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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Sikkim has enough foodgrains to last till August

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 APR:**

The State Government has distributed relief packages consisting of rice, oil, dal, salt, potato and onion to 1,27,530 beneficiaries till date.

Additional Controller, Metrological division of Consumers Affairs Department, CK Sharma, said that as of now 19,13,210 kgs of rice, 4,46,433 lts of cooking oil, 446,433 kgs of dal and 1,27,530 kgs of salt have been distributed through the Department while onion and potatoes were supplied by Sikkim Marketing Federation Limited.

He informed that as per the direction of the State Government, the department has already procured enough food grains for



another three months which are stored in FCI food godowns at Rangpo and Jorethang, as well as food godowns across the State.

The State Food, Civil In-charge of the FCI Godown

Supplies and Consumers Affairs department is very thankful to the FCI for supplying the food grains, said Mr Sharma.

and head of Quality Control, Manas Chakraborty also assured that FCI has enough food grains for another 2-3 months. He said that FCI is working from 8 am in the morning to 9pm in the evening in the current situation even though they have very limited manpower to unload and load food grains.

As of now, 29 labourers are working 12-14 hours per day and FCI is providing all the required protection to them, said Mr Chakraborty.

Labourer, Mohan Chettri, who is supplying the food grains to the masses, informed that the work load has seen a three-fold increase compared to before. He added that the workers have been issued masks, sanitizers and other required items for protection.

Sikkim's truckers face more than just Corona stress

**SANDEEP PRASAD
GANGTOK, 17 APR:**

Truckers of Sikkim engaged in transporting essential supplies to the State from across the border are risking their lives but they are not being provided the required support.

Speaking to SummitTimes today, truck driver, Sanjit Kumar complained of facing harassment when they are in West Bengal.

"They try to bully us. They say we are bringing the virus. We are not treated well at NJP Food Godown in West Bengal. They just empty bottles of what they call sanitizers all over us, over our clothes. The other day some of the drivers got slapped by officials," said Mr Kumar.

He requested the government to allow one handy boy to accompany each driver for safety reasons as well as for loading supplies which is difficult for a single person.

"If the truck breaks down, what will a single driver do? There is the risk of the supplies being stolen on the way. So we request the government to look into this," he said.

Truck drivers also said that they need Personal Protection Equipment while going outside the State.

RBI to ensure adequate liquidity in system; cuts reverse repo rate by 25 bps

MUMBAI, APR 17 (PTI): The Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday said the central bank will ensure adequate liquidity in the system to ease the financial stress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The central bank reduced the reverse repo rate - the rate at which banks park their fund with the central bank - by 25 basis points to 3.75 per cent.

This will encourage banks to lend to the productive sectors of the economy.

With regard to other measures, Das said RBI will begin with giving an additional Rs 50,000 crore through targeted long-term repo operation (TLTRO) to be undertaken in tranches.

Besides, he announced a re-financing window of Rs 50,000 crore for financial institutions like Nabard, National Housing Bank and Sidbi.

He further said surplus liquidity in the banking system has increased substantially as result of central bank's actions.

Stating that the RBI is monitoring the situation developing out of Covid-19 outbreak, he noted that the contraction in exports in March at 34.6 per cent was much more severe than global financial crisis of 2008-09.

'Doubling rate of COVID-19 cases in India reduced with imposition of lockdown'

NEW DELHI, APR 17 (PTI):

The Union Health Ministry said on Friday the rate at which the number of coronavirus cases in the country was becoming double in the last one week was 6.2 days, as against three days before the nationwide lockdown was imposed

At a daily media briefing about updates on COVID-19 situation, Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal claimed that India has been doing better than many other countries on the outcome ratio, which is the number of recoveries from coronavirus infection versus the number of deaths

"If 80 per cent of the patients in India are recovering and in 20 per cent cases deaths are being reported, then by that standard India has been doing a little better than many other nations on the outcome ratio," he said

"Before lockdown, the doubling rate of coronavirus cases was 3 days. Going by the number of cases in the last seven days, the doubling rate has been 6.2 days. In 19 states and Union Territories the doubling rate is less than

the national average," he said

The health ministry official also said the average growth factor of cases from April 1 has been 1.2, whereas between March 15 and 31 it was 2.1

This decline of 40 per cent was due to increase in testing, including that of cases with severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) and influenza-like illness (ILI), Agarwal said

He also informed reporters that 1,919 dedicated COVID-19 hospitals with 1.73 lakh isolation beds and 21,800 ICU beds have been readied till now

The number of novel coronavirus cases in India rose by 1,007 and 23 deaths were reported in 24 hours, taking the tally of total infections to 13,387 and fatalities to 437, the joint secretary in the health ministry said, adding 1,749 people have been cured of the infection so far, which is 13.06 per cent of the total patients

Agarwal further informed that five lakh rapid antibody testing kits, which arrived from China on Thursday, are being distributed to states for districts with high case burden

Governor takes stock of online teaching from Sikkim-based univs



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 APR:**

Governor Ganga Prasad convened a meeting with Vice Chancellors and Heads of all the Universities in Sikkim to take stock of the online teaching and learning options adopted by them to ensure that learning continues through the lockdown when educational institutions have been closed for more than a month.

