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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Educational institutions to remain closed for another 2-3 weeks after lockdown

SANDEEP PRASAD

GANGTOK, 07 APR:

Schools and colleges in the State will remain closed for another 2-3 weeks after the lockdown ends on 14 April, Additional Chief Secretary, Education Department, GP Upadhyay informed SummitTimes today, while adding that in the meanwhile, schools have been directed to register with the State Government's online portals to initiate e-education so that students don't miss out on learning because of the lockdown and the Novel Coronavirus situation.

"The opening of schools and colleges across the State may be deferred by 2-3 weeks depending on the COVID-19 situation," the Additional CS said while speaking to SummitTimes.

Schools across the State, it may be recalled, have been closed since 16 March.

In view of the prevailing situation, there was no chance to reopen schools and colleges immediately with the end of

the lockdown, he added.

Meanwhile, school heads have been directed to register their respective schools with State government online portals to initiate e-education for the students across the State.

Already, around 200 Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools have registered with online education portals Sikkim edutech, diksha, Zoom and SERT, he informed, adding that the remaining schools have also been directed to get registered immediately.

He mentioned that the higher education institutions have already initiated online classes.

The Additional CS also informed that 55 scholarship students who had been quarantined at the SICUN facility in Assam Lingzey have completed their 14-day quarantine and will be taken to their respective homes on Wednesday after proper examinations.

Lockdown provisions had mandated this quarantine for the students all of whom are reported to be in good health and



none have displayed any nCoV symptoms. The concerned DCs have been informed about their return home and directed to monitor their health.

Meanwhile, the Additional CS also informed that after a meeting with the Education

Department, it was decided that department personnel be appealed to donate one day's salary to the CM Relief Fund.

He further informed that Rs 60,000 has been transferred to the school management for 12 girls from Sikkim studying at

Him Jyoti in Himachal Pradesh and who are staying back in the hostel there. Other students who are similarly stranded in other parts of the country have also been sent funds from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, he further informed.

Unimpressed, authorities shut Lall Bazaar Goskhan for another fortnight

AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 07 APRIL:

Expressing dissatisfaction with the still unimproved condition of meat stalls in Lall Bazaar Goskhan, the concerned authorities have decided to keep the meat stalls [except the ones selling pork] shut for another 15 days during which the vendors are expected to spruce up the stalls to meet the required hygienic standards.

This decision was taken after a joint inspection by the Mayor, Commissioner and officials of Gangtok Municipal Corporation and officials from Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department and Food Safety Cell of Health Department.

It may be recalled that a similar joint inspection on 31 March had found the stalls in filthy condition and ordered them shut for a week. The vendors were directed to clean the stalls

and ensure that the facility met hygiene and food safety standards. The follow-up inspection today clearly left the authorities unimpressed.

Speaking to media persons after the inspection, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department Additional Director, Madan Shankar, stated that even after a week's time was given, except the stalls selling pork, no improvement was found in the condition of the other meat stalls.

While the pork stalls are stalls will be allowed to open in a couple of days after they had been disinfected, the other stalls will remain shut at least for another 15 days.

"We found that there was not much improvement in the condition, so we have decided to give another chance to them of 15 more days to improve the hygiene and condition of their beef,



buff, chicken and mutton stalls and then we will decide accordingly after a review," he said.

He informed that orders for the pork stalls to open will be issued with-

in a couple of days after the stalls have been disinfected.

He added that two vendors did not even open their stalls for inspection today and have hence been sealed.

Biomedical Waste Management in the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic

ViewPoint

HARI BHAKTA SHARMA [LUTHEL]

We only understand the importance of waste collection services when we miss them, and they are vital elements that uphold the quality and hygiene of the city. Their need is more felt at the time of crises, especially when the crises demand more hygiene and sanitation. The global COVID-19 pandemic is generating tons of medical waste; therefore, experts acknowledge waste collection workers as the second most important human shield to coronavirus, after the health workers. Since, waste collection workers are often exposed to several health risks, including infections; therefore, they are vulnerable parts of the population. They need to be protected, and the government should recognize the critical role they play. For same reason United Kingdom Govt. has granted 'key worker' status to the waste workers which means, education and care provision for their children and family will be continue during this crises so that they will be able to continue their services.

As of today has officially crossed more than 4000 COVID-19 cases, and this number seems to increase further. During the treatment of COVID-19 patient, different types of waste get generated, which needs special attention. The indiscriminate disposal of various items can be a potential source of infection of COVID-19. Rigorous monitoring is required to ensure such waste does not end up infecting others. Also, we need to ensure that people who are at home are disposing of their waste correctly; this is to make ensure that they do not end up passing it to neighbours and the waste collectors. The waste generated during this global pandemic at isolation ward, quarantine facility and home-care are mostly hazardous and biomedical and therefore needs special attention. As per the existing biomedical waste management rule, 2016, bio-medical waste is generated during the diagnosis, treatment or immunization of human beings or animals or in research activities pertaining thereto or in the production or testing of biological. It includes wastes like a human an-

atomical waste, animal waste, microbiology & biotechnology waste, waste sharps, discarded medicines & cytotoxic drugs, soiled waste, solid waste, liquid waste, incineration ash, chemical wastes. These wastes are potentially hazardous because of the potentially infectious as it may pose a severe threat to human health if its management is indiscriminate and unscientific.

Recently, CPCB has issued updated guidelines for biomedical waste management. The updated guidelines are contingency plans that will make sure that no other health risks are added on top of the pandemics. The instructions are in addition to the rules regarding biomedical waste management, 2016. These guidelines though liable to be updated if necessary, are based on current knowledge of COVID-19 and existing practices in the management of infectious waste generated in hospitals while treating viral and other contagious diseases.

Waste management for COVID-19 isolation wards:

1. The bulk of waste is expected from isolation ward where COVID-19 patient is

kept. Keeping this in mind, as a safety measure, the latest guideline by CPCB stressed that a double-layered bags (2 bags) should be used for the collection of waste from COVID-19 isolation wards to ensure adequate strength and no leaks.

2. Prior to handling over to Common Bio-medical Waste Treatment Facility (CBWTF), Collect and store biomedical waste separately. Ensure that the collection bin is labelled as COVID-19 and should be stored independently in a temporary storage room before handing over to the authorized staff of the CBWTF. There should be a separate record of waste generated from COVID-19 isolation wards. The COVID-19 labelled waste can be directly lifted from ward into CBWTF collection van; however, the waste collection bags should be marked as 'COVID-19 waste'. The labelling is to ensure the priority treatment and disposal immediately upon receipt at CBWTF.

3. While the state should immediately report the operation of COVID-19 ward to SP-CBs, former should ensure that the isolation wards are using

dedicated trolleys and collection bins labelled as 'COVID-19 waste'. Likewise, these trolleys should be disinfected with 1% sodium hypochlorite solution.

4. The state should immediately depute sanitation workers separately for biomedical waste management and general solid waste management so that the waste can be collected and transferred timely to the temporary waste storage facility.

5. All the points listed above should be followed at the sample collection centres and laboratories for COVID-19 suspected patients.

WASTE MANAGEMENT FOR COVID-19 QUARANTINE CAMPS/HOMECARE FACILITIES

As compared to isolation wards, less quantity of waste is expected from these facilities; however, the following points need to be followed to ensure safe handling and disposal of waste.

1. Apart from biomedical waste if any should be handled as per solid waste management rule 2016. Biomedical waste should be collected in yellow coloured bags and bins.

Turn Page 2

COVID-19 death toll rises to 114, number of cases climbs to 4,421: Health Ministry

NEW DELHI, APR 7 (PTI): The death toll due to novel coronavirus rose to 114 and the number of cases in the country climbed to 4,421 on Tuesday, according to the Union Health Ministry.

While the number of active COVID-19 cases stood at 3,981, as many as 325 people were cured and discharged, and one had migrated, it stated. The total number of cases include 66 foreign nationals.

According to the ministry's data updated at 9 am, three new deaths were reported from Rajasthan, while Tripura recorded its first coronavirus case.

Maharashtra has reported the most coronavirus deaths at 45, followed by Gujarat at 12, Madhya Pradesh nine, Telangana and Delhi seven each, Punjab six and Tamil Nadu five fatalities.

Karnataka registered four deaths, while West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have recorded three fatalities each. Two deaths each have been reported from Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala. Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana have reported one fatality each, according to the health ministry data.

However, a PTI tally based on figures reported by states directly on Monday night showed at least 138 deaths across the country, while the confirmed cases reached 4,683. Of them, 359 have been cured and discharged.

There has been a lag in the Union Health Ministry figures, compared to the numbers announced by different states, which officials attribute to procedural delays in assigning the cases to individual states.

The highest number of confirmed cases are from Maharashtra at 748, followed by Tamil Nadu at 621 and Delhi with 523 cases. Kerala reported 327 COVID-19 cases, Telangana 321, Uttar Pradesh 305 and Rajasthan 288 cases. Andhra Pradesh reported 226 coronavirus cases.

Novel coronavirus cases have risen to 165 in Madhya Pradesh, 151 in Karnataka and 144 in Gujarat. Jammu and Kashmir has 109 cases, West Bengal has 91, Haryana 90 and Punjab 76 cases of the infection.

Thirty-two people were infected with the virus in Bihar while Uttarakhand has 31 patients and Assam 26. Odisha reported 21 coronavirus cases, Chandigarh 18, Ladakh 14 and Himachal Pradesh 13 cases.

Ten cases each have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Chhattisgarh. Goa has reported seven COVID-19 infections, followed by Puducherry with five cases. Jharkhand has reported four cases and Manipur two. Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have reported one case of the infection each.

"State-wise distribution is subject to further verification and reconciliation," the ministry said on its website.

SBI cuts savings rate by 25 bps to 2.75 pc

NEW DELHI, APR 7

(PTI): The country's

largest lender SBI on Tuesday said it has cut savings rate by 0.25 per cent to 2.75 per cent on all deposits.

The new rate will come into effect from April 15, 2020.

In view of adequate liquidity in the system, SBI realigned its interest rates on Savings Bank Deposits, with effect from April 15, 2020, SBI said in a statement.

The savings rate has been reduced to 2.75 per cent from 3 per cent, it said.

The bank has also reduced the marginal cost of funds

based lending rate (MCLR) by 35 bps across all tenors.

The one-year MCLR comes down to 7.40 per cent per annum from 7.75 per cent per with effect from April 10, 2020, it said in the statement.

It is the 11th consecutive cut in MCLR in 2019-20, the bank said.

The one-year tenor is the benchmark against which most of the consumer loans are priced.

"Consequently, EMIs on eligible home loan accounts (linked to MCLR) will get cheaper by around Rs 24.00 per 1 lakh on a 30 year loan," SBI said.

