to them.

The people have full faith in the deity and believe it brings good fortune and harmony. Therefore, they continue celebrating this festival.

During the festival, the shaman is engaged in extraordinary performances as he presides over the rituals.

The attire of the shaman is an expensive woven dress with a 'khamar kabney' worn across the shoulder doing down to the knees and a 'Rigngag' on the head which consists of five different directional bodhisattvas.

The shaman carries a bell in his left hand and a medium sized drum in his right. The equipment used by pazabs/ warriors includes a helmet, armour, swords, and a 'kabney' across both the shoulders.

The main role and responsibility of the shaman is to please the main deity by offering and reciting prayers. The Pazabs [warriors] are helpers to the shaman and help in chasing away spirits and protecting the shaman. They help in chasing away enemies and other evil spirits.

On the appointed day, the shaman invites the main deity, Sha Radrap/Ap Radrap, early in the morning at around 7:30am, and between 8:30am to 9, he offers 'Marchang' [gestures of paying respect to guests]. After making the offerings, the shaman recites some prayers and communicates with the spirits and the main deity. At that time, the shaman predicts the condition expected for the community for the year ahead and the entire village listens keenly to the predictions.

At the same time, the Pazabs coordinate with their leader as several sounds of danger are repeated and the head of the village 'Gup' goes with them to open the sacred "Tshendar" [prayer flags] erected around 200 metres from the temple. There are two sacred flags - the bigger one is believed to have been brought from some part of India and represents victory over other troops.

After opening the sacred flags, the Pazabs start their journey back to the monastery and at that time, the shaman offers 'Marchang' to the deity welcoming the guest. This time, the shaman recites prayers praising and pleasing the deity stating that, 'everyone depends on you; you have to protect and guide us from four directional enemies, and lighten us with harmonious, prosperities in all time'.

After the prayers, lunch is served to the warriors and the entire village eats their packed lunch together. This occasion also allows festivities and meeting of many family members. It serves a bigger purpose of promoting community vitality which is an essential part of our culture.

Through this, I came to know that, this festival has unique value and characteristics which is indirectly represented through the warrior dance.

After lunch, family members leave for home, and the shaman and warrior stay back at the monastery.

Thereafter, the village tour begins around 12:30pm. The shaman and the Pazabs start the village tour with prayers led by the shaman chasing away evil spirits. For instance, he tells the spirits not to harm my villagers and to not to return until the world disappears. In case the spirits visit, they will be burned alive, he



warns. Even as the prayers are recited in five different directions of the village, the warriors sing and dance at two different locations.

Finally, all the Pazabs and the shaman return to the monastery exhausted, a few fully drunk and most very hungry. By the time they return, it was nearly 9:30pm. Once, they enter the monastery, 'Marchang' is offered again with the main prayer pleasing the main deity and the Pazabs return the sacred flag inside the 'Goenkhang', a sacred place reserved for the deity which only men are allowed to enter. Then, all are served dinner by the village headman.

After dinner, the shaman pays respects to the deity, thanking him for protection, while the Pazabs pay their respects to the shaman. The warriors, who collect money through the ritual, offer some to the shaman as a gift before departure. After accepting the token gift, the shaman makes some more offerings and the next morning makes the last offering to the deity.

Since the festival has been celebrated for a long time it has seen much change. The elders mentioned that earlier, they would invite two to three shamans and three to five consorts for the festival and offer foodgrains for the shaman. Nowadays, however, the shaman demands cash.

In earlier times, the preparations also included the slaughter of an ox/ bull and the meat would first be offered to the main deity and later served on the day of the festival for the entire village. The festival was an annual gathering party - a kind of a victory celebration marked at Bala/ Bjena village.

In other oral traditions, Sha Radrap/ Ap Radrap was once a highly educated master in Tibet who had once beaten a student to death. He became increasingly aggressive in nature and his soul later became a mountain spirit who was eventually calmed by Guru Rinpoche and appointed the main protector and promoter of Buddhism. Currently Sha Radrap/ Ap Radrap covers three monasteries in Western Bhutan's Wangdue district.

There is also the story of Radra Phuen Sum (three cousin brothers) marking the three monasteries/ residences.

There are different versions on how these three temples came under his control and the elders of Bala community narrate that after reaching their area, Ap Phub Ngedup introduced these three monasteries - Jangsa at Khotakha as the summer



residence, Bala temple as winter residence and the third as Radra ney-khang (sacred place of the deity) near Wangdue. The last is the oldest dzong and now serves as an institution for the monk body and public administration built by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal.

The elders also shared details about the deity's manifestation in three different temples - firstly as 'king' settled in Jangsa Dzong at Sha Khotokha village, second as the main deity of Bala village, who was considered to be a 'Monk' and finally as a 'warrior' who settled at Radra ney-khang at Bajo Thangka near Wangdue.