Additional Chief Secretary to the Governor, Dr K Jaykumar, Vice Chancellor of Sikkim University, Prof Avinash Khare, Vice Chancellor of Sikkim Manipal University, Lt General, MD Venkatesh (Retd), Vice Chancellor ICFAI University Sikkim, Dr Jagannath Patnaik, Vice Chancellor Sikkim State University, Prof GK Niroula (Chhetri) and Dean, Dr Govind Pratap Singh, SRM University were present on the occasion.

The meeting deliberated on the issues and concerns of teaching and learning processes and the progress on online learning modules being

followed by all the Universities, an official press release informs.

The Vice Chancellors apprised the Governor that online teaching and learning process was being followed to the extent possible.

While online learning applications such as Microsoft Learning, Google Classroom, Paathsala, Zoom, WhatsApp and MHRD learning portals are being used extensively, in view of recent apprehension of MHA regarding online app Zoom, classes will be switched over to other available platforms.

Assignments and projects are being assigned and submitted through emails regularly much to the tune of regular classroom routines, the Governor was informed.

The effective medium of video learning using Youtube platform is also being encouraged.

The problem of poor internet connectivity in most of the interior locations in the State is hindering 100 percent coverage of students

through online mediums and applications of learning, the university officials informed.

However, the progress made despite the problem of internet connectivity is satisfactory, reported the heads of University.

Updates on the online classrooms being conducted and the level of participation of students from their respective homes are being sent mandatorily to MHRD and UGC weekly, Vice Chancellor of Sikkim University informed.

Regular counselling on mental health of students, regular monitoring and supervision of students has been ensured by most of the Universities.

Further, the Vice Chancellors placed their concerns arising out of lockdown and other social distancing protocols which will have far reaching implications to the management including delay in admissions, academic programs, examination, certification and placement of students.

All the heads of

Universities echoed the concern that a large number of students and faculty members from outside the State will be returning to the State once the universities resume normal classes and activities.

Going by the protocols on social distancing, quarantine and isolation of students and faculties from other COVID-19 affected states and countries, proper policy guidelines on logistics, accommodation and other requirements of students need to be put on place which will be of immense magnitude.

The Universities sought the intervention, assistance and direction from State Government for smooth transition to the normal routine following all the safety protocols and norms of social distancing.

Governor expressed satisfaction on the updates with regard to online teaching learning process and stressed that there should be no compromise on the quality of teaching and learning process despite adversity faced due to COVID 19 crisis. He further assured to take the matter of accommodation and other logistics with State government to address the concern regarding the students who would be coming to Sikkim from outside once the classes resumes after lockdown. He further urged the respective heads to devise effective mechanism to deal with the possible situation after the lockdown in close coordination with State Government.

Govt depts to resume work from 20 Apr

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 APR:**

The State Government has decided to resume work at government departments starting 20 April. Although keeping govt departments operational through the lockdown was always Sikkim's original plan, when the national lockdown intervened on 25 March, the State too had to fall in line and shut down all govt departments save those involved in either enforcing the lockdown or providing essential services.

Now, finally, departmental offices will begin functioning, albeit at a reduced strength.

A circular issued by the Chief Secretary on Friday announces that all departments will function with restricted staff from 20 April onwards.

While all officers of the level joint secretary and above are required to attend office, personnel below this rank will attend office on rotation. The departments have been directed to prepare the roster and ensure that office attendance does not exceed 1/3rd of the actual strength.

Those providing essential services have been working through the lockdown and will continue to do so.

Interestingly, despite the constant stress on social distancing and rules prescribed for private vehicles [allowing only one passenger per vehicle], the circular from the Chief Secretary directs that "to the extent possible, the Departments/ PSUs may make arrangement for pool vehicles."

"Movement of people to and from office shall be permitted on production of valid photo IDs," the circular adds.

Woman travels 2,700 km across six states to meet ailing son in hospital

KOTTAYAM/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APR 17 (PTI):

A 50-year-old woman travelled 2,700 km in a car crisscrossing 6 states to meet her critically ill son, a BSF jawan in Jodhpur, despite strict lockdown restrictions due to Covid-19.

The woman was accompanied by her daughter-in-law and another relative during the journey, which they covered in 3 days time.

Speaking to PTI from Jodhpur in Rajasthan, Sheelamma Vasan said the health condition of her son, Arun Kumar (29), who was suffering from myositis, (inflammation of muscles), was improving.

"Due to gods grace we have reached here without any problems anywhere", she said.