MP and Minister briefed on West Sikkim's medical preparedness for nCoV challenge

**RUDRA KAUSHIK
GYALSHING, 07 APR:**

Lok Sabha MP, Indra Hang Subba, accompanied by Agriculture Minister Loknath Sharma and PHE Minister Bhim Hang Subba today inspected the District Hospital here and took note of availability of medical facilities there in light of the Novel Coronavirus situation and the lockdown.

CMO [West], Dr Anusha Lama, updated them about the preparedness level and informed that the Health Department has introduced a new helpline to deal with medical emergencies in the district.

"In case of medical emergencies related to pregnant women and infants (below one year),

the patient party can dial 102 to avail ambulance facilities at their doorsteps while for other medical emergencies one can call on 108 to avail the ambulance services," she detailed.

Dr Lama further informed that ambulance services have been made available in all the eight Primary Health Centres of the district.

Provisions for meals for patient parties at the hospital were also discussed given that eateries in the town are closed due to the lockdown.

Minister Loknath Sharma directed the daily meal supplier of the hospital to make provisions to provide meals to people attending to the patients assuring that expenses



towards this service will be taken care of by the Department and the state government.

He also visited various medical units of the hospital and interacted with patients there and

took note of medical facilities being provided to the patients and availability of medicines in the hospital.

Later, the MP and Minister Sharma visited the quarantine centre

established at the hostel of Gyalshing Girls Senior Secondary School where five persons who had returned to Sikkim from other states are lodged.

The MP and Minister interacted with the quar-

antined people and advised them to complete their quarantine term of 14 days.

They also inspected the isolation centre established at the Ayush Hospital.

SIMFED aids Organic Farmers in South Sikkim maintain supplies

NAMCHI, 07 APR [IPR]:

As fourteen days have passed since the announcement of a 21-day nationwide lockdown, South Sikkim is also peacefully observing this period so as to contain the spread of COVID-19. The good news here is that till date zero cases of COVID-19 has been reported in the second smallest state of the country.

Lockdown in general can have an adverse effect in any supply chain may it be economic or access to basic essential items. However, it is extremely laudable of Sikkim State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation Ltd. (SIMFED) particularly of the South District who are efficiently delivering vegetables to the various market areas of the dis-

trict.

Some employees of South Sikkim SIMFED branch is on emergency duty they are in-charge of collecting vegetables from the farmers of the rural areas. The vegetables are then supplied to the vendors in semi urban locations thereby providing an uninterrupted inventory of staple vegetables to the consumers.

SIMFED official from Namchi, Marcus Chettri is visiting vegetable farms on a daily basis at places such as Salley bong, Rabitar, Jawbari, Phalidara, Sadam, Bul-Singtam, Sumbuk and many more. He and his team aids in procurement of greens cultivated in these locality. Seasonal edibles such as Cabbages, Cauliflower, Beans, Carrot, Beet-root, Garlic, Potatoes, Ginger



and other sundry consumable items are purchased from the organic farmers which are then kept at SIMFED outlet at Namchi. Some commodities on demand basis are also sold to vendors who are established at Namchi, Jorethang, Melli and Ravangla.

Currently SIMFED in

the district is daily providing an average quantity of 100-120 kg Cauliflower, 210-220 kg Cabbage, 25-30 kg Carrot, 15-20 kg Broccoli, 20-30 bunch Leafy Vegetables, 110-120 kg Potatoes and 35-40 kg Green Peas.

In this crucial time SIMFED has emerged as

a hero particularly towards the organic farmers of the state. Sikkim has a sustainable economy where major focus is on agriculture and to support the farmers and their produce in this time of crises SIMFED has maintained a supply chain wherein the vegetables are transport-

ed seamlessly by the officials.

This chain also let the farmers a chance to avoid going to the market by selling their agricultural produce to the SIMFED officials from their hamlet thereby maintaining social distancing and other safety precautions.

India to export hydroxychloroquine on case-by-case basis

NEW DELHI, APR 7 (PTI):

India has decided to partially lift the ban on export of paracetamol and anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine in sync with its global commitment to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, officials said on Tuesday. On March 25, India banned export of hydroxychloroquine in the midst of views in some quarters that the drug could be used to fight COVID-19. India is the largest exporter of the drug.

In a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

last week, President Donald Trump sought supply of hydroxychloroquine to the US to treat coronavirus infected people.

On Monday, Trump warned India that the US may retaliate if it did not export hydroxychloroquine despite his personal request.

Hydroxychloroquine is an old and inexpensive drug used to treat malaria. India is the largest producer of the drug globally.

Officials said India would export the drug on a case-by-case basis after meeting all the domestic requirements.

"India has always maintained that the international community must display strong solidarity and cooperation.

This approach also guided our evacuation of nationals of other countries," Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs Anurag Srivastava said.

"In view of the humanitarian aspects of the pandemic, it has been decided that India would licence paracetamol and HCQ (hydroxychloroquine) in appropriate quantities to all our neighbouring countries who are de-

pendent on our capabilities," he said.

The MEA spokesperson was responding to media queries on the issue.

"We will also be supplying these essential drugs to some nations who have been particularly badly affected by the pandemic," said Srivastava.

India is learnt to have received requests from at least 20 countries including its immediate neighbours Sri Lanka and Nepal for supply of hydroxychloroquine.

"Like any responsible government, our first

obligation is to ensure that there are adequate stocks of medicines for the requirement of our own people," the MEA spokesperson said.

In order to ensure this, he explained, some "temporary steps" were taken to restrict exports of a number of pharmaceutical products. He said a comprehensive assessment was carried out about possible requirements of various drugs under different scenarios.

"After having confirmed the availability of medicines for all possible contingencies currently

envisaged, these restrictions have been largely lifted," he said.

He said the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has notified lifting of restrictions on 14 drugs on Monday.

"With regard to paracetamol and hydroxychloroquine, they will be kept in a licensed category and their demand position would be continuously monitored," Srivastava said.

"However, the stock position could allow our companies to meet the export commitments that they had contracted," he added.

Agreement reached between K'taka, Kerala on opening border roads, Centre tells SC

NEW DELHI, APR 7 (PTI):

The Centre informed the Supreme Court on Tuesday that a settlement has been reached between Karnataka and Kerala on lifting the blockade of border roads by the former and parameters for passage of patients for medical treatment at Talapadi border.

The bench said that then it can dispose of a batch of pleas including that of an appeal filed by Karnataka government against the April 1, order of Kerala High Court on the border issue.

On Monday, the Kerala government in its affidavit told the top court that Karnataka's blocking National Highways and border roads due to coronavirus, preventing people's access to medical treatment and move-

ment of essential goods, is violative of fundamental rights of the Citizens. It had said eight lives have been lost till date on account of the blockade of border roads by Karnataka and one person had died after an appeal was filed by Karnataka government in apex court against the High Court order for opening of the borders.

Kerala said that the Union government, under whom the National Highway fall, is duty bound to issue direction to Karnataka to remove such blockade for transporting patients requiring medical attention as well as essential goods to Kerala.

The top court on April 3 asked the Kerala govern-

ment to not to precipitate the issue of opening of borders till further hearing while asking the Chief Secretaries of both the states to hold discussions with Union Health Secretary for amicable settlement of the issue and decide on parameters to be maintained in case of health emergencies.

The Karnataka government's plea filed by advocate Shubhranshu Padhi said, "The issue involved in the present SLP (special leave petition) is with regard to the closure of a road between the State of Karnataka and State of Kerala in order to combat the spread of the pandemic COVID-19... from the bordering Districts of the States."

The plea said the or-

der of the Kerala High Court has been passed wholly without any jurisdiction and is thus liable to be set aside. The state government said that Karnataka has locked down its borders in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 except the movement of essential commodities.

The State of Karnataka had specifically closed the Makutta Check post on the Mysore-Virajapat-Kannur highway. However, the High Court vide the Impugned Order has directed Central Government to intervene and remove the closure on the said road, it said.

The high court on April 1 gave the order on a PIL seeking directions for opening of the roads connecting Kasaragod

in Kerala and Mangaluru in Karnataka, which had been closed by Karnataka in view of the lockdown to check the COVID-19 outbreak.

The court had said the national highways come under the administrative jurisdiction of the central government and that the provisions of the National Highways Act clearly provide for the maintenance of such highways by it.

The arterial roads that connect Mangaluru in Karnataka, to Kasargod in Kerala were part of the National Highway network and it is therefore the duty of the Central Government to ensure that the said roads are kept free of blockades, the court had said.

Seven COVID-19 hotspots identified in Bengal: Mamata

Seven COVID-19 hotspots identified in Bengal: Mamata

KOLKATA, APRIL 7 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said her government has identified seven COVID-19 hotspots in the state and was taking necessary measures to break the cycle of transmission.

Banerjee also said that the death toll in the state has risen to five, while the number of active cases stands at 69. On Tuesday, eight new coronavirus cases were reported.

"We have identified seven COVID-19 hotspots in the state. We are taking appropriate action," Banerjee said without divulging the names of the vulnerable areas.

The chief minister also said that she was weighing the option of providing "limited relaxation" on the work front for unorganised sector workers, who were among the worst hit by the lockdown.

"We are mulling the idea of allowing limited relaxations in some unorganized sectors. We will also allow Kisan Mandi to operate but everyone has to adhere to the social distancing norms," she added.

stocked," he said.

The seizure comprised 9950 pieces of N-95 masks worth Rs 24.87 lakh and 181 litres of hand sanitiser which is valued at Rs 2.75 lakh, the official said, adding that further investigation is underway.

The demand for the protective masks and other such gear has spiked in view of the outbreak of coronavirus.

The arrested men have been identified as Farhan Hussain Roshan Ali Patel (45) and Amir Hussain Zafri (27), both residents of Oshiwara.

Biomedical Waste Management...

2. Quarantine camps/homecare facilities should inform CBWTF operators as and when the waste is generated so that the CBWTF ensured timely collection and disposal at their treatment facility.

3. The urban local bodies (ULBs) should engage CBWTF to pick up any biomedical waste from home-care for suspected patients, and this can be directly from home or authorized/identified collection points.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD (SPCB)/PCCS AND CBWTFs?

SPCBs should ensure that they have a record of COVID-19 treatment wards/quarantine centres/quarantine homes in the state. Furthermore, they should ensure proper collection and disposal of biomedical waste as per biomedical waste management rule, 2016 and additional guidance issued by CPCB with respect to COVID-19 pandemic.

SPCB should allow CBWTFs to operate for extra hours as per requirement. Further, they should not insist on the authorization of quarantine camps as such facility does not qualify as health facilities. However, it may allow CBWTFs to collect biomedical waste as and when required.