The deity was considered to be very wealthy as a result the village was consid-

ered to be the wealthiest in their locality. This is also true to this day. I noticed that while villages nearby lacked sufficient food and other materials, these villages were well stocked. Their belief in the deity is very strong and wherever they go, they take the deity's name first and only then leave home. It starts with small things and grows to other important works as well, for example, they all use the name 'Radra' as their title. Likewise, even when they go for archery tournaments, they first offer prayers to their deity and the practice goes on.

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Australian Govt looking at travel exemptions for Indian cricket team's Test tour: Reports

MELBOURNE, APR 25 (PTI): The Australian government might make travel exemptions for the Indian team's tour Down Under later this year to save the cricket board from losing a staggering 300 million Australian dollars in the wake of COVID-9 pandemic.

Cricket Australia is under huge financial pressure due to global lockdown and has laid off 80 percent of its staff. India's four-Test tour in

December-January could provide a relief to the struggling bldy

As of now, Australia's borders are sealed till September 30 but their could be an extension of travel sanctions.

According to a report in 'ESPNCricinfo', international exemptions to allow an India touring party to arrive in Australia next summer would be seriously considered by the federal government in the event of wid-

er travel bans, strongly suggesting that Cricket Australia will be able to avoid losing up to AUD 300 million in revenue in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic."

The website also reported that CA has received a positive response from its government.

"...The governing body is understood to have received highly encouraging news about their outlook, at least as far as the lucrative India

tour is concerned," the report stated.

Cricket Australia was expecting revenue of AUD 500 million from this financial cycle, primarily from broadcast rights. Even if spectators are not allowed and cricket becomes a TV only event, they happen to lose AUD 50 million.

But if India fail to tour, the repercussions will be of gigantic proportions.

"Such a scenario (only live TV coverage)

would likely leave CA with a hole of around AUD 50 million in its annual revenue of nearly AUD 500 million, but nowhere near the sort of blow they could have expected without being able to welcome India for a series of Test and limited overs matches due to pull the organisation out of the low point of its four-year revenue cycle," the report stated.

Australia Prime Minister Scott Morrison on

Friday had said that his government is looking at all option as far as resumption of sporting activities is concerned.

"What is a safe way to be able to do that, and to get as much consistency as we possibly can across all the states and territories," Morrison said.

"That was strongly supported today by all the states and territories, having something along those lines they would find very helpful.

Coutinho goes under the knife for ankle injury

BERLIN, APR 25 (AFP): Bayern Munich midfielder Philippe Coutinho has undergone surgery to remove loose fragments from his right ankle and will be sidelined for at least two weeks, the club said.

The Brazil international is on a season-long loan from Barcelona and has scored eight goals in 22 Bundesliga appearances for Bayern.

"Philippe Coutinho underwent an operation on his right ankle, during which loose joint fragments were removed," the club said in a statement.

"The operation was a success. The Brazilian will begin his recovery program in around 14 days."



France midfielder Corentin Tolisso also had an operation earlier in the week on his ankle and will miss the league's potential restart date on May 9.

The Bundesliga is prepared to resume next month without spectators following the coronavirus outbreak but is awaiting the all-clear from the German government.

World Cup semifinal loss to NZ still haunt us: Rahul

MUMBAI, APR 25 (PTI): Star India batsman KL Rahul said the heart-breaking World Cup semifinal loss to New Zealand, especially after a near-perfect show in the group stages, continues to haunt him and his teammates.

In a special chat show, 'The Mind Behind', Rahul said if he was given a chance to change the result of any one match in the past, it would sure-

ly have been the 2019 World Cup semifinal.

"It has to be the World Cup semifinal. I think most of us are still not over that loss, it is still haunts us sometimes," he said.

"I can't imagine what the senior players must have felt but you know in a World Cup it just becomes even harder knowing that we played so well in the entire tournament. I still wake up

to that nightmare sometimes."

India were perhaps the most dominant side in the group stage of the 2019 World Cup, winning each of their matches except the one against hosts England.

The Virat Kohli-led side was the favourite going into the semifinal against eventual runner-up New Zealand but lost the crucial contest by 18 runs.

Just like other Indian cricketers, Rahul too is currently enjoying a rare break from the game because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Let me talk about myself. I've just been sitting and doing some homework. I've been watching some videos from the past and taking notes of the things I was doing right and where I could improve," he signed off.



Man United's Woodward says virus will hit transfer spending

MANCHESTER, APR 25 (AP): Manchester United vice chairman Ed Woodward has told fans there will be reduced spending on players as the entire football industry deals with the financial consequences of the coronavirus pandemic.

English Premier League games have not been played for more than six weeks and stadiums are due to be closed to fans when the season resumes in June at the earliest.

It could be several months before social distancing restrictions

are eased to allow supporters back into games, dealing a significant financial blow to United, which generated more than 55.2 million pounds (68 million) in matchday revenue in the first half of the season.