The family was informed by a Malayali doctor at AIIMS in Jodhpur about Arun Kumars condition following which they decided to undertake the journey from Kerala

through Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat to reach Rajasthan.

Thanks to the intervention of Union Minister V Muraleedharan, office of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Congress leader, Oommen Chandy, the family could get necessary passes for the travel across the states.

Volunteers of Hindu help line, a VHP organisation, helped in arranging a cab and two taxi drivers free of cost to take them to Jodhpur.

After getting necessary passes arranged by Kottayam District Collector P K Sudheer Babu, Sheelamma accompanied by her daughter-in-law Parvathy and another relative set off on the journey from Panackachira village in Koruthodu panchayat in Kottayam on April 11 and reached Jodhpur on 14th, "Vishu" (Malayalam new year).

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COVID-19 is transforming education sector in Sikkim

NAMCHI, 17 APR (IPR):

The novel coronavirus pandemic is completely altering the way education is imparted, it's challenging the functions of a traditional classroom thereby compelling the Education Department in Sikkim to take an appropriate strategy and embrace along with utilising the different types of media available at the moment. Now it can be safely said that there are two forms of media which is traditional as well as nontraditional. Television, Radio and newspapers are the major part of traditional media and non-traditional mostly comprises of digital or new media.

It is pretty admirable of Sikkim's officials in the education department, they are trying to incorporate these traditional and non-traditional media to it's fullest in order to provide an uninterrupted network wherein the students can continue with their lessons. They are conducting classes through platforms such as All India Radio, Cable Television, online platforms like Facebook, applications like ZOOM, Sikkim edutech, WhatsApp and many more. Similarly, in South District these kind of classes has commenced in all the 227 schools including that of Primary, Junior High School,



Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools located in the district.

G o v e r n m e n t Secondary School Lingi Payong - One such school which has consistently tried to make an optimum advantage of e-learning is Government Secondary School Lingi Payong. This school has a total enrolment of 130 students from places such as Kaw, Darakharka, Lower, Middle and Upper Payong. The Facebook page of this school is currently filled with videos, post and messages for online classes, students speaking about awareness, videos of basic hand washing techniques which has been shot and uploaded by school representatives and various other guidelines to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

Headmaster Suraj

Kumar Sharma and his army of teachers and staff has played a big role in assisting to develop an e-learning system for the school. For starters class wise WhatsApp group for primary classes has been created wherein assignments, feedback are conducted in a coordinated manner. A subject wise WhatsApp group for upper primary and secondary level has been fashioned so that the students can get proper attention specifically for subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Nepali and many more. The school also has a Facebook page in which teachers has made and uploaded video lessons as it was evident that a number of parents, guardians and students were listed on the most popular social media page. These educational videos were developed

in a bid for the students to comfortably access the study materials. The headmaster, staff and students regularly also uses other digital platforms such as YouTube for learning purpose and other educational applications such as Gurushaalaa and BYJU's. Television, Radio especially AIR Gangtok is also being utilised by the students, they are duly informed about any live classes concerning CBSE and NCERT. Suraj also believes that the teachers should upgrade themselves in terms of educating and with regards to the same they use a variety of online resources like DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), SWAYAM and many more. While, he maintains that the students should use smartphone and other social media platforms

with due supervision from their parents.

However, the headmaster has observed that when it comes to e-learning most of the students do not have internet connectivity and equipment's in the form of smartphones, laptops and other apparatus. Interestingly, among parents as well there is a divide as he observed that younger couples had a basic knowledge as how to manoeuvre with a smartphone containing social media platforms and other applications as compared to older aged parents they tend to operate more of radio and television concluding that even the guardians required basic digital literacy so that they could actively take part in coaching their children. Nevertheless, this kind of approach that the education

department is currently adopting is learning centric and will help the students as well as their parents due to the effective use of different types of media.

Speaking, to Sneha Rai a class 10 student of Lingi paiyong school said that they have a subject wise WhatsApp group where the subject teacher shares a video of the lesson and if they have any problem with certain lessons or in basic arithmetic problem then they can get back to the teacher and discuss with them. As for homework the subject instructor explains a problem in detail and gives the pupil an assignment they then have to work out the project, take a picture and submit. Sneha also says that she misses school and now that the schools have been closed for valid reason she reminisces her studies, school and classmates which were outside of the current wired world.

Overall it can be said that with changing times our perspective towards education system should also be modified, the stakeholders need to acquire and absorb the newer technology and virtual learning should be promoted. This kind of hosted learning also enables the authorities to practise social distancing amongst the students which is crucial and needed at this hour.

West Sikkim shelter homes get sanitized

GYALSHING, 17 APR (IPR):

AL DC West, Karma Lepcha visited the Child Care Institutes (CCIs) of Gyalshing Sub-Division. The CCIs were thoroughly inspected and sanitized by the West District Administration.