CBWTFs should report the receipt of COVID-19 waste. They should ensure regular sanitization of workers involved in handling and collection of COVID-19 waste. The workers involved in the collection, transfer and treatment of COVID-19 waste should be provided with adequate PPEs including layers mask, splash-proof aprons/gowns, nitrile gloves, gumboots and safety goggles. The dedicated vehicle used for the collection of COVID-19 waste should be labelled as such. It should be sanitized with sodium hypochlorite after every trip. CBWTFs should ensure that COVID-19 waste is disposed-off immediately upon receipt at the facility while maintaining its record.

[the writer is a Research Scholar with Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, IIT Kharagpur]

~ SummitTIMES ~
CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

Sajong Primary School opens Whatsapp classroom

SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 07 APR:

The lockdown has disrupted many set patterns, none as severely as education, with schools in Sikkim having been shut since 16 March last month. With schools unlikely to open anytime soon after the lockdown ends, teachers are being required to start thinking out of the box to ensure

that learning does not suffer too much.

One such effort is seen at Govt Primary School, Sajong, in East Sikkim, which is keeping in touch with students over Whatsapp and ensuring that their education continues.

The initiative has been spearheaded by Headmaster CM Chettri

[Mani Roka] and his team of eight teachers.

The Headmaster started a group and added parents of all the 23 students and teachers.

On this group, the subject teachers post homework at frequent intervals for students who too are responding well through videos, photographs and home assignments.



“It has been a great success and we are working with students through a virtual classroom. This homework group was created the day after the schools were closed because of the Novel Coronavirus situation,” Mr Chettri informs.

Similar options have been taken by schools across the state.

Forest personnel reinforce checks against human-to-animal nCoV transmission and conflicts

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 APR:

Following reports of transmission of Coronavirus to a Tiger in a United States zoo, Sikkim has taken preventive measures to stop such human-to-animal transmission and vice versa by imposing restrictions on entry to all national parks, sanctuaries and forest areas in the State. Meanwhile, standard protocol has also been maintained at the Himalayan Zoological Park at Bulbuley in East Sikkim.

A press release from Forest Department informs that there have been cited instances of coronavirus from animals to humans and vice versa, and in keeping with a recent direction of the Government of India, it has been found necessary to reduce human-wildlife interface as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19 in Sikkim.

“Sikkim has so far no COVID-19 cases and we

PROTOCOL MAINTAINED IN THE HIMALAYAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK, BULBULAY

1. Entry for all visitors has been closed.
2. All the enclosures are been cleaned and sanitized [fumigated] on regular basis.
3. All the zoo keepers are strictly using gloves and masks at all times during feeding.
4. All the enclosures have been provided with footbath [potassium permanganate].
5. Feed so provided are checked and cleaned before sending it for feeding to animals.
6. Animal behaviour are been monitored on regular basis by the zoologist / Vet.
7. Zoo is also equipped with quarantine ward if any animals get infected and can be isolated and treated.
8. We have well equipped Zoo hospital to take any case of emergency treatment of ant zoo or rescued animals.
9. Directions and developments in this regard from Central Zoo Authority are followed and factored in our zoo procedures and protocols.

must strive to maintain this status. This cannot be done without support and co-operation of all people of Sikkim,” the release stresses.

The release further informs that Forest Department personnel have been continuously patrolling forest areas and river banks along with Police department personnel to check against entry into forest areas.

“The Forest Department already has a task

force in place comprising of field managers, veterinary doctors, frontline staff to manage any situation of human-wildlife conflict. We have an animal treatment facility and a zoo hospital at the Himalayan Zoological Park in Bulbuley and all staff are on high alert,” the release adds.

It is informed that Himalayan Zoological Park was taking all measures to sanitize enclosures and adequate protection

has been given to animal handlers there.

Animal feed is also being monitored and administered taking all due sanitary precautions and standard protocols were being followed as far as possible for sanitization of animals and also maintaining social distancing among the Protected Area and Zoo staff so that any chance of transmission of virus is reduced.

The release further mentions that EDCs and

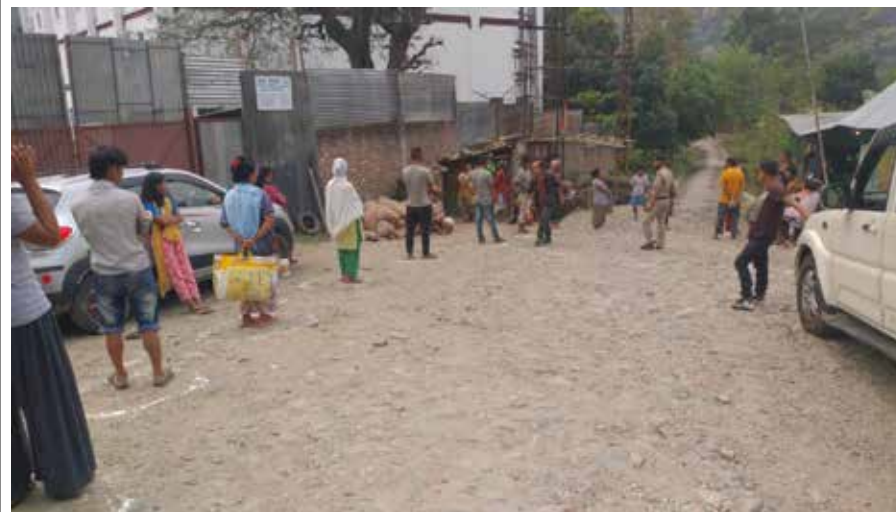
JFMCs and SHGs have also been roped in to help forest staff and for awareness generation and support.

It is added that sufficient stock of essential items, drugs and medicines for wildlife operations was also being maintained and high-end equipment like Gut-50 and DAN inject guns, customised enclosure for carrying rescued animals with necessary support has been maintained.

Forest officials and staff are working in collaboration with district officers like police personnel, DC office and Panchayats, it is added.

The Department adds that in the current lockdown situation, there have been instances of wild animals straying into urban areas and thus it was essential that the public should take note of such situations and cooperate with the Department. The department has also thanked the civil society and people of Sikkim for supporting the department.

Distribution of essential commodities in South Sikkim



NAMCHI, 07 APR [IPR]: South District Administration, through its various departments, has been actively and successfully engaged in the distribution of essential commodities and relief materials in the district for the past few days.

Proper protocol of social distancing and hygiene is being ensured while also making certain that these commodities are being distributed through a system of tokens/ coupons in order to avoid overcrowding.

Similarly, the food materials such as rice, daal, edible oils, salt and potatoes are being sent to all notified fair price shops from the food godowns for further distribution to the needy ones of rural and urban households under South district.

REPORT FAKE NEWS

The fake news section in the website www.covid19sikkim.org shall display all the fake news related to the Government of Sikkim.

The fake news are verified and published by the fact finding team. Citizens can also report fake news at the said website under the register & report link in the fake news section. The citizen has to register once with the email ID which shall act as the username for login and password. After registration, a dashboard has been created wherein the citizen can report fake news by sharing the

link or uploading videos.

The uploaded contents shall be verified and published in the website for general information of the public. It may be noted here that the identity of the reporter shall be kept confidential. It is requested that the citizens should participate in this exercise and submit fake news for betterment of the society. It is also advised that publishing of fake news is a punishable offence under the disaster management Act.

*Information & Public Relations Department
Government of Sikkim*

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- 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.



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WEST : 9593297809
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SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

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

Cops on lockdown duty attacked in Bhopal, five arrested

BHOPAL, APR 7 (PTI): Five persons were arrested on Tuesday after a mob attacked two policemen on lockdown enforcement duty in the Old City area here, city police said.

Stating that attacks on police personnel would not be tolerated, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the accused would be tried under the stringent National Security Act (NSA).

The police, meanwhile, booked Shahid Kabootar (35), a history-sheeter who is the main accused, under the NSA while pressing relevant IPC sections for assault against others.

The incident took place in Islam Nagar area

around 10 on Monday night, said inspector D P Singh of Talaiya police station.

Constable Laxman Yadav was stabbed in the neck with a knife while constable Satish Kumar sustained a stab wound in his left hand. Both were undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the city, he said.

Those involved in the attack included Kabootar who has a past criminal record and Mohsin Kachori (26), he said.

Kachori fled from the spot after the incident, inspector Singh added.

“We have arrested five men including Kabootar. The NSA has been invoked against Kabootar,” the police official said.

cial said.

“A case has been registered against total of 19 persons, some of whom have been identified. They attacked the policemen with knives, sticks and stones around 10 pm in Islam Nagar locality,” he said.

Chief Minister Chouhan said attacks on police personnel who are working day and night to protect people during lockdown would not be tolerated.

“Kabootar or Kachori, no one will be spared. The goons and malefactors desperately need to be taught a lesson,” he tweeted.

“These goons will be tried under the National Security Act,” the chief minister added.

SBI-Mangan staff arrange essential supplies for 30 families in need

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 APR:

The staff at State Bank of India's Mangan branch have pooled in their personal resources and arranged essential provisions for 30 underprivileged families from Hee-Gyathang, Nampatam and Ravong villages in North Sikkim.

The SBI-Mangan team reached supplied of rice, daal, salt and mustard oil to the families today, it is informed.

These are remote villages, and accessing provisions is made difficult not only by the lockdown, but also the finances at the disposal of these families, which

is why the SBI-Mangan team got together to help them out.

The provisions were taken till the road-end where the villagers arrived to collect the provisions, it is informed. The SBI-Mangan staff have also thanked the concerned panchayats for coordinating the entire effort.

This was a joint effort of SBI-Mangan, it is informed, towards which every employee of the Branch contributed. The team was led by Branch Manager Arvind Rajak and FO Wang T Bhutia along with few other staff members, it is added.

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ECoR serves food to more than 23,000 people

BHUBANESWAR, APR 7 (PTI): The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has provided food to more than 23,000 poor and needy people under its jurisdiction during last 10-days in the wake of nationwide lockdown, an official said.

As per the directions of the Ministry of Railways, ECoR has taken steps to provide bulk food with paper plates at different important stations under its jurisdiction through Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) base kitchen at

Khurda Road and Food Court at Visakhapatnam in the wake of COVID-19 crisis, the official said.

All the agencies of ECoR including Railway Protection Force (RPF) have also been involved in a big way in the food distribution to the needy people in station areas under ECoR jurisdiction.

These apart, different NGOs, ECoRWWO (ECoR Women's Welfare Organisation), Railway employees have also come forward to distribute food, he said. From lemon rice in the south to khich-

di-chokha in the east and kadi chawal in the north, IRCTC is serving a variety of meals keeping in mind the local taste buds of the people since the lockdown was announced.

Till April 6, IRCTC has distributed 16,400 meals which are being prepared from Khurda Road base kitchen and Visakhapatnam food court. Altogether, IRCTC has prepared and served 16,400 meals from March 30, the ECoR Spokesperson said.

Different NGOs like Marwari Yuva Mach, Kumud Pahad Surakhya

Samittee, ECoRWWO/ Sambalpur Unit have also been involved along with RPF in distribution of 729 meals at Sambalpur, Titilagarh, Balangir stations.