That will impact the finances available to spend on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's squad.

Nobody should be under any illusions about the scale of challenge facing everyone in football and it may not be 'business as usual' for any clubs, including ourselves, in the transfer market this

summer, Woodward said in a conference call with 12 fan representatives on Friday.

As ever, our priority is the success of the team, but we need visibility of the impact across the whole industry, including timings of the transfer window, and the wider financial picture, before we can talk about a return to normality.

The summer transfer window usually runs through July and August but the season will stretch beyond June 30 if it can resume, impacting when deals will be

allowed.

One of the biggest pieces of transfer speculation during the lockdown period without live sport has been over whether United can sign Tottenham striker Harry Kane. Without naming Kane, Woodward alluded to reports of a potential deal worth 200 million pounds.

I cannot help feeling that speculation around transfers of individual players for hundreds of millions of pounds this summer seems to ignore the realities that face the sport, Woodward said.

United is paying its staff in full, while most players at Premier League rival Arsenal are taking a 12.5% salary cut and the Southampton and West Ham squads are deferring pay.

Of course, everyone is grappling with the economic realities of the pandemic and we are no different, Woodward said.

So the longer the crisis continues the greater the impact will be for every club, including ourselves. United generated 303.8 million pounds in revenue in the first six

months of the financial year to Dec. 31, 2019, with half coming from global sponsorship deals.

We have always believed that our commercial model gives us greater resilience than most clubs, Woodward said, and we are grateful for the enduring support of our commercial partners in helping us achieve that.

United is fifth in the Premier League with nine games remaining, three points behind Chelsea in the fourth Champions League qualification place.

We have offers from Australia, New Zealand to host domestic games: ECB Chief

LONDON, APR 25 (PTI): The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive Tom Harrison has confirmed receiving offers from Australia and New Zealand boards, helping them host their domestic games -- county as well as List A.

On Friday, the ECB suspended all forms of professional cricket till July 1 due to the COVID-19 outbreak

which has wreaked havoc globally but more so in the United Kingdom.

"We've had offers as far away as Australia and New Zealand. Those offers are on the table," Harrison was quoted as saying by the BBC.

"I haven't had anything from Abu Dhabi, but that's not to say the offer hasn't been made," he added.

England's three-Test

series against West Indies and the women's two T20Is against India in June have been postponed along with the delay in the domestic season. This apart, around nine rounds of county games that stands cancelled at the moment.

Harrison said the ECB was getting used to the idea of hosting cricket in empty stadiums.

"Inevitably, behind

closed doors does change the venue allocation and the mindset. It goes from taking the game around the country to give fans a chance to see England in their back yard. That shifts because there's no-one seeing England play live at all."

"You can see what other sports are considering: allocating neutral venues for all matches and then playing in those. That's the lens we're

putting on this. What's the minimum number of grounds we need for our desired international schedule and how to cater for that."

England were scheduled to launch the inaugural edition of The Hundred, a new 100 balls per side format to be played by eight franchises, in July. But with the latest delay in commencement of the game, the tournament

may be pushed back.

However, the ECB chief insisted that the tournament could provide the important commercial value and generate interest in the game in times of crisis.

"I don't think this in any way dilutes the case for The Hundred. It absolutely accelerates it and makes it something cricket needs to get behind," he said.

Manmohan Singh slams govt over dearness allowance freeze

NEW DELHI, APR 25 (PTI): Former prime minister Manmohan Singh has slammed the government over freezing of dearness allowance, asserting that it was not necessary at this stage to impose hardships on government servants and armed forces personnel.

The finance ministry on Thursday froze inflation-linked allowance for 50 lakh central government employees and 61 lakh pensioners till June 2021 due to the COVID-19 crisis. However, DA and dearness relief (DR) at current rates will continue to be paid, it said.

"We should be on the side of people whose dearness allowance is being cut. I sincerely believe it is not necessary at this stage to impose hardships on government servants and also on the armed forces people," Singh said during the Congress's consultative group meeting whose video was released by the party on Saturday.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi also slammed the government over the issue, saying the problem was with the government's going ahead with the central vista redevelopment project.

"You are taking away money from the middle class, you are not giving money to the poor people and you are spending it on your central vista," Gandhi told the meeting. Senior Congress leader and former finance minister P Chidambaram said, "When you (gov-

ernment) have not cut back expenditure on the bullet train, central vista development, those are the programmes which should be first put on halt before you halt people's dearness allowance."

The Centre last month approved the land use change for execution of its ambitious central vista redevelopment project in Lutyens' Delhi with the issuance of a notification by the Union housing and urban affairs ministry.

The redevelopment project of the Central Vista -- the nation's power corridor -- envisages a triangular Parliament building next to the existing one, common Central Secretariat and revamping of the 3-km-long Rajpath -- from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.