The CCIs namely Himalayan Shelter Home, Langang; Kapinjal SAA and Sunrise Home of Kyongsa, Gyalshing were sanitized. The ADC (W) also distributed sanitizers, soaps, bleaching powder and food items.

STCS chairperson inspects services in his constituency



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 17 APR:

STCS chairperson, Bishnu Kumar Khataiwara, visited Budang and Upper Pachak areas of his constituency today to take stock of the lockdown situation there.

He enquired after the relief distribution process and discussed various issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He visited floriculture units at Budang

and met with the staff of Horticulture Department.

He urged the Panchayats to keep track of how the people were coping with the situation and get in touch with him if his intervention was required.

Also today, Chaap Gurash Eco Tourism Club of Budang handed over a cheque of Rs 12,000 as a donation towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Eleven migrant labourers on long march back home caught

UTTARKASHI, APR 17 (PTI): Eleven migrant labourers were caught while trying to escape to Saharanpur through forests and a case was registered against a WhatsApp group admin for spreading rumour that they were jamaatis, police said on Friday.

The migrant labourers were caught when they reached a village named Syalna on their way and the villagers informed the police saying some dubious persons had entered the village on foot, Badkot police station SHO D S Kohli said.

Police rushed to the spot with a medical team and brought the labourers to Badkot

where they were medically examined to ascertain if they had symptoms of COVID-19, Kohli said.

Preliminary investigations revealed they were trying to reach Saharanpur through the Ganga ghati and Yamuna ghati forests in Uttarkashi district, the official said.

Meanwhile, someone spread a rumour on WhatsApp saying they were jamaatis, Kohli said.

A case has been registered against the admin of the WhatsApp group under the Disaster Management Act and relevant sections of the IPC, he said.



Namchi municipality employees at work

NAMCHI, 17 APR (IPR):

As the masses diligently follow the nationwide lock down to combat the spread of COVID-19, the municipal workers are at the forefront cleaning drains and collecting garbage. It is heartening to see the workers from Namchi Municipal Corporation carrying out their work despite this global outbreak.

CHILDLINE 1098 responded to 4.6 lakh calls in 21 days

NEW DELHI, APR 17 (PTI): Government helpline for children 'CHILDLINE 1098' has responded to a total of 4.6 lakh calls in 21 days, with a majority of them received during the lockdown period.

These calls were received from March 20 to April 10, said CHILDLINE 1098, the 24x7 helpline across 571 districts for children in distress.

The CHILDLINE 1098 in a statement said that 30 per cent of the calls were from the northern region, followed by 29 per cent from the western region, and 21 per cent and 20 per cent from southern and eastern regions respectively.

"These calls include calls for information, active intervention, prank/crank calls, or even silent calls where the confidence building of

the caller is undertaken. The helpline is providing information about COVID-19 prevention as well as referring to the relief services through district level linkages," the CHILDLINE 1098 said in a statement.

A total of 9,385 interventions were also taken up on the ground by the CHILDLINE 1098 frontline workers during this period.

"Of these, 30 per cent of the cases were related to the pandemic situation. Within the coronavirus-related interventions, 91 per cent of them requested for food, while 6 per cent needed medical assistance and the remaining were regarding help with transportation," the helpline said.

Of these 9,385 interventions, to name a major few categories; emergency interventions

for child protection aspects (protection from abuse) accounted for 20 per cent which includes preventing child marriage, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, trafficking, abandonment, neglect, child labour, it said.

About 9 per cent of the calls were related to health aspects. Missing children and education related issues accounted for 5 per cent each, it said.

"However, it is felt that a large number of children may not have had opportunities to report their distress as they may not have access to mobile phones or to their friends, teachers or other concerned adults. The helpline is planning to actively follow up on the cases of abuse reported to ensure that they are safe," the helpline said.

Childline service

has been identifying vulnerable children and adults like migrants, nomadic population, tribal, pavement dwellers and street children in the districts and linking them to other donors and district administration for continuation of relief services.

Apart from working with the district administration, teams have been supporting the Health Department in raising awareness on COVID-19, distributing safety masks and sanitisers to 'break the chain', working with the Labour Department and down to the Panchayat level, it said.

"However, communities are fast quarantining themselves, and are not allowing any outsider to enter their villages; therefore they find it difficult to rescue a child from such communities," it said.

S&P cuts India growth forecast to 1.8 pc

NEW DELHI, APR 17 (PTI): S&P Global Ratings on Friday slashed India growth forecast for the current fiscal to 1.8 per cent, from 3.5 per cent estimated earlier, on account of the lockdown to contain Covid-19 pandemic.

The US-based rating agency expects growth to significantly recover to 7.5 per cent in 2021-22 fiscal.

S&P had in March cut India growth forecast to 3.5 per cent for 2020-21 fiscal, from 5.2 per cent projected earlier.