While RPF distributed 4,318 meals, NGOs provided 2,287 meals at various stations, he said.

Food packets/meals are also being distributed to the needy people at Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Brahmapur, Paradeep, Khurda Road, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram stations by involving IRCTC and NGOs, he added.

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Let's Accept it. We Are Racist *And because we are also victims of prejudices, let us resolve to be better*

So, northeasterners, rather anyone with “chinky” features, are being heckled elsewhere in the country with “Corona” catcalls, being barred from entering shops and in worse scenarios, being spat upon. Unequivocally shameful ignorance and racism. And while this plays out, one is also reminded of a joker who claimed that Indians are not racist. And what did he offer up as proof? The fact that we continue to live with South Indians who are also black! [This was in the context of attacks on Africans in cities across the country some years back]. After we are done laughing at this artless attempt at claiming sensitivity, and wondering in which alternate reality such clear evidence of bigotry can be used to claim openness, we need to stare deep into the mirror and confront the monster that gets reflected back.

We need to begin by accepting that we all carry our prejudices around with us. Much of it, we have imbibed subconsciously through stray comments and smart quips which are thrown around in casual conversations. This condition, we share with the rest of humanity, because that is essentially how we engage with others – by pigeonholing them, caricaturizing them, even demonizing them. Eventually though, people grow up. They recognize the shallowness of their prejudices as they meet more people and get exposed to more diversity. Some others grow more confident, and as they grow in confidence, they stop being fearful of others. As for the prejudices we grow up with, most of these are harmless generalizations and misconceptions which even the first flush of education can correct, but when they remain the only introductions one is exposed to, they harden into beliefs and convictions. These convictions become a dangerous liability when the minds which hold them need to negotiate with the others. Africans in India are suffering what the Northeasterners face in the mainland and what the “Indians” experience in the North-East. Most of Delhi had remained an island of North Indianess until a few decades ago when the number of Chinkies arriving in the capital increased substantially. Neither the northeasterners, nor the North Indians were eased into each other's company nor were they really informed in any detail about each other. We all had our prejudices though, so we began engaging with each other through these prisms. We remained ignorant and blundered about poorly informed and preferred to find our own communes even it was possible to become cosmopolitan. Our collective prejudices often congealed into racist moments which primarily were to our detriment because they kept us ignorant, and often, when it found violent expressions pulled others into its blinkered vortex as well. The degrees and magnitude of this violence might differ from place to place, but they have happened everywhere – in Sikkim, in Nagaland, in Manipur, in Assam, in Maharashtra, in Bengaluru, in Delhi, Mumbai... you get the drift.

We cannot, not as Indians, not as Northeasterners (whatever that means), not as Biharis, claim that we cannot be racist because we are and have been victims of racism ourselves. We have to instead resolve that because we have suffered prejudice, we need to be better – better informed, better behaved... better humans.

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How Mandela stayed fit: from his ‘matchbox’ Soweto home to a prison cell

GAVIN EVANS
THECONVERSATION.COM

February 15, 1990: Nelson Mandela wakes as always at 5am and begins his hour-long exercise routine. The difference this time is that instead of a prison cell, his gym is the front room of his “matchbox” house – so-called for its small size – at 8115 Vilakazi Street, Soweto. And soon he'll be besieged by journalists, well-wishers, diplomats and family members.

I get to interview him a few hours later to ask about his plans. His answers are clear and concise and I'm too nervous to probe deeper. But towards the end I toss in a question about boxing, and his stern demeanour changes. He beams with delight and begins to chat about his favourite fighters and how he followed the sport in prison.

Mandela started boxing as a student at Fort Hare University, and then trained more seriously when studying, working and struggling in Johannesburg during the 1940s and 50s, although he didn't fight competitively and was modest about his prowess. “I was never an outstanding boxer,” he said in his autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom. “I was in the heavyweight division, and I had neither enough power to compensate for my lack of speed nor enough speed to make up for my lack of power.”

What he relished about it was the rigour of training, a routine periodically broken by arrest and the demands of the “struggle”, but not often. He wrote:

“I unleashed my anger and frustration on a punchbag rather than taking it out on a comrade or even a policeman.”

REFUGE IN EXERCISE

Mandela believed this routine was the key to both physical health and peace of mind.

“Exercise dissipates tension, and tension is the enemy of serenity. I found that I worked better and



thought more clearly when I was in good physical condition, and so training became one of the inflexible disciplines of my life.”

Four mornings a week he'd set off for a run and three evenings a week he'd work out in a Soweto boxing gym – his way of losing himself “in something that was not the struggle”. He said he'd wake up the next morning feeling refreshed – “mentally and physically lighter” and “ready to take up the fight again”.

From 1960 Mandela led the underground campaign of the African National Congress's military wing, umKhonto weSizwe, moving around the country disguised as a chauffeur, with trips abroad to rally support, so his boxing training became sporadic. The “Black Pimpernel”, as he was dubbed, was arrested in 1962 – the result of a tip-off to the apartheid police from the CIA, it has since emerged – and spent the next 27-and-a-half years in jail, 18 of them on Robben Island.

LIFE BEHIND BARS

When Mandela arrived, a prison warden sneered: “This is the Island. This is where you will die.”

Part of the challenge was getting used to monotony. As he put it:

“Prison life is about routine: each day like the one before; each week like the one before it, so that the

months and years blend into each other.”

The daily routine of Prisoner 46664 consisted of gruelling manual labour – working in a quarry to dig out limestone and using heavy hammers to smash rocks into gravel. This was draining but he decided not to use it as an excuse to abandon his exercise regime. From then on it started at 5am and was carried out in a damp 2.1m squared cell rather than a sweat-soaked Soweto boxing gym. “I attempted to follow my old boxing routine of doing roadwork and muscle-building,” he said.

He'd begin with running on the spot for 45 minutes, followed by 100 fingertip push-ups, 200 sit-ups, 50 deep knee-bends and calisthenic exercises learnt from his gym training (in those days, and even today, this would include star jumps and ‘burpees’ – where you start upright, move down into a squat position, kick your feet back, return to squat and stand up).

Mandela would do this Mondays to Thursdays, and then rest for three days. This continued even during his several spells in solitary confinement.

BEATING TB

In 1988, aged 70, he contract-

ed tuberculosis, exacerbated by the damp cell, and was admitted to hospital, coughing blood. He was moved to a prison warder's house in Victor Verster Prison near Paarl and soon resumed a truncated version of his exercise programme, which now included laps of the prison swimming pool.

He was released from prison, along with other political prisoners, on 11 February 1990, nine days after the African National Congress and other liberation movements were unbanned by the apartheid government. He went on to become the first president of a democratic South Africa, from 1994 to 1999.

Inevitably as he reached his 80s, his exercise routine was moderated but never abandoned. He died on 5 December 2013, aged 95, of a respiratory infection.

Mandela believed a lifetime's habit of exercise helped him to survive prison, ready for the challenges that lay ahead. “In prison, having an outlet for my frustrations was absolutely essential,” he said – words that might be taken to heart by those facing months of coronavirus-prompted lockdowns in cramped conditions.

[the writer is Lecturer, Culture and Media department, Birkbeck, University of London]

ICU ventilators: What they are, how they work and why it's hard to make more

BERTO PANDOLFO
THECONVERSATION.COM

Around the world, people are racing to design and manufacture much-needed ventilators to address a global lack of supply. One New York hospital has reportedly attempted treating two patients per ventilator out of desperation.

On March 26, a joint statement published by the American Society of Anaesthesiologists advised in regards to COVID-19 patients that: “... sharing mechanical ventilators should not be attempted because it cannot be done safely with current equipment.”

Ventilators help a patient breathe by assisting the lungs to inhale and exhale air. These machines are used to treat patients suffering from conditions including pneumonia, brain injury and stroke.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus (which causes the COVID-19 disease) attacks the respiratory system. When infected, a patient's ability to breathe is compromised. In mild cases, breathing or respiratory support can be provided using noninvasive means, such as delivering oxygen-rich air through a face mask.

In more severe cases, when a patient suffers acute respiratory distress, an invasive form of respiratory support is required. This is provided through an artificial airway. A tube attached to a ventilator is inserted into the patient's mouth or nose (and down the windpipe), or via a surgical-made hole in the neck.

BREATHE IN, BREATHE OUT

The principal function of a ventilator is to pump or blow oxygen-rich air into the lungs; this is referred to as “oxygenation”. Ventilators also assist in the removal of carbon dioxide from the lungs, and this is referred to as “ventilation”.

One basic type of ventilator is the Bag Valve Mask (BVM). The BVM, also known as the Ambu Bag, is operated manually by a person squeezing a self-inflating bladder. This is an essential tool for ambulance crews, first responders and critical care units. It is light, compact and easy to use.

However, in situations where a steady and controlled air exchange (oxygen in, carbon dioxide out) is needed, mechanical ventilators are required. These look like a quintessential medical product.

A mechanical ventilator comprises a computerised box that sits on top of a mobile trolley. There is an array of screens, dials, data cables, power cords and gas tubes. Modern mechanical ventilators are highly complex and sophisticated pieces of equipment. Their increased complexity in comparison with the Ambu Bag allows a superior level of care.

The extra features and control measures of mechanical ventilators allow adjustments such as:

- how long inhalation for a patient lasts
- how much air is received
- how often air is received
- the concentration of oxygen within the air (air is about 21% oxygen, but in some cases the percentage of oxygen is increased)
- how much pressure the patient's lungs are inflated to
- the temperature and humidity of the air.

VENTILATORS – A DIY PROJECT?

Making a mechanical ventilator requires considerable expertise in research, design and manufacturing. To make a commercial mechanical ventilator means ensuring reliability, serviceability and adherence to strict regulatory standards.

All of this is vital, as mechanical ventilators are often used in life and death situations. And this is why, like other specialist medical devices, they are not cheap. One mechanical ventilator can cost up to US\$50,000 (about A\$82,000).

Responding to a global need in mechanical ventilators, various groups from around the world have emerged with alternative ventilator designs, each claiming their design works and can be manufactured quickly and cheaply.

A number of these DIY mechanical ventilators are based on the Ambu Bag design, including open lung ventilation and proposals from Triple

8 Racing, Richard Branson's aerospace company Virgin Orbit and British home and garden appliance company Gtech.

However, instead of relying on manual activation like the Ambu Bag bladder, these designs use mechanical automation to press and release the bladder at desired intervals. Some basic controls are available, but the most significant advantage is their inherent simplicity.

BIG PLAYERS JOIN THE RACE

More complex ventilator proposals have also appeared. The Mechanical Ventilator Milano (MVM) was inspired by a 1960s design and uses the pressurised medical oxygen available in hospitals to drive the ventilator. This simplifies the unit considerably, as it doesn't need a motor.