Congress's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it would have been fine if the money was being transferred to migrant labourers.

"But you are continuing with the new Parliament House, new building for ministers, new house for PM, you are continuing with zero cut on expenditure of the government which could save you close to 2-2.5 lakh crore rupees. But, you are denying relief to your armed personnel, to your pensioners, to your government servants," he said.

Former Union minister Manish Tewari said the first thing the government should have done before cutting allowances, salaries, etc. was to set up an expenditure rationalisation commission.

7 more test positive for COVID-19 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, total cases rise to 29

PORT BLAIR, APR 25 (PTI): Seven more people have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, taking the total number of cases in the Union Territory to 29, an official said on Saturday.

All of them are residents of the Bambooflat area in the south Andaman district, he said.

"Of the new cases, six are from one family, and all of them came in

contact with a COVID-19 patient detected earlier," the official said.

All the patients are undergoing treatment at the GB Pant Hospital here, a health department official said.

Five cases were reported from the Bambooflat area on Thursday.

Last week, a 39-year-old police radio operator had tested positive for COVID-19 in the locality, which has now been de-

clared a hotspot, and all the cases were either his family members or related to him.

Of the total cases reported in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, home to several vulnerable tribes, 18 are active now.

Eleven persons -- 10 with links to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi and a student who travelled on a flight with some of them -- have recovered from the disease.

A total of 2,679 sam-

ples have so far been sent to the Regional Medical Research Centre here for tests, and of these, results of 2,433 have come while 246 are awaited, the health department official said.

The department has so far received 3,800 rapid test kits from the Centre, he said.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration has set up an isolation centre at the GB Pant Hospital with 50

beds, and a total of 961 people are now in quarantine centres, the official said.

The Union Territory administration has adopted the "pool testing" method using less kits for more tests in the fight against novel coronavirus.

The local administration has urged people to stay at home and follow the lockdown order imposed to contain the outbreak of the dreaded virus.

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Outbursts, panic: Lockdown ordeal for special-needs families

PARIS, APR 25 (AP): After weeks of France's strict lockdown, Mohammed, a 14-year-old with autism, took a pickaxe and started hitting the wall of his house, hoping that he could finally go out.

His explanation: Too long at home, too hard to wait." Coronavirus lockdown is proving a particularly trying ordeal for children with disabilities and their families who are struggling to care for them at home now that special schools and support programs have been shut down.

Mohammed hasn't picked up the ax again since the incident last month, his father Salah says with relief. But his son still gets exasperated, and says, I want to break the house down. The family, like others who spoke to The Associated Press about what they're going through, spoke on condition they be identified by first name only, out of privacy concerns for their children.

Making matters worse, Mohammed's mother, who

works in a nursing home, has been on sick leave after testing positive for COVID-19. She had to live for weeks isolated on the top floor of their house in the Paris suburb of Mantes-la-Jolie, and was forced to keep distance from her family. Her health has since improved.

That was particularly hard for Mohammed, who has a close relationship with his mother.

We kept telling him that there's the disease. He took note. Then he tried again to go up and see her, Salah said.

Violent outbursts, incomprehension, disputes, panic attacks: Lockdown is a shock to many children with special needs, cut off from their friends and teachers, deprived of their reassuring routine. And France's virus lockdown measures now in their second month and not set to end until at least May 11 are among Europe's strictest.

At home, Mohammed requires constant attention so that he won't put himself in

danger.

That's tough on him. We reprimand him, saying no. ... We need to repeat and repeat, Salah said. The father admits to his own fatigue, working at home as a telecoms engineer while also taking care of his two other sons, ages 12 and 8.

Salah knows how to detect signs on Mohammed's face when he is under too much pressure and may get angry: I don't let things get heated. Mohammed's teacher at the Bel-Air Institute near Versailles, Corentin Sainte Fare Garnot, is doing his best to help.

If you remove crutches from someone who needs them from one day to the next, it gets very complicated, he said.

The feeling of loneliness and lack of activity can be very deep for people with autism, he said. Mohammed calls him several times a day.

Aurelie Collet, a manager at the Bel-Air, which provides specialized educational and therapeutic services for doz-

ens of children with different types of disabilities, said some teenagers just didn't understand the lockdown rules at first, and kept going out. Others who used to be well-integrated in their class turned inward, isolating themselves in their bedrooms.

So the staff developed creative tools to keep communicating and working with the children, including through social networks, she said.

Thomas, 17, and Pierre, 14, brothers with intellectual disabilities who also go to the Bel-Air, are similarly destabilized by lockdown.

I feel worried about how long the lockdown will last, what's going to happen next, Thomas said. The teenager has lots of questions about how many people will get the virus, when the epidemic will stop. At first, their parents recalled, the boys acted as if they were on vacation, playing all day and calling their friends.