"We assume that the first-wave of community transmission peaked in March in China and will peak in April for most other economies in the region. In some emerging markets, including India and Indonesia, a peak in reported cases is assumed to come somewhat later, perhaps early in the third quarter," S&P said.

S&P revised Asia-Pacific growth in 2020 to 0.3 per cent with China at 1.2 per cent, India at 1.8 per cent, and Japan at -3.6 per cent.

The agency assumes the recovery from the pandemic to be "flatish U-shape with activity returning to pre-outbreak levels, if at all, in 2023. If unemployment surges, we may be facing an elongated L-shape, it added.

S&P joins the other international agencies in cutting India growth forecast over the

concerns about the fallout of COVID-19 pandemic.

Fitch has projected India's GDP to grow at 2 per cent this fiscal--the slowest since the economy was liberalised 30 years back.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has slashed India's GDP growth projection to 1.9 per cent in 2020 from 5.8 per cent estimated in January, as the global economy hits the worst recession since the Great Depression in the 1930s due to the raging coronavirus pandemic.

Similarly, World Bank has estimated India's economy to grow between 1.5 to 2.8 per cent in the 2020-21 - the worst growth performance since the 1991.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) sees India's economic growth slipping to 4 per cent in the current fiscal (April 2020 to March 2021), while S&P Global Ratings has lowered its GDP growth forecast for the country to 3.5 per cent.

Moody's Investors Service has also slashed its estimate of India's GDP growth during the 2020 calendar year to 2.5 per cent.

These growth estimates compare to an estimated 5 per cent growth rate in 2019-20 fiscal that ended on March 31. Indian economy also grew by 5 per cent in 2019 calendar year.

~ 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 Road-side just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact:

78640-04501, 62970-03235, 98320-48410

ISKCON's Food for Life initiative serves Sikkim



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 APR:**

ISKCON Gangtok has been serving hot meals to people, mostly

attendants to patients, at STNM Hospital complex in Socheygang and daily-wage earners, now stranded without

work for nearly a month, in and around in the capital every day. On the instructions and guidance of

the Governing Body Commissioner [GBC] zonal secretary of ISKCON Sikkim, Jayapataka Swami ji, ISKCON Gangtok has served more than 2,500 hot meals so far, informs an ISKCON press release. The initiative had begun on 31 March.

The release informs that even though ISKCON Food For Life, Gangtok, has been distributing free meals every week in Gangtok since October, with the Covid-19 induced lockdown, it has begun doing so every day.

"We are equipped to serve 500 persons every day and if needed

we can increase our facilities to cook and serve even 1,000 plates of full meals a day. Now, we are serving everyday different menu and we don't repeat same menu in a week, so people don't miss their own homemade food amidst lockdown," the release states.

It is added that ISKCON Gangtok was indebted to the State Government, Police Department, and the STNM Hospital administration team for providing facilities and allowing ISKCON to serve the people of Sikkim.

One-third COVID-19 patients in Noida cured

KISHOR DWIVEDI

NOIDA (UP), APR 17 (PTI): Thirty-three of the 92 coronavirus patients in Gautam Buddh Nagar are cured and discharged from hospital, a number which has brought some cheer to the district which is among the worst affected in Uttar Pradesh.

This 35 per cent recovery rate is better than the 13 per cent recorded at the national level. Union Health Ministry on Friday morning said there are 13,387 positive cases in the country and 1,748 people have been cured.

Statistics for Uttar Pradesh show that about 9 per cent of the total 805 infected people till Thursday night have recovered from COVID-19.

Gautam Buddh Nagar near Delhi had emerged as a major hotspot for the virus in March and the district also saw the shunting of some top officials, including the district magistrate and the chief medical officer,

over the handling of the situation.

It initially had the maximum cases in the state but now stands third in the list after Agra and Lucknow.

District Surveillance Officer Sunil Dohare on Friday said so far 1,925 samples have been taken for COVID-19 test and 92 of them tested positive.

District Magistrate Suhas L Y said 33 of the 92 patients have been cured and discharged.

Dear residents, today nine more patients have been cured and discharged, making the total discharge number to 33 out of 92 cases. Now 59 active Covid cases remain in Gautam Buddh Nagar. All our corona warriors shall continue to do our best, the DM tweeted on Thursday night.

In a statement on Friday, the health department said 1,222 people are currently under surveillance

across Noida and Greater Noida for coronavirus and 595 in institutional quarantine.

On cluster containment activity, the department said 4,036 teams were deployed for gathering information and raising awareness in a concerted door-to-door campaign.

These teams have visited 3,90,898 houses so far and screened 12,46,769 people. They identified 1,030 people who had travelled abroad in recent weeks.

All travellers have been put under surveillance, it added.

The Gautam Buddh Nagar administration has identified 28 hotspots across Noida and Greater Noida where residential societies and sectors have been completely sealed, even as the general lockdown curbs are applied elsewhere in the district.