The MVM was designed by more than one hundred academics and researchers from around the world. It even features a control system enabled through wifi connectivity.

One proposal that more closely mirrors existing ventilators was developed by Dyson, following an urgent request from British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was moved to ICU last night as he battles COVID-19. The Dyson ventilator, unsurprisingly, incorporates a motor from one of its iconic vacuum cleaners.

Dyson is an internationally recognised design and manufacturing company. Pivoting its resources to a mechanical ventilator is not as difficult as it would be for other companies. After all, managing the movement of air is a core function of Dyson's products (mainly vacuum cleaners, fans and hair dryers).

Importantly, Dyson will only release its ventilator once it meets British health authority specifications.

But while the race to design and manufacture much-needed ventilators continues, health workers on the front lines must make do with what they have. Let's hope these collective efforts can soon alleviate some of their stress.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer Product Design, University of Technology Sydney]

Book looks at murky world of black-market art

NEW DELHI, APR 7 (PTI): Artefacts have been smuggled out of India since colonial times and author Shobha Nihalani addresses the issue of illegal art trade and ways to preserve heritage in her new book.

Set in Southeast Asia and India, "The Blue Jade" took shape slowly while Nihalani researched the topic of art crime.

Antiquities smuggling is one of the world's most profitable illegal trades, and artefacts have been smuggled out of India since colonial times, she says.

Nihalani also says she is impressed by China's cultural heritage.

"The illegal art trade is also of grave concern for the Chinese authorities. In 'The Blue Jade' I wanted to showcase this commonality between both India and China, in terms of their need to preserve their rich heritage," says.

The novel looks at the murky world of black-market art set against the historical backdrop in the times of legendary princess-saint Mirabai.

Neelam, starting her career as an art

curator in Hong Kong, discovers a precious relic hidden inside a statue of Mirabai. The relic turns out to be the most sought-after blue jade pendant, long thought lost.

Neelam must complete her family's unfinished mission of returning the jade safely to the Indian monument where it belongs. But this is no simple task, she must outrun a deadly ring of smugglers who are after the prized blue pendant.

As she travels through India, she trails the fabled journey of Mirabai, in a mystical link of history and present day.

Nihalani, who usually writes in the genre of thrillers, says the characters in her books face many obstacles - some are pushed to the edge, and are tested emotionally and physically.

"They are troubled souls. They have to fight their own darkness with every ounce of strength they have. Overcoming their personal demons and facing their nemesis give them a chance to prove that they can overcome any dilemma purely on will-power and faith within," she says.

Sundarbans' unique location to protect its tigers from COVID-19, say wildlife experts

PRADIPTA TAPADAR

KOLKATA, APR 7 (PTI):

After reports of a tiger testing positive for COVID-19 in the US set alarm bells ringing across the globe, wildlife experts in the country have dismissed the possibility of the big cats contracting the disease at Sundarbans on account of the forest's geographical location.

As per the latest tiger census report, the biosphere reserve in south Bengal has 88 Royal Bengal Tigers.

Pranav Chanchani, the coordinator of WWF-India's Tiger Conservation Programme, said the unique geographical location and the topography of the reserve is an advantage that the Sundarbans' big cats have over other tiger populations.

"Poaching and climate change continue to pose threats, but tigers in Sundarbans are not exactly vulnerable to coronavirus infection. That said, it's always wise to take precautions," Chanchani noted.

The reserve authorities, however, are



not taking chances and were monitoring the behaviour of all 88 tigers round the clock.

The NTCA, in view of the reports from Bronx zoo in the US, has sound-ed alerts for all tiger habitats in India, advising isolation for sick animals and personal protection equipment for keepers.

"Given the topography of Sundarbans, we know that the tigers are safe. Nonetheless, we have enhanced our 24x7 vigil as we do not want to take risks. All entry and

exit points have been sealed," S Kulandivel, the joint director of the biosphere reserve, told PTI.

The noted tiger expert also said that human activities and interactions are a rarity at the Sundarbans -- the largest single block of tidal, halophytic mangrove forests in the world -- and that would definitely act as a deterrent against the disease.

"One can only enter the mangrove forests via a creek or a narrow water channel. Common people

or for that matter wildlife officials would not want to go near a wild animal. So the question of getting into Sundarbans and transmission of the virus from humans is unlikely. Still, we aren't taking any chances and have beefed up security," he said.

The forest officials along with the BSF's water patrol unit have tightened vigil across the reserve, with boats guarding the entry and exits points of the estuaries.

suits while visiting the jungles," Sinha told PTI.

A task force, comprising field managers, forest personnel and veterinary doctors, has been constituted to manage crisis situations, if any, he said.

Bengal tigers - one of the most endangered species in the world had been battling loss of habitat, poaching and climate change for several decades now, despite its one-of-a-kind ecosystem.

According to state forest minister Rajib Banerjee, steps have been taken to set up facilities for emergency treatment of animals and guidelines have been laid down regarding the movement of staff and villagers in and around the Sundarbans.

Spread over 10,000 sqkm - 4000 sqkm in West Bengal, the rest in Bangladesh -- Sundarbans was declared UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

Apart from tigers, the mangrove reserve is also home to a variety of birds and reptiles, including the salt-water crocodile.

Odisha reports first COVID-19 death

BHUBANESWAR, APR 7 (PTI): Odisha reported its first COVID-19 fatality as a 72-year-old man infected with coronavirus died, officials said on Tuesday.

The victim had died on Monday and the report confirming that he tested positive for the virus arrived on Tuesday.

The man from Jharpada locality in Bhubaneswar was admitted to AIIMS in the Odisha capital on April 4 with complaint of respiratory distress, they said.

The patient who had a history of chronic hypertension died on April 6, the Health and Family Welfare department

tweeted, adding contact tracing and containment is going on.

Meanwhile, a fresh COVID-19 case was confirmed in Bhubaneswar during the day.

The man (45) belonged to Madhusudan Nagar, Unit IV in the state capital, the health department said on Twitter.

It was not immediately known whether he had any recent travel history.

With this, the number of coronavirus cases in the state has gone up to 42.

The fresh cases came to light a day after a 32-year-old man from Kendrapara district having travel history to

Dubai tested positive of novel coronavirus on Monday.

The man had returned from Dubai on March 24, an official said, adding on his return from Dubai, he stayed at the house of a friend in Bhubaneswar before visiting his native place in Kendrapara district.

Does the amount of virus you are exposed to determine how sick you'll get?

SARAH L CADDY
THECONVERSATION.COM

Healthcare workers are likely to be in contact with many COVID-19 patients every day. Being in contact with more people with the disease means that, in theory, they will be exposed to higher doses of the coronavirus over time. Does that mean they are at greater risk of contracting the disease, as reports from some countries suggest?

We know for some diseases that the dose of virus a person is exposed to will directly correlate with how severe the disease is. A good example of this is influenza. A 2015 study from the US showed that the higher the dose of influenza virus given to healthy volunteers, the worse their symptoms. Viruses are tiny particles that must get into our cells in order to replicate, so the logic is that the more starting virus particles there are, the more cells will be infected.

However, viruses replicate exponentially. A single infected cell can produce hundreds, if not thousands, of copies of the particle. This means that for some viruses, even a tiny dose of virus is enough to cause an infection. For example, for half the population, it takes just 18 particles of norovirus to cause an infection. This can lead to the classic clinical



signs of vomiting and diarrhoea. In such infections, the virus replicates so fast that the starting dose can become much less relevant.

Is the initial dose of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) related to the disease severity? At the moment, we just don't know. The only way to answer this question definitively is with "experimental challenge studies", which involves intentionally infecting healthy volunteers in order to study diseases and their treatments. These would be ethically questionable because of the potential severity of the disease.

Once a patient is infected, it is relatively straightforward to measure how much virus they are making - a value known as the "viral load". This is because the standard international test for coronavirus is quan-

titative. Instead of just a positive or a negative result, diagnostic teams also get a number from zero to 40. This number is known as the Ct value or threshold cycle.

Counter-intuitively, the lower the number, the more virus a patient sample has. Any number less than 15 corresponds to very high levels of virus, whereas samples greater than 35 only have low quantities of virus.

In the absence of infectious dose data, researchers have been trying to determine whether a high viral load corresponds to worse illness. A report from China suggested that there is no difference between how much coronavirus a person is exposed to and how sick they get. But another report showed that patients with milder disease had lower levels of the virus.

OTHER FACTORS TO

CONSIDER

It is important to bear in mind that the amount of virus it takes to cause infection is only one part of the story. How the body responds to the virus can also be critical. This is because the immune response to a virus can be both beneficial and harmful. If the immune system isn't adequately activated, the virus can replicate faster. On the other hand, if the immune system is over-activated, it can damage healthy tissues.

There is a long list of medical conditions that can increase the chances of having a severe case of COVID-19, from diabetes to high blood pressure. But what about factors such as exhaustion or extreme stress? We expect many frontline medical staff to be under significant pressure in the coming weeks and months; could this affect their

susceptibility?

Sleep deprivation has been shown to affect your chances of getting infected with rhinovirus, also known as the common cold virus. Scientists in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, monitored sleep patterns in 164 adults over a week and then exposed them all to rhinovirus. Those people who slept fewer than five hours a night were significantly more likely to develop a cold than those who slept seven or more hours.

We don't know whether these findings can be applied to SARS-CoV-2 as the new coronavirus is very different from rhinovirus. But we can speculate that the immune responses of severely overworked healthcare workers will not be optimal compared with a well-rested person at home. This could be an additional factor explaining why more frontline staff are seemingly becoming infected with COVID-19.

Despite all these uncertainties, of course, it is still essential for healthcare workers to minimise exposure to the virus as much as possible. From wearing as much protective equipment as available to practising social distancing with colleagues - every measure will count.

[The writer is Clinical Research Fellow in Viral Immunology and Veterinary Surgeon, University of Cambridge]

Collins offers free access to textbooks for classes 1-8

NEW DELHI, APR 7

(PTI): In some good news for parents, Collins Learning has made free online access to student textbooks that combine all subjects in a single grade e-book, for classes 1 through 8 during the lockdown period.

Across the country, parents are settling into the idea that the current coronavirus outbreak will require many to take over the responsibility of their children's studies, a statement by Collins Learning said.

Collins Digital Home Learning integrates learning and evaluation in an easy-to-use digital blended learning solution. Parents now can get free material on the platform, with various interactive activities and learning tools designed to keep the child engaged while learning supported by many hours of animations and videos.

Talking about the initiative, HarperCollins India CEO Ananth Padmanabhan says, "These new digital textbooks for core subjects English, Maths and Science have

many hours of learning and fun including animations, videos, worksheets and practice material, along with a free dictionary."

With a simple child-friendly interface and a newly created multi-subject textbook for each age group between classes 1 and 8, these books will help the child continue learning, he adds.

Collins is the educational publishing division of HarperCollins Publishers and strives to promote holistic development of children of all ages.