Then the family, which lives near Versailles, west of

Paris, organized activities to keep their lives more structured.

Another big concern for Thomas is his future, as the internship he was planning to do this summer is likely to be postponed.

His younger brother Pierre says he's having more nightmares than usual, adding that the lockdown is also prompting more family quarrels.

Pierre especially misses the gardening he used to do at the Bel-Air, so he has planted seeds in pots to grow radishes.

Under nationwide restrictions, the French can only leave home for essential services, like buying food or going to the doctor, and must stay close to home. Physical activity in public is strictly limited to one hour, and within a nearby radius. Police routinely fine violators.

Recognizing the burden this places on people with autism, French President Emmanuel Macron announced in early April an exception that allows them to go out

in places where they are accustomed to go, taking the necessary health precautions but with no limit of time and distance.

The challenges are familiar to millions of families around the world. Across the U.S., teachers are exploring new ways to deliver customized lessons from afar, and parents of children with disabilities are not only home-schooling but also adding therapy, hands-on lessons and behavioral management to their responsibilities.

Salah has started again to take Mohammed do some biking outside, something he used to do before. This is like a safety valve to him, he needs it. ... We're having a hard time following him, he's going ahead, happily shouting, Salah said with a smile in his voice.

Sainte Fare Garnot is helping the family to find concrete solutions. Because playing soccer with his brothers in the garden has proven difficult for Moham-

med because the rules of team games are too complex for him, he suggested that the three boys instead take shots at goal in turn.

France is still playing catch-up with some developing-country peers in terms of educational opportunities for children with autism spectrum disorders, and teachers fear that some will also have to spend months relearning skills they may have lost during the lockdown period.

The president has announced that schools will be progressively reopened starting from May 11, but authorities have not provided details yet about special-needs children. France counts more than 350,000 school students with disabilities, including 70,000 in the special education system that includes the Bel-Air.

The uncertainty is especially hard for young people like Mohammed. I know he will ask me again," his teacher said.

China approves third COVID-19 vaccine for clinical trials

KJM VARMA

BEIJING, APR 25 (PTI): China has approved its third coronavirus vaccine for the second phase of clinical trials as it reported 12 new COVID-19 cases, taking the total number of infections in the country to 82,816.

China has approved three coronavirus vaccines, including the one developed by Chinese military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) for clinical trials.

An "inactivated" vaccine developed by Wuhan Institute of Biological Products under the China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm) and the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) started its clinical trials, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

An "inactivated" vaccine consists of virus particles, bacteria, or other pathogens that have been grown in culture and then lose disease producing capacity. In contrast, live vaccines use pathogens that are still alive.

WIV has been in the eye of the storm in recent weeks as US Presi-



dent Donald Trump and top American officials alleged that the coronavirus may have escaped from there and demanded a probe into it. An official of the WIV denied it, terming the allegation "entirely based on speculation".

A total of 96 persons in three age groups have received the vaccine in the first phase of clinical trial as of April 23. The vaccine has shown good safety results so far and vaccine receivers are still under observation, said

the Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinopharm.

The randomised, double-blind and placebo-controlled clinical trials of the inactivated vaccine are conducted in Jiaozuo, central China's Henan Province, and the second phase of clinical trial will focus on the vaccination procedure, it said.

The vaccine will also go through the third phase of the clinical trial, and it may take about one year to complete the clinical trial before finally reaching the conclusion

on the vaccine's safety and efficacy, it said.

China has approved three COVID-19 vaccine candidates for clinical trials.

An adenovirus vector vaccine, developed by Institute of Military Medicine under the Academy of Military Sciences, was the first to be approved to enter a clinical trial.

The first phase of the clinical trial was completed at the end of March, and the second phase started on April 12.

Meanwhile China's National Health Com-

mission, (NHC) said on Saturday that 12 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases were reported in the country on Friday, of which 11 were imported.

The other one was domestically transmitted in Heilongjiang Province bordering Russia.

The death toll in the country remained at 4,632 people as no fatalities were reported due to coronavirus on Friday, it said.

The overall confirmed cases on the mainland had reached 82,816 by Friday, including 838 patients who were still being treated and 77,346 people discharged after treatment.

The total number of imported cases of the coronavirus in China increased to 1,629 on Friday, of this 909 had been discharged from hospitals after recovery, and 720 were being treated with 25 in severe condi-

tions, it said.

Also on Friday, 29 asymptomatic cases were reported. So far, 983 suspected asymptomatic cases, including 150 from abroad, were still under medical observation, it said.

Coronavirus' first epicentres Hubei and its capital Wuhan had 553 asymptomatic cases under medical observation, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The asymptomatic cases were a cause of concern as the government has lifted over two-month lockdown in Hubei and Wuhan after cases abated.

Asymptomatic cases refer to people who are tested positive for the coronavirus but develop no symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat. They are infectious and pose a risk of spreading to others.