Bhaichung files police complaint against Siliguri resident

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 APR:**

Former Indian football team skipper and Hamro Sikkim Party, working president, Bhaichung Bhutia has filed a police complaint against the landlord of a building where a Sikkimese girl was staying on rent. The landlord is accused of ill-treating the girl and asking her to vacate the premises as he suspected her of suffering from COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia has filed a police complaint at Pradhan Nagar Police Station in Siliguri, West Bengal against

Hiren Dey for forcibly removing his tenant who hails from Sikkim.

The police complaint states that the girl, who was residing in Pradhan Nagar, Siliguri was forcibly removed from her house on 02 April by her house owner, Hiren Dey who suspected that she had contracted the virus. The girl was asked to return after the lockdown ended on 14 April.

However, on 14 April Mr Dey refused to allow the girl to come back and instead asked her to pay the rent and leave, it is alleged in the police complaint.

Bhaichung Bhutia

has requested the police to look into the matter to take necessary action.

It is learnt that the girl was suffering from fever and on learning this the house owner asked her to leave her rented room in Pradhan Nagar, Siliguri and left outside her house for 3-4 hours with no help.

On learning of this, Bhaichung Bhutia and his friends took the girl to a hospital. The doctor in writing informed that it was only regular flu but despite the written statement from the doctor, she was asked by her landlord to come back only after the lockdown.

After knowing the incident, Bhaichung and his friends gave her medical assistance and kept her in a hotel room until she recovered but even after full recovery, she was not allowed back in her rented room.

"It is very unfortunate. In this difficult time people should be supporting each other. Sadly, this girl with a humble background from Sikkim had to go through this nightmare of an experience. I have contacted the police and I hope she gets justice," said Bhaichung Bhutia.

He added that there have been more such cases all over India

against our people, especially the North-Eastern people.

"There should be zero tolerance for discrimination. The local authority should be vigilant and take necessary action to put an end to this," he expressed.

Mizoram to go ahead with class-12 board exam

AIZAWL, APR 17 (PTI): The Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE) will resume class-12 board examination from April 22 despite opposition from a section of students and the Centre's guidelines which said that all educational institutions would remain suspended till May 3 for enforcing the lockdown.

The High School Leaving Certificate (HSSLC) examination will be held from April 22 to April 24 for the remaining subjects in Arts, Science and Commerce streams, a notification issued by the MBSE said on Friday.

It will be conducted in all the examination centres across the state, the notification said.

The board asked the students concerned to

appear in the nearest centre or a centre of their choice.

State Education minister Lalthandama Ralte had announced the resumption of the examination on Wednesday, saying it was inevitable as the board exam was abruptly suspended due to imposition of nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of novel coronavirus.

The state cabinet and a meeting of all political parties, NGOs, churches and student bodies on Monday had suggested re-commencement of the exams.

Ralte said that about 4,700 students are yet to complete their board exams.

On Thursday, a group of students had

launched a no exam campaign on Instagram and other social media platforms demanding the postponement of the re-scheduled exams.

The students complained that many students, who were outside the state and those who were staying in their villages after the nationwide lockdown, will be inconvenienced due to restriction of movement.

They also blamed the state government for backtracking from its earlier decision to resume the examinations after the lockdown period.

Siaha district deputy commissioner Bhupesh Chaudhary on Thursday in a letter to the controller of examination of the MBSE had informed him

that the notification to re-commence the board examinations was a clear violation of the MHA guidelines and therefore, no board exams would be allowed within Siaha district.

"The notification for re-commencement of HSSLC (Arts, Science and Commerce) examination from April 22 in Siaha is a clear violation of the MHA order and therefore, no exemption can be accorded to the conduction of the class-12 board examinations," Chaudhary said in the letter.

In its consolidated guidelines issued on April 15 to contain the spread of novel coronavirus, the MHA said that all educational, training, coaching institutions, among others will remain suspended till May 3.

MP: No cabinet for almost a month even as COVID-19 rages

BHOPAL, APR 17 (PTI): After setting record as the longest-serving chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chouhan would surely not have wanted another 'feather' in his cap: the CM without cabinet for the longest time.

It is 25 days since he was sworn in as chief minister for a fourth time amid the coronavirus outbreak, but he is functioning without a council of ministers.

Before the BJP lost the 2018 Assembly election to the Congress, Chouhan had served as chief minister for almost 13 years without a break, a feat no other politician in Madhya Pradesh has achieved.

On March 23, 2020, he took oath as chief minister for a record

fourth term after Jyotiraditya Scindia's rebellion brought down the Kamal Nath-led Congress government.

Before him, Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa had served without a council of ministers for 22 days in his latest innings, a BJP leader said.