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SummitTIMES

Chinese football agonises over wage cuts in face of coronavirus

SHANGHAI, APR 7 (AFP): Chinese Super League (CSL) players were under growing pressure Tuesday to take a pay cut in line with the likes of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, as coronavirus hits football hard.

The CSL has some of the best-paid coaches and players in the world with Shanghai SIPG's Brazilian attacking midfielder Oscar reportedly earning nearly USD 30 million a year.

However, while many CSL players have donated masks and other equipment in the fight against the pandemic, which has caused all football to stop, there is no unified response.

The CSL season was supposed to begin on February 22 but was indefinitely postponed because of the outbreak, which began in China in December before spreading worldwide.

The campaign is unlikely to begin before late May at the earliest even though China says that the number of locally transmitted infections and deaths has dwindled.

State-run Xinhua news agency published a lengthy article debating whether CSL clubs should follow Messi's Barcelona and Ronaldo's Juventus in temporarily cutting salaries by as much as 70 per cent.

Bayern Munich's players have also agreed to take a pay cut, as have those at other clubs in the Bundesliga, while a similar argument is raging in the English Premier League.

A video conference involving CSL clubs on Thursday will likely see salary cuts discussed, the Beijing News said.

Other media went further, saying that a

salary reduction will definitely be broached in Chinese Football Association (CFA) talks this week.

Xinhua cited online polls of fans showing that the overwhelming majority -- in one instance 90 per cent of respondents -- were in favour of a pay cut.

But it noted that some fans are against reducing salaries because, unlike in suspended European leagues, CSL teams are already in training for the new season even though it has no start date.

Xinhua quoted one CSL club as being "inclined to cut pay" but is awaiting guidance from the CFA and FIFA.

"All clubs are watching, the problem is that no one wants to be the first," the news agency cited another as saying.

An opinion piece in the Oriental Sports Daily argued that with almost all industries badly affected by coronavirus, it was unfair to single out footballers.

"Many people (in China) are very resentful of Chinese football, saying that these people have taken so much money... and should use their salaries to pay more to scientists and doctors, but this is a misunderstanding," wrote Ge Aiping.

"I haven't seen any news of a Chinese Super League player who proposed a voluntary pay cut.

"(But) money is not easy to earn and if you want to give it out, you really need to struggle with yourself." Chinese football sprang to prominence in recent years by dishing out world-leading wages to foreign players and coaches, but the CFA has since reined in spending.

Spotting talent was my forte, found teenager Virat exceptionally talented: Vengsarkar

KUSHAN SARKAR

NEW DELHI, APR 7 (PTI): He remains India's best chairman of selectors by a distance for his sheer ability to spot talent and Dilip Vengsarkar always knew that Virat Kohli was "exceptional" when he first saw the Indian captain in age-group cricket.

The former skipper's tenure as chairman of the national selection committee between 2006-08 is often cited as a benchmark for all those who came after him as he backed a very raw Kohli and promoted Mahendra Singh Dhoni to captaincy. "Selecting talent was my forte. I will tell you something. You might be good at spotting talent but what you do after spotting is very important. If someone is talented, you have to induct him and give him chances," Vengsarkar, who turned 64 on Monday, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

Vengsarkar believes that he was able to do justice to the chairman's post because of the time he spent as head of BC-Cl's now defunct Talent Research Development



Wing (TRDW) which found the gem called Dhoni.

When talking about Kohli, one could sense the pride in his voice as he was the one who picked the feisty batsman after an Emerging India team's tour of Australia where the current captain was even ready to open the innings on the chairman's call. The 'Colonel' liked his attitude.

"I have watched a lot of U-16 and U-19s as TRDW chairman and watched Virat a lot during his junior cricket days. So when I became chairman of selection committee, we picked him for an Emerging Tour of Australia. I was there

and when I saw him bat, I knew he is ready for big time cricket," Vengsarkar recalled.

So was he convinced that this is the guy who would play 15 years for India? Vengsarkar gave a different reply.

"You can never be sure whether someone will go on to play that long. What I saw was an exceptional talent and if you have an eye, you would know which players are more likely to succeed at the highest level.

"You need to have something extra. Virat had that," the former India captain said.

"...every selector must have courage and conviction along with eye

for talent. If you are convinced about someone, you have to back him to the hilt. That's what good selectors do," he said.

Was there any pressure on him to not select Kohli, whose attitude then was questioned in all quarters?

"I don't think anybody pressurised me. I was convinced that I had picked a guy who had exceptional talent at that point of time. I knew he was a tremendous player who needed backing."

There is a funny story how Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who was 21 at that time, was inducted into the TRDW scheme despite the policy of having only U-19 play-

ers. rules shouldn't come in the way of a talented player.

He has immense respect for the late Jagmohan Dalmiya, who started the TRDW scheme which became defunct after he lost the elections.

"Once Mr Dalmiya lost elections, they discontinued the TRDW thing. Extremely unfortunate as players who were spotted and sent to NCA became big stars.

"In fact, the players I selected then gave me an idea of bench strength when I became head of selection committee. That's how useful TRDW was."

Talk about NCA and Vengsarkar is not happy that from a Centre of Excellence, it has turned into a rehab facility for injured players.

"NCA at that point of time was doing well, now it has become a rehab centre. I loved my time as chairman of NCA because Mr Dalmiya gave me a free hand," he said.

"All those players whom I spotted there grew in stature. That gives me immense pride and a sense of satisfaction.

At times, cricketers hurt national interest due to easy T20 money: Waqar Younis

Karachi, Apr 7 (PTI): Pakistan bowling coach Waqar Younis feels the "easy money" on offer at mushrooming T20 leagues is, at times, making cricketers inconsiderate towards national interest.

Waqar said Mohammed Aamir and Wahab Riaz's decision to quit red-ball cricket last year was one such instance in which their personal goals ended up adversely affecting the national team. Aamir's decision to quit at an age of 27 caused quite a stir.

"These leagues offer easy money for players who can remain in comfort as they have to bowl just four overs," Waqar said in a conference call with journalists on Monday.

"But at times, while thinking about their com-

fort zone players don't think how much damage they can do to national interest. They don't think about the broader picture," he added.

Waqar also criticised Aamir and Wahab for the way they announced their decision.

"If you are sitting on social media and announcing your decision it really hurts. They should have informed their management or board first. They should have discussed it first. It is unfortunate they did this because of this we had to suffer a bit," he said.

"But I wouldn't say we are lost or anything. If they have taken their decisions fine. But we have no grudge against them. I still think they both have cricket left in them.

"They should carry on playing white ball cricket if they are select-

ed for Pakistan. Yes they did leave the team in a difficult situation at that time," he added.

He noted that head coach and chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq has spoken about having a policy where the board and management is aware of players wanting to quit Test cricket.

"I think there should be a policy based on which players quit Test cricket but we can't put any restrictions even by law. Players should take decisions by coordinating with the board because it hurts the team," he said.

Waqar did not believe there was any communication gap between players and the board which led to this situation.

He also spoke about Pakistan pacer Hasan Ali not being able to play for Pakistan since the last

World Cup and said injuries had hurt him.

Pakistan's former bowling coach Azhar Mahmood has claimed that Hasan's injury was prolonged and affected his fitness because he was made to lift heavy weights in the gym.

Waqar said this was the first time he had heard about this.

"I don't know how Azhar knows this while sitting in England but what I know is that injuries hurt him. Look fast bowlers will also have fitness issues. It is difficult that a fast bowler will never get injured.

"One has to tough and smart as a fast bowler to have a long career. But Hasan is an asset to Pakistan cricket and he is very aggressive and we need him as he is a fine cricketer. Hopefully he will be back soon," he said.

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Coronavirus face masks Q&A: is the advice changing?

JULIE BRAINARD & PAUL HUNTER

THECONVERSATION.COM

Many health authorities, previously discouraged the public from wearing masks to avoid COVID-19. However, emerging evidence has caused the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the UK government to reconsider whether the public should wear masks. There are of course different types of face masks, and we are mainly considering disposable surgical masks.

DO THESE FACE MASKS WORK?

Experiments with mock viruses and patients in laboratories suggest surgical masks should help prevent viral illnesses "if used correctly". Yet, randomised trials done on people in their homes or communities often show little, if any, benefit.

A problem is that many of these studies did not fairly test how protective masks were. In most trials, many people who were supposed to wear the masks didn't wear them as instructed – and some who were never supposed to wear masks, did wear them. This means the evidence is messy. What these studies mainly show is that it was difficult to get people to use masks as instructed even when participating in a clinical trial.

Other forms of evidence from studies in community settings do suggest that mask-wearers had somewhat fewer respiratory infections than those who didn't wear masks. However, even taking these many different variables into account, our review found evidence that masks can be most protective for those at higher risk of infection when

worn for short periods of time.

SHOULD EVERYONE WEAR MASKS?

So far, the official answer in the UK, for example, has been no. Irrespective of the effectiveness of mask use in the community, mass buying by the public has created a shortage for healthcare workers. This puts healthcare workers at risk of getting COVID-19.

But emerging evidence is changing the balance of potential harms and benefits. We know that people are infectious very early after becoming unwell. Other evidence shows wearing masks does reduce the risk of infected people spreading the infection to others.

With this evidence, arguments against everyone wearing masks in public are looking less certain. Countries that previously recommended against wearing face



masks in public (including the US) are changing their minds.

But with the current shortage of masks, we have to think carefully about who would benefit most from wearing them. Recent deaths in doctors

and nurses remind us of the need to give these people priority.

Based on current evidence, the use of face masks more widely by the public is justified. Wearing masks in public is most beneficial in

situations where you can't properly keep your distance from other people. Wearing masks on crowded public transport is likely to be beneficial – but won't have any protective effect while walking through desert-

ed streets or in the countryside.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER PROBLEMS WITH WEARING MASKS?

Mask wearing can have its own problems. Surgical masks are uncomfortable, can be difficult to wear for long periods, costly, and contribute to landfill waste.

DO CLOTH MASKS WORK?

Although the CDC recommends wearing cloth masks, there's very little scientific evidence showing cloth masks protect people from respiratory illnesses.

Cloth masks have large pores and allow moist air circulation – which means cloth masks are less likely to stop virus-contaminated droplets from getting through.

WHAT SHOULD I DO? Social distancing

and frequent hand washing remain the best ways to prevent viruses spreading between you and other people.

If you choose to wear a mask, do not wear it for many hours – four or five hours at most each day. And only wear it when you are in contact with other people, and change it if it becomes damaged or dirty.

Masks can become contaminated from use, not only by COVID-19 but by other bacteria and viruses, so they should be disposed of carefully, making sure to wash your hands afterwards. It's also important to never share your mask with someone else for this reason.