Italy to ease lockdown on May 4, give free masks

ROME, APR 25 (AP): Italy will start distributing free protective masks to nursing homes, many of which have been devastated by coronavirus infections and deaths.

Domenico Arcuri, the government's commissioner for the pandemic, says doing so is a gesture of solidarity and nearness and support to these places ever more at the epicenter of this great crisis.

Arcuri says free masks also will be distributed to public officials, transport workers

and police. Millions of Italians will be allowed to return to workplaces starting on May 4, when lockdown restrictions will be considerably eased.

Italy, with some 26,000 reported deaths, most of them of elderly persons, has Europe's highest toll from COVID-19. In Lombardy, Italy's most stricken region, prosecutors are investigating about two dozen homes, including one in Milan where some 200 residents died.

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Row over Boris Johnson's top aide at secret Covid-19 science meetings

ADITI KHANNA

LONDON, APR 25 (PTI): Downing Street on Saturday went into strong denial mode after a political row broke out over a UK media report claiming that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's top aide had attended secret meetings of the scientific group advising the government on its Covid-19 response strategy.

The Guardian' claimed that Dominic Cummings, Johnson's chief strategic adviser, and an official associated with the Brexit campaign were part of the meetings of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE). This triggered Opposition anger as it implies government influence over what is pegged as an independent advisory body, the membership of which has not been made public.

"The scientists on SAGE are among the most eminent in their fields. It is factually wrong and damaging to sensible public debate to imply their advice is af-

fectured by government advisers listening to discussions," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

Public confidence in the media has collapsed during this emergency partly because of ludicrous stories such as this, the spokesperson said.

Johnson's office stresses that Cummings and Ben Warner, a data scientist associated with the Vote Leave campaign for the UK's exit from the European Union (EU), are not members of the group and had only listened in to SAGE meetings in order to better understand the scientific debate around coronavirus.

They "occasionally" asked questions or offered help with reaching out to civil servants at Whitehall when required.

SAGE is a panel of medical and scientific experts, chaired by the UK's Chief Scientific Officer, Sir Patrick Vallance, that provides independent advice to the government during any crisis and has been leading on crucial decisions such as the length and nature of the Covid-19

lockdown. Its advice feeds into ministers' decision-making process and is not made public.

But the latest revelations have led to calls for greater transparency in its working, including from within the ruling Conservative Party backbenchers.

"We should publish the membership of SAGE: remove any non-scientist members: publish their advice in full: and publish dissenting opinions with the advice," Tory MP David Davis, a former Brexit Secretary, said on Twitter.

But the Opposition Labour Party has been more vehement in its reaction, saying Cummings had "no place" on the government's scientific advisory group.

"He is a political adviser, not a medical or scientific expert. If the public are to have confidence in the SAGE, the government must make clear Dominic Cummings can no longer participate or attend," Labour's shadow health secretary Jonathan Ashworth told the BBC.



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SUMMER READY! The on-air personality, Wells Adams goes on a shirtless run while out in Studio City, Calif.

I'm fascinated by the world of wrestling: Chris Hemsworth on Hulk Hogan biopic

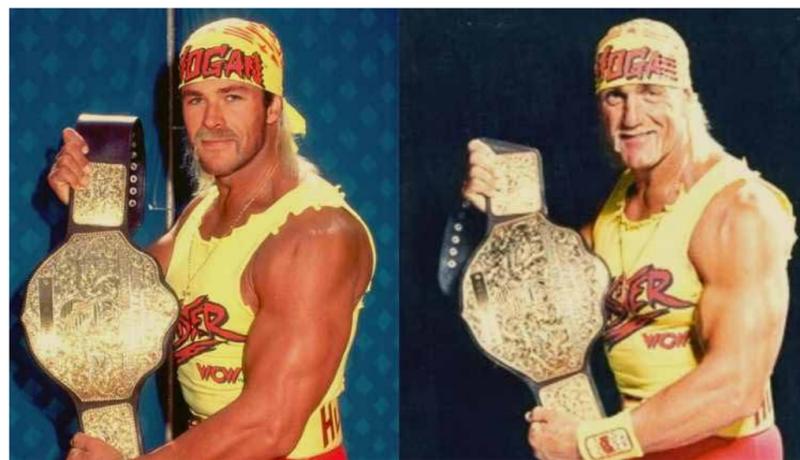
LOS ANGELES, APR 25 (PTI): Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth says he is excited to play veteran WWE wrestler Hulk Hogan in the biopic, which is currently in writing stage.

The Netflix film is set to be directed by Joker helmer Todd Phillips and the Australian actor has teased that the makers are planning to show a never-seen-before side of the wrestling industry.

I know it's being written now and worked on. I know very little about that. It's sort of in the process now.

"I'm just fascinated by that world, and I think they're pretty keen to show a side of the world that people haven't seen before. I'm as intrigued as you are," Hemsworth told ScreenRant.