Chouhan will need to accommodate the rebel Congress MLAs who have switched over to the party in his cabinet. BJP sources said that one of the issues that have cropped up is how big or how small the council of ministers should be in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

Opposition Congress is targeting Chouhan, pointing out that despite the state facing a grave challenge in the form of rising number of coronavirus cases and

deaths, Madhya Pradesh does not have a health minister.


As of Thursday, the state had recorded 1,299 coronavirus cases and 63 deaths, most of them in Indore and Bhopal.

"This situation came about because of the coronavirus crisis. Fighting COVID-19 is

the primary concern and priority of the chief minister," said BJP spokesperson Rajneesh Agrawal.

But former chief minister Nath said the BJP is fooling the people of the state which does not have a cabinet or even a health minister amid the pandemic.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?



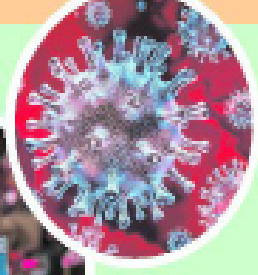
The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

Symptoms of nCoV

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

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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District surveillance Officer
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WEST : 9593297809
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The Art of Distraction

Don't laugh, get scared... very scared

When an elected leader, who has gone on to get selected Chief Minister by his fellow MLAs, in his very first public address of consequence, claims that there were internet-like “things” in the times of the Mahabharata, it is easy to scoff at the pool that democracy offers to pick representatives from. It staggers some more when his Governor too echoes the belief and extends gubernatorial support to the claim. And before the ICT textbooks can be rewritten to include this information about a tool of communication not more than six decades old, he delivers another revelation! Now, he is questioning the evaluation by which beauty pageants select winners and serving “Indians” their most significant query: who represents the quintessential Indian form of beauty better Aishwarya Rai or Diana Hayden? There is a lot that is problematic with “beauty contests,” but come on, even beauty pageants make a token claim for brains. But for the Chief Minister of Tripura, beauty is only skin-deep, and more dangerously, the Indian look has to manifest in a Hindu lady to be good enough to represent India on the global stage. His fixation with mythology as science is clearly limited to Hindu epics, or maybe that is the extent of his learning, because just about every epic from anywhere in the world has characters which communicate long distance, fly, even bend time, receive limb replacement surgeries, build grand edifices... and the list goes on, but the point being made is the same – the Right has dangerous blinkers on, and because they command democratic endorsement now, will be serving more horrors than jokes. Just laugh and mock them, and a nightmare will soon become very real.

The Tripura CM was condemned for that bout of pettiness, but there are more memes and social media jokes about this than warnings. And with this response of mock and giggles, we are performing exactly as the AltRight playbook wants everyone to. When such comments surfaced initially, one could laugh at the obvious juvenility of saffron-flaunting leaders. But these comments are no longer rare, and this throws up two immediate worries – one, that such puerility, because it also has electoral endorsement will get force-fed into the already distressed education system of the country and brainwash an entire generation, and two, that these are intentional distractions in which a stand-up comic subverts the public discourse while the more dangerous muscle demolishes everything that the Right does not agree with. We have already seen the ease with which the American Comic-in-Chief ties up commentators with his tweets and phone-ins while policy changes are effected to upend governmental decencies. It will not surprise if media attention in Tripura is focused so much on the idiocy being announced from public speeches that the violent eviction of political competitors receives no attention. A similar subterfuge was seen in the education sector as well when saffron-clad leaders and junior ministers made outrageous claims at around the same time that institutions were being cut at their knees and/ or being infected from the top. The Right tested the waters when they appointed jokes to outlying institutions like the FTTI and the Censor Board. They refined the power of distracting with “nationalistic lies” when JNU was attacked and now they are upping the game, infiltrating mainstream institutions and daily lives.

It is important to stop seeing the loony claims of leaders of the Right as confirmation of their foolishness. There is a much more Machiavellian plan afoot – one that seeks to lull us with shock and comedy so that we do notice the horror that is actually being put into effect.

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Explainer: What Donald Trump's funding cuts to WHO mean for the world

ADAM KAMRADT-SCOTT
THECONVERSATION.COM

US President Donald Trump has announced the US is cutting its funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) – a decision that will have major implications for the global health response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The US contributes more than US\$400 million to the WHO per year, though it is already US\$200 million in arrears. It is the organisation's largest donor and gives about 10 times what China does per year.

Trump has accused the organisation of mishandling and covering up the initial spread of COVID-19 in China, and of generally failing to take a harsher stance toward China.

What will Trump's decision to cut funding mean for the organisation?

WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE WHO?

The WHO was established in 1948 to serve as the directing and coordinating authority in international health. It was created with a mandate to improve the health of the world's population, and defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

While various civil society, industry and faith-based organisations can observe WHO meetings, only countries are allowed to become members. Every May, member states attend the World Health Assembly in Geneva to set the WHO's policy direction, approve the budget and review the organisation's work.