[Julie Brainard is Senior Research Associate, University of East Anglia; Paul Hunter is Professor of Medicine, University of East Anglia]

Global leaders wish UK PM Boris Johnson speedy recovery

LONDON, APR 7 (PTI):

Several international leaders including US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have wished British Prime Minister Boris Johnson a quick recovery after he was admitted to an intensive care unit of a London hospital as his coronavirus symptoms worsened.

Johnson, 55, was tested positive for coronavirus more than 10 days ago and was admitted to the hospital a day earlier, which Downing Street said was done as part of a precautionary measure.

The Conservative party leader spent Monday night in the intensive care unit (ICU) at St. Thomas' hospital, in a move his office said was a "precaution" should the British Prime Minister require ventilation to aid his recovery from COVID-19.

Prime Minister Modi hoped that his British counterpart finds himself in perfect health soon.

"Hang in there, Prime Minister @BorisJohnson! Hope to see you out of hospital and in perfect health very soon," the prime minister wrote on Twitter.

President Trump has asked leading US companies working on COVID-19 drugs to "contact immediately" UK Prime Minister Johnson's doctors and offer "help" to his "good friend".

"We are very saddened to hear that he (Johnson) was taken into intensive care this afternoon a little while ago, and Americans are all praying for his recovery," Trump told reporters during his daily press conference at the White House on Monday.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen wished Johnson "a speedy and full recovery".

"My thoughts are with Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his family this evening," she said in a tweet.

Michel Barnier, the European Union's Brexit negotiator who is recovering in quarantine after testing positive for coronavirus, wished Johnson a speedy recovery.

"Wishing Boris Johnson all the best and a speedy recovery. My thoughts are with you and your family," Barnier

tweeted.

French President Emmanuel Macron also took to Twitter to extend his support to Johnson saying: "I hope he will rapidly overcome this ordeal".

"I send all my support to Boris Johnson, to his family and to the British people at this difficult moment. I wish him a speedy recovery at this testing time," he said in a tweet.

Director-General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sent his and WHO's heartfelt good wishes to the British Prime Minister.

"I am thinking of my friend @BorisJohnson tonight, and sending my and @WHO's heartfelt good wishes as he battles the #coronavirus. I know the @NHSuk and its dedicated #health-workers will be looking after you," he said.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said in a tweet, "My solidarity and wishes for a speedy recovery for Prime Minister Boris Johnson. These are difficult days for our countries, but it is through strength and unity that we can win this battle".

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said: "on behalf of the Dutch cabinet, I wish Boris Johnson, his family and the British people lots of strength during this difficult time".

Italy's Foreign Minister Luigi di Maio said that "the Italian people is with the UK in these difficult times. We are one for each other. Get well soon Boris Johnson!"

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the President of Sri Lanka, said on Twitter: "My best wishes to PM Boris Johnson for a speedy recovery. Our prayers are with you and the people of the UK during these trying times".

On Monday night, the British Prime Minister asked his First Secretary of State, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, to step in for him and the minister will be chairing his second daily COVID-19 meeting in place of him on Tuesday.

His hospitalisation comes as the number of coronavirus hospital deaths in the UK reached 5,373 and the UK's Department of Health said there were now 51,608 confirmed coronavirus cases.

British PM fights virus in intensive care as global deaths soar

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson battled the coronavirus in intensive care on Tuesday as death tolls in the United States and Europe reached new heights from the pandemic sweeping the world.

Johnson, 55, moved into intensive care when his condition worsened 10 days after his diagnosis. A senior cabinet minister said Johnson had been given oxygen but had not been put on a ventilator.

His case has highlighted the global reach of COVID-19, which has put more than half of the planet on some form of lockdown, upended societies and wrecked economies worldwide.

The disease's relentless march across the planet has now claimed more than 75,000 lives out of more than 1.3 million confirmed cases, with warnings that much worse is yet to come.

The number of daily deaths in Spain rose to 743 on Tuesday, after France on Monday recorded a new surge of 833 fatalities and Italy saw its death toll shoot up after days of dropping.

And the United States -- which has by far the most number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the world -- recorded 1,150 deaths over 24 hours, Johns Hopkins University said.

- 'Fighting a ferocious

enemy' -

There were however glimmers of hope in the daily diet of deadly statistics.

In China, where the virus originated late last year, there were no new deaths reported for the first time, just a day before it plans to lift travel curbs from the contagion's epicentre of Wuhan.

In New York state, the US epicentre of the crisis, the rate of growth in the death toll appeared to be slowing, although state Governor Andrew Cuomo warned that "now is not the time to be lax".

"New York City is fighting back. We have an invisible enemy. We have a ferocious enemy. But this city is fighting back with everything we've got," said mayor Bill de Blasio.

- 'Like 9/11' -

But amid fears of a second wave in Asia, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared a month-long state of emergency in Tokyo and six other parts of the country.

Singapore's usually bustling business district fell silent as most workplaces closed to stem the spread amid a new surge of cases in the city-state.

The virus is stretching medical facilities to the limit and the World Health Organization warned there was a global shortage of six million



nurses.

People around the world have been forced to improvise as supplies run short, with bodies packed in cardboard coffins in Ecuador and a mosque converted into a makeshift mask factory in Iran.

Undertakers in New York are so overworked that a city official raised the possibility of carrying out temporary burials in a public park.

"Trenches will be dug for 10 caskets in a line. It will be done in a dignified, orderly and temporary manner. But it will be tough for NYers to take," tweeted Mark Levine.

New York City funeral home director Pat Marmo said he was dealing with three times more bodies than normal.

"It's almost like 9/11, going on for days and

days and days," he said.

As hospitals overflow, the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in Manhattan is being converted to handle at least 200 patients beneath its stained-glass windows.

"In earlier centuries, cathedrals were always used this way, like during the plague. So this is not outside the experience of being a cathedral, it is just new to us," cathedral dean Clifton Daniel told the New York Times.

- 'Coronabonds' -

Governments around the world are scrambling to put together rescue packages to stem the economic damage from effectively shutting down global commerce, as fears loom of a devastating recession.

Japan has promised a \$1-trillion stimulus package, nearly twice as large as measures taken

during the 2008 financial crisis and a staggering 20 percent of GDP in the world's third-top economy.

With the ink barely dry on a \$2-trillion economic rescue package passed by Congress, US President Donald Trump said he favoured another massive spending programme, again roughly \$2 trillion, but this time targeting infrastructure projects.

"We built the greatest economy in the world. I'll do it a second time," he said.

EU finance ministers are expected to clinch a deal to use the eurozone's 410-billion-euro bailout fund to fight the virus but the bloc remains divided on pooling debt to issue "coronabonds".

But France warned it was heading for its worst recession since World

War II and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the European Union was facing its "biggest test" since its founding in 1957.

Analysts at Oxford Economics said the pandemic "may trigger annual GDP declines among the worst seen in the last 100 years" with millions of jobs being shed around the world.

Stock markets have chosen to see the glass as half-full so far this week, with the Dow Jones index soaring 1,600 points on Monday as traders saw hope the pandemic was reaching its apex.

Markets were up in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Shanghai and the London market rallied three percent in opening deals.

But away from the multi-billion packages and Wall Street swings, the coronavirus is affecting millions of ordinary people trying to make ends meet.

On a usually bustling wharf in Senegal's capital Dakar, 23-year-old fishmonger Galaye Sarr said his produce normally gets exported to Italy but trade has dried up.

"The boats have been docked for a long time, all because of the coronavirus. And even if they go and catch fish, we can't sell it," he told AFP.

"We're still trying to keep going, hoping that one day God will rid us of the curse."

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson moved to intensive care as coronavirus symptoms worsen

ADITI KHANNA

LONDON, APR 7 (PTI):

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who was in hospital due to persistent coronavirus symptoms, has been shifted to the intensive care unit after his coronavirus symptoms "worsened", Downing Street has said.

Johnson, 55, asked UK foreign secretary Dominic Raab to deputise for him as he was moved on Monday to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at St Thomas' Hospital in London, a move Downing Street said was a precaution should he require ventilation to aid his recovery.

Over the course of this afternoon (Monday), the condition of the Prime Minister has worsened and, on the advice of his medical team, he has been moved to the ICU at the hospital, a Downing Street spokesperson said.

The Prime Minister has asked Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who is the First Secretary of State, to deputise for him where necessary," the spokesperson said.

Raab, speaking after taking temporary charge, said the team spirit within the government would be focussed on taking Johnson's plans to defeat the pandemic forward.

The minister said: The government's business will continue. The Prime Minister is in safe hands with that brilliant team at St Thomas' hospital, and the focus of the government will continue to be on making sure that the Prime Minister's

direction, all the plans for making sure that we can defeat coronavirus and can pull the country through this challenge, will be taken forward".

"There's an incredibly strong team spirit behind the Prime Minister, and making sure that we get all of the plans the Prime Minister's instructed us to deliver, to get them implemented as soon as possible. And

that's the way it will bring the whole country through the coronavirus challenge that we face right now, the minister said.

Downing Street said Johnson remains conscious and is receiving excellent care, for which he thanks all National Health Service (NHS) staff for their hard work and dedication.

Queen Elizabeth II

has been kept informed about Johnson's health by No 10, according to Buckingham Palace.

According to the BBC, Johnson was given oxygen late on Monday afternoon, before being taken to intensive care. However, he has not been put on a ventilator.

Earlier in the day on Monday, Johnson had messaged from his hospital bed to say that

he was in good spirits and staying in contact with his ministers to oversee the UK's coronavirus fightback despite his hospitalisation on Sunday night due to persistent COVID-19 symptoms.

He was last seen in public applauding the NHS and other key workers just outside his flat in Downing Street last Thursday and posted his

last Twitter video message on Friday in which he said he was still displaying minor symptoms.

"I still have a temperature. So in accordance with government advice I must continue my self-isolation until that symptom itself goes. But we're working clearly the whole time on our programme to beat the virus," he said.

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MASKED MOLLY! Model, Molly Sims wore a bandana around her nose and mouth as a mask during the COVID-19 quarantine in Los Angeles.

Challenging to write a biopic: Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari on 'Murthy'

MUMBAI, APR 7 (PTI): Director Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, who is making a biopic on real-life couple - Infosys co-founder NR Narayana Murthy and author Sudha Murthy, says it is a challenging task to work on a real life story.

The film, tentatively Murthy will be co-written by Shreyas Jain, Piyush Gupta and Ashwiny's husband, filmmaker Nitesh Tiwari.

Ashwiny said she was enamoured by the strong yet simple personality of the couple.

It is not only Sudha Murthy's film. There are two strong personalities Sudha and Narayan in the film. The working title is Murthy', the meaning of which is making a difference, Ashwiny told PTI.

The director feels happy to have been chosen to bring on screen an inspiring tale.

They are very simple people. They have done so much for society and country. I felt their story needs to be told. It so happened that I was chosen to tell the story. They met me and said, I am right to tell the story, my

track record is good and that don't show any kissing scenes, she said.