The project was announced last year, with 8 Mile scribe Scott Silver and John Pollono attached to pen



the script.

The film is expected to look into Hogan's rise from the Florida wrestling circuit to becoming the face of the World Wrestling Federation in the 1980s where he squared off with villain Andre the Giant.

The movie, however, will

not delve into the legal battle between Hogan; Gawker Media and its founder, Nick Denton, over a sex tape that the online media company published featuring the former WWE star.

The project will be produced by Michael Sugar through his Sugar23's first-

look Netflix deal along with Joint Efforts' Phillips and Bradley Cooper, Eric Bischoff, and Hemsworth.

Hogan will also serve as executive producer along with Sugar23's Ashley Zalta. Steve Desmond and Michael Sherman will serve as co-producers.

I'm never gonna say never: Cameron Diaz on acting comeback

LOS ANGELES, APR 25 (PTI): Two years after announcing her decision to retire from acting, Hollywood star Cameron Diaz has teased that she may return to movies.

In a recent interview with her former makeup artist Gucci Westman for Harper's BAZAAR UK, the Charlie's Angels star said she is "never



going to say never," when it comes to her potential return to the big screen.

I'm never gonna say never, because I'm not a person who says never about anything, Diaz said.

The 47-year-old actor's last movie role was as Miss Agatha Hannigan in the 2015 film Annie, in which she

starred alongside Jamie Foxx and Rose Byrne.

Diaz, however, is enjoying her time at home with husband Benji Madden and their new born daughter Raddix.

I love being married. The best thing that's ever happened to me is finding my husband, our partnership, his friendship, she added.

Ryan Reynolds, Shawn Levy reunite for time-travel movie

LOS ANGELES, APR 25 (PTI): Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds is teaming up once again with filmmaker Shawn Levy for a time travel movie.

The duo are currently awaiting the release of their film, "Free Guy" which was

recently pushed to December 2020 in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Levy will direct the film with Reynolds playing a man who must travel back in time to get help from his 13-year-old self.

Together, they encounter their late father, who is now the same age as Reynolds, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Written by Jonathan Topper, the film is based on TS Nowlin's spec script titled

"Our Name is Adam".

The project hails from Skydance and will be produced by David Ellison, Dana Goldberg and Don Granger. Reynolds and Levy will also produce.

Varun Dhawan donates to help daily wage workers of the film industry

MUMBAI, APR 25 (PTI): Actor Varun Dhawan has donated money to help five lakh daily wage workers of the film industry.

Several celebrities including Salman Khan, Amitabh Bachchan, Ajay Devgn, Rohit Shetty, Arjun Kapoor, Boney Kapoor, Jahnvi Kapoor and others have come forward to help the daily wage workers amid the nationwide lockdown.

Varun, who celebrated his 33rd birthday on Friday, has helped daily wage workers under the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE).

Ashoke Pandit, who is the president of Indian Film and TV directors Association took to Twitter to thank Varun for his contribution.

@fwice_mum thanks @Varun_dvn for donating towards the daily wage work-



ers of the entertainment industry. Nearly 5 lakh cine workers, belonging to 32 crafts, wish him a very Happy Birthday. #HappyBirthdayVarunDhawan #FWICE-FightsCorona," Pandit wrote on Twitter.

The actor had earlier donated Rs 55 lakh to PM-Cares Fund and Maharashtra Chief Minister relief fund. He has also pledged to provide free meals to the frontline workers, doctors and medical staff.

Vidya Balan pledges to donate 1000 PPE kits to healthcare staff in India

MUMBAI, APR 25 (PTI): Actor Vidya Balan has decided to donate 1000 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits to the frontline healthcare staff across India.

In a video message posted on her Facebook page, the actor announced that she is also collaborating with celebrity shout-out platform Tring to raise money for additional 1000 PPE kits.

In the war against COVID-19 our health care professionals are like our soldiers at the border fighting for our health and freedom. Just like we equip our soldiers for the battle we must do the same with our medical staff. There



is a critical shortage of PPE for our senior doctors, residents, nurses and ward boys in their daily work.

As a result, a lot of our hospitals are not functioning at full capacity. Join me in changing this now. I am

donating 1000 PPE kits to hospital and medical staff across the country. And I am pledging to raise money for another 1000, she said.

According to a statement issued by the actor's team, she has joined hands with Tring

to provide additional 1000 PPE kits, in association with Manish Mundra of Drishyam Films and photographer-producer Atul Kasbekar.

For donations made through Tring, Vidya will be recognising the support of every donor by sending a personal thank you video message, and a chance for a two-minute video call with her.

Vidya said each PPE kit is worth Rs 650 (all-inclusive of delivery costs and applicable taxes) and it consists of one coverall laminated and waterproof, nitrile gloves, goggles, face shields, 3-ply surgical mask and shoe covers.

ARIES:

You may have settled for less in the past, but that's not your style anymore. You are honing your skills, realising your magical abilities, and coming into your power. Knowing what you deserve will prove to be a turning point for you, Aries. You are ready to attract opportunities that are in alignment with who you are right now. Rule #1: learn to stay open. If you've had any guilt around self-care or choosing yourself, you're learning to let go of that too. How about starting (or ending) your day with a ritualistic bath followed by a cup of sereni-tea?

Tip: You know your worth.

TAURUS:

You may feel like everything is falling apart. Is it really, though? Look beyond the illusion. Understand your vantage point here. This is the secret to overcoming the given obstacle. Yes, it's true that there are people who may be trying to get in the way of your success or poison others against you. Don't feel threatened by the juvenile games. Focus on what you came here to do.

Tip: Understand your vantage point in any given situation.

GEMINI:

No love story is devoid of drama. But you're learning to take everything with a pinch of salt and focus on the essence of your relationship—the love that brought you together. Date night promises to start early in the Gemini headquarters. Single or away from your partner? You're likely to spend quality time with your siblings or somebody you consider as one. Share stories, both old and new. Know that it is vulnerability that is bringing you together.

Tip: Love like nobody's watching.

CANCER:

There were times in the past when you resisted self-care and considered turning inwards a colossal waste of time. But you're letting go of this limiting belief. You're learning the importance of giving yourself the love you deserve. It's all about coming up with small, simple rituals that make you feel celebrated. Movement meditation is also going to be a big theme for you today.

Tip: Give movement meditation a shot.

LEO:

As a fire sign, you revel in living on the edge. The idea of slowing down has always sounded more appealing on paper than it does in practice. But what you're experiencing now is a deep inner alchemy. Yes, there are days you resist the process. But the days you embrace mindfulness outnumber them. Remember, awareness is about the small, simple things, like connecting with the ground when you walk or sipping on your tea like it's source of ecstasy.

Tip: Slow down.

VIRGO:

While the new moon is synonymous with beginnings, la luna in her fading glory encourages us to face our shadows; to release and to let go. Inner work is the need of the hour, Virgo. You already have a sense of what you need to part ways with. It's now time to set a strong intention and take the required action. Want to take the witchy route to liberation?

Tip: La luna, in her fading glory, is encouraging you to release.

LIBRA:

Your relationship with confrontation has always been a complicated one. What's keeping you from speaking your truth? Do your needs not deserve to be met, Libra? Remember, the wounded child is now an empowered adult. Befriend courage, stand up for yourself, and speak your mind. This is the only way the world will meet you halfway. If you're feeling especially sensitive today, be mindful of your boundaries. Be mindful of what you may be consuming consciously or unconsciously. Most importantly, take time to ground your energy.

Tip: The wounded child is now an empowered adult.

SCORPIO:

A powerful affirmation by Danielle LaPorte to start your day with: "I call all of my power back to me now. I am whole and complete." This is a time of reclaiming your reins, Scorpio. The limitations that once held you back are now intimidated by your very presence. It's true that there are certain things in our life that are predetermined, but don't forget the role of free will. Steer your chariot in a direction that you feel called towards, and know the Universe will realign itself for you.

Tip: Call your power back to you.

SAGITTARIUS:

You're craving solo time like never before, especially if you've been sharing space with other people. It's okay to check out once in a while as long as you're not harming anybody in the process. Let your loved ones know your need for space as you bury yourself underneath a pile of books. You may or may not have a way around the chores though. By tapping into the gift of awareness, you will find a way to make the most mundane tasks meditative.

Tip: Your need for space is real.

CAPRICORN:

We all have an army of angels, guides, and masters assigned to us at birth. We may not be able to see them through our naked eyes, but we can perceive them via our third eye or the 'ajna chakra'. Tune in, Capricorn. Feel their presence. Become aware of the many miracles they are manifesting on your behalf. As you do, be sure to express your gratitude for each one of them.

Tip: Your spirit team is trying to get through to you!

AQUARIUS:

You may have been at loggerheads in the past, but you're slowly finding your balance. You're learning to appreciate their contribution to your life, and acknowledging the love that brought you together. Domestic bliss is on the cards, Aquarius. As such, interpersonal relationships are taking centre stage. Be mindful of the wounds that are calling for your attention.

Tip: Love conquers all.

PISCES:

Your time away from the matrix has provided you with the opportunity to not just inculcate new habits, but also to put them into practice. It's not just about who you are becoming in this time period, it's about what you are taking into the world with you. Make it count, Pisces. There are positive changes on the health and wellness front too. You couldn't fathom the idea of not having access to your gym or your trainer, but look at you now! The cheat code to staying motivated: workouts that allow you to be your most playful self as you sweat it out.

Tip: Make this period of self-isolation count.