The director, who has made films such as Nil Battey Sannata, Bareilly Ki Barfi and Panga, said working on a biopic isn't easy.

We are still writing it. We want to focus on getting it correct on writing level. A biopic cannot be just written like a biopic, there has to be a good graph, there has to be a character sketch. If I do exactly like it is then it will be like a documentary. It is challenging. I will have to meet a lot of people and take their point of view in terms of their lives.

The Panga director said nothing has been finalised yet about the cast and crew for the film.

Besides this film, Ashwiny also has been signed by producer Ekta Kapoor for a film.

"I am co-producing it with her. We are almost done with writing then we will go to actors. It is a slice-of-life rom-com and will have my signature touch," she said.

Bachchan teams up with Rajinikanth, Ranbir, Alia for short film on social distancing



MUMBAI, APR 7 (PTI): Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has unveiled a short film, "Family", which talks about the importance of staying at home, maintaining hygiene and social distancing in the times of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Family", which has been conceptualised and virtually directed by Prasoon Pandey, also features Rajinikanth, Ranbir Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Alia Bhatt, Diljit Dosanjh, Chiranjeevi, Mohanlal, Mammooty, Sonali Kulkarni, Shiv Raj Kumar and Prosenjit Chatterjee.

Bachchan posted the film on his official Twitter handle, saying, When you see that the cause is greater than the idea you dreamt of, there is just immense joy and gratitude for all my colleagues and friends in the making of this historic effort. We are one and we

shall overcome. Jai Hind!

The made-at-home film, which aired across Sony Networks on Monday night, chronicles a family's effort to find a misplaced pair of sunglasses belonging to Bachchan's character.

At the end of the short, the 77-year-old actor said artistes from several industries came together to make the film, but no one stepped out of their house.

"Every artiste shot their own section in their own house. You too, please stay indoors. That's the only way to keep yourself safe from the dangerous coronavirus. Stay indoors, stay safe."

On Sunday, it was announced that Bachchan has pledged monthly ration to support 1,00,000 households of daily wage workers belonging to the All In-

dia Film Employees Confederation who were severely affected by the 21-day lockdown to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

The actor called Indian film industry as a united family but said there is another "huge family" which supports and works with them -- workers and daily wage earners.

"They are facing great difficulty due to the lockdown. We all have come together and teamed up, with the help of sponsors and TV channel, to raise a fund. This fund will be distributed to our workers and daily wage earners to provide them with some relief in these tough times," Bachchan said.

The initiative is supported by Sony Pictures Networks India and Kalyan Jewellers.

Disney releasing new Frozen' short series made at home

LOS ANGELES, APR 7 (PTI): Disney is releasing a series of new shorts titled At Home With Olaf, featuring Josh Gad's ever-cheerful Frozen snowman.

The shorts were entirely made at home by Disney animator Hyrum Osmond, with Gad voicing the Olaf from his home.

Starting this week, enjoy an all-new original Disney Animation digital series with everyone's favorite snowman, Olaf. #AtHomeWithOlaf created at home by Hyrum Osmond. Voiced from home by Josh Gad. #DisneyMagicMoments, Disney Animation posted on its official Twitter handle along with the link of the short.

Gad, who has voiced the character in Frozen and Frozen II, also took to the microblogging site to share the details about the project.

"My friends Jennifer Lee (writer-director Frozen' films) & Osmond called me up one day & asked me if I would be able to record some dialogue and sounds as Olaf from home. These little shorts done from home by Hyrum & the @DisneyAnimation team are so charming & hopefully provide a smile during these scary times, he tweeted.

Shah Rukh, Priyanka part of global event honouring healthcare workers on COVID-19 frontline

YOSHITA SINGH

UNITED NATIONS, APR 7

(PTI): Indian stars Shah Rukh Khan and Priyanka

Chopra Jonas will join artists from around the world for a global television and streaming special curated by pop star Lady Gaga to support and applaud frontline health care workers in their battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The One World Together At Home' virtual concert organised by the World Health Organization and international advocacy organisation Global Citizen will air

on April 18 and will feature the real-life experiences of doctors, nurses and families living through the pandemic.

Apart from Shah Rukh and Priyanka, the star-studded line up also includes Alanis Morissette, Billie Eilish, Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day, Chris Martin, David Beckham, Elton John, Idris and Sabrina Elba, John Legend, Kerry Washington, Lang Lang, Lizzo, Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder.

The broadcast will be hosted by Jimmy Fallon of The Tonight Show', Jimmy



The first short, titled "Fun With Snow", is already available on the Disney Animation website.

The studio has not revealed when or how regularly future episodes will arrive.

Kimmel of Jimmy Kimmel Live' and Stephen Colbert of The Late Show with Stephen Colbert.'

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said the United Nations system is fully mobilised: supporting country responses, placing our supply chains at the world's disposal and advocating for a global ceasefire.

He said the world organisation is proud to join forces with the global event to help suppress the transmission of the virus, minimise social-economic impacts

on the global community and work together now to advance Global Goals for the future.

Co-Founder and CEO of Global Citizen Hugh Evans said the program will honour and support the heroic efforts of community health workers and aims to serve as a source of unity and encouragement in the global fight to end COVID-19.

Through music, entertainment and impact, the global live-cast will celebrate those who risk their own health to safeguard everyone else's, he said.

Aries: Spirituality is a big theme in the Aries headquarters. So what if you can't attend a full moon gathering? Join a virtual one this evening or sit in your balcony and converse with Mother Moon. While new moons support beginnings, la luna in her fullness is synonymous with fruition and release. So take this opportunity to write a letter to your younger self addressing the traumas you didn't get a chance to address in the past, or to the best friend/ex you parted ways with a long time ago. Putting down your dated beliefs on paper is another idea you can explore. Once you're done putting your thoughts down on paper, burn the sheets, and bury the ashes when you get a chance to. Five deep breaths in, five deep breaths out. Tell us, dear one, what does freedom look and feel like?
Tip: Release yourself from the pain of the past.
Taurus: Commitment is a big theme for you right now, Taurus. Revisit the list of resolutions you made earlier this year. If you haven't had a chance to keep up with them, the time to make positive changes is now. For some, the commitment could manifest as a work-related contract. If something's up for renewal, get to it now! Couples who've been quarantined together are moving past the initial resistance and easing into 'the new normal'. Exercise kindness and compassion for that one person who's stood by you, as you have been through it all.
Tip: Commitment is a big theme for you today.
Gemini: There are days when everything's right in your Universe and then there are days when your inner demons threaten to get the better of you. It's all a part and parcel of light. The duality, the dance of shadow and light. Replace your resistance with acceptance. Know that one cannot exist without the other. The good news is, you'll find a way to overcome whatever you have been

struggling with, whether it is mental or emotional. Lean onto your soul crew, Gemini. Find new ways to bring joy and madness back into your life.
Tip: Welcome to the realm of rainbows!
Cancer: So what if you can't go outdoors, Cancer? Spend time on your balcony or head over to the terrace. Find new and creative ways to soak in the sun. Ditto for your workout. Just because you can't hit the gym doesn't mean you can't sweat it out at home. How about perfecting your Suryanamaskar or putting on some music and allowing your body to flow? 'Adapt and adjust' is pretty much the quarantine mantra!
Tip: Find new ways to soak in the sun.
Leo: You know what's a superpower, Leo? The ability to be your most authentic self in a world of replicas. Be warned: you will be tempted to give into the pressure. But following the herd mentality isn't going to serve you. If anything, it will dull your sparkle and keep you from following your soul purpose. On the upside, this full moon is going to bring the news of completion and fruition, putting you on the map for what you are best at. But stepping into the limelight is not something you've ever been afraid of!
Tip: Make authenticity your superpowers.
Virgo: Like the Taurean crew, you're revisiting your list of resolutions. Life happens, Virgo! It's okay if you weren't able to see this through. But there's no reason you can't hit the refresh button. So whether you're thinking about meditating every day for 30 minutes straight or learning the guitar, the time to recommit to your goals is now. Know that the Universe is supporting your every venture. Quarantined couples are coming to the realisation that spending 'this' much time together is not such a bad thing after all! Who knew cooking up a

storm could be this much fun?
Tip: Revisit your list of resolutions.
Libra: The full moon in Libra will bring with itself unexpected surprises. What you need to keep in mind though, is that the world is on hold right now. So it could take a few days for your cosmic Fed-ex to make its way to you. Be patient. Librans who are in the mood to get hitched could receive a grand proposal through somebody in the family. The suitor at hand could be somebody from overseas (but they don't have to be). Keep your open mind open, explore, and see how things go. You never know what may transpire under these magical skies!
Tip: A grand proposal could be on its way to you.
Scorpio: You've had it with the rumour mill, Scorpio. But do you really want to let somebody else's version of your reality get to you? That's a choice you're going to have to make. Instead of stooping down to their level and dimming your light, shine brighter than you ever have before. This is the best way to throw them off their game. As such, the full moon tonight is likely to illuminate a host of secrets. Things that have been hidden from you will be brought to light. A mantra that will keep you sane: respond, don't react.
Tip: Many secrets are coming to the fore.
Sagittarius: What ignites your inner fire, Sagittarius? What are the things you feel passionate about? This week is about finding your True North, realigning with your path, and serving the world in a manner that feels authentic to you. Yes, you have what it takes to leap forward. So, commit to your long-term goals with a newfound fervour. Show your obstacles who's in charge. Remember, having the right team by your side will prove to be the biggest game changer. Hire and train the right people who will assist you in this journey.

Tip: You have that big goal energy about you.
Capricorn: Some days you wake up feeling like a QuaranQueen. On other days, you legitimately want to set the neighbourhood on fire and find the nearest escape route. It's all a part of the process, the anger and the frustration too. While option #2 may not be the sanest way forward, you can always step out for a grocery run and get some fresh air (with adequate safety measures). Some of you may be particularly nostalgic for the good ol' days and the times you spent with your friends who live in other parts of the world. Thankfully, technology is not on lockdown. So set up a Skype date and catch up with your loved ones.
Tip: Set up a Skype date.
Aquarius: This is an especially tricky time in the Aquarius headquarters. Beware of foes masquerading as friends. Trust the voice of wisdom that tells you that a given person has a hidden agenda. If you don't already know what their game plan is, you will know soon. A woman in your life, who has your best interests in her heart, could be instrumental in revealing valuable information to you.
Tip: Always trust your gut.
Pisces: That this is an especially challenging time for all of us in the collective is not brand new information, Pisces. But what is your role here? How are you doing your bit to alleviate pain, assist healing, and raise the vibrations? Let your inner empath take over from here. Practice kindness and compassion. Hold space for your fellow warriors in the best way you can. Connecting with the women in your life is also going to be a big theme for you today. When was the last time you concaled with your mum and your favourite aunt? Now is the time to pick up the phone!