Currently, there are 194 WHO member states, which means the organisation has one more member state than the United Nations.

HOW IS THE WHO FUNDED?

The WHO receives the majority of its funding from two primary sources. The first is membership dues from countries, which are described as “assessed contributions”.

Assessed contributions are calculated based on the gross domestic product and size of population, but they have not increased in real terms since the level of payments was frozen in the 1980s.

The second source of funding is voluntary contributions. These contributions, provided by governments, philanthropic organisations and

private donations, are usually earmarked for specific projects or initiatives, meaning the WHO has less ability to reallocate them in the event of an emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

HAVE COUNTRIES PULLED FUNDING BEFORE?

Over more than 70 years of operations, a number of countries have failed to pay their membership dues on time.

At one point the former Soviet Union announced it was withdrawing from the WHO and refused to pay its membership fees for several years. When it then rejoined in 1955, it argued for a reduction in its back dues, which was approved.

As a result of nonpayment of assessed contributions, we have seen several instances where the WHO has been on the verge of bankruptcy. Fortunately, governments have usually acted responsibly and eventually paid back their fees.

HAS THERE BEEN POLITICAL CRITICISM OF THE WHO BEFORE?

Yes. In 2009, the WHO was accused of acting too early in declaring swine flu a pandemic, in part over concerns it had been pressured by pharmaceutical companies.

Five years later, the organisation was accused of acting too late in declaring the West African Ebola outbreak a public health emergency.

Trump has criticised the WHO for not acting quickly enough in sending its experts to assess China's efforts to contain COVID-19 and call out China's lack of transparency over its handling of the initial stage of the crisis.

But these criticisms ignore China's sovereignty. The WHO does not have the power to force member states to accept a team of WHO experts to conduct an assessment. The country must request WHO assistance.

Nor does the organisation have the power to force a country to share any information. It can only request.

Of course, Trump's comments also ignore the fact the WHO did eventually send a team of experts to conduct an assessment in mid-February after finally obtaining Chinese approval. The results from this investigation provided important information about the virus and China's efforts to halt its spread.

DOES CHINA HAVE INCREASING INFLUENCE OVER THE WHO?

Understandably China has grown in power and economic influence since 2003, when then-Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland publicly criticised it for trying to hide the spread of the SARS virus.

China has also been criticised for blocking Taiwan's bid to join the organisation. Taiwan has had one of the most robust responses to the COVID-19 crisis.

But China is ultimately just one of the WHO's 194 member states. And one of the great ironies of Trump's criticism is that the organisation has been criticised by other member states for decades for being influenced too heavily by the United States.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE US CUTS FUNDING?

If enacted, these funding cuts may cause the WHO to go bankrupt in the middle of a pandemic. That might mean the WHO has to fire staff, even as they are trying to help low- and middle-income countries save lives.

It will also mean the WHO is less able to coordinate international efforts around issues like vaccine research, procurement of personal protective equipment for health workers and providing technical assistance and experts to help countries fight the pandemic.

More broadly, if the US extends these cuts for other global health initiatives coordinated by the WHO, it will likely cause people in low income countries to lose access to vital medicines and health services. Lives will be lost.

There will also be a cost to the United States' long-term strategic interests.

For decades, the world has looked to the US to provide leadership on global health issues. Due to Trump's attempt to shift blame from his administration's failures to prepare the US for the arrival of COVID-19, he has now signalled the US is no longer prepared to provide that leadership role.

And one thing we do know is that if nature abhors a vacuum, politics abhors it even more.

[the writer is Associate professor, University of Sydney]

Coronavirus: Heavy use of hand sanitisers could boost antimicrobial resistance

WINSTON MORGAN
THECONVERSATION.COM

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, scientists and governments have been advising people about the best hygiene practices to protect themselves. This advice has caused a significant surge in the sale and use of cleaning products and hand sanitisers. Unfortunately, these instructions rarely come with advice about using them responsibly or of the consequences of misuse.

But as with the misuse of antibiotics, the excessive use of cleaning products and hand sanitisers can lead to antimicrobial resistance in bacteria. There's concern that the sudden overuse in cleaning products and hand sanitisers during the pandemic could lead to an increase in the number of antimicrobial-resistant bacterial species we encounter. This would put a greater strain on our already struggling healthcare systems, potentially leading to more deaths. What's more, the problem could continue long after the current pandemic is over.

Antimicrobials (including antibiotic, antiprotazoal, antiviral and antifungal medicines) are important to our health. They help us fight against infections – particularly if your immune system is weak or compromised. However, some organisms (like bacteria) can change or mutate after being exposed to an antimicrobial. This makes them able to withstand the medicines designed to kill them. As the use and misuse of antimicrobials become more

widespread, the number of resistant strains increases. Infections that were once easily treated are now becoming life threatening.

The processes that lead to antimicrobial resistance are many and varied. One route is through mutation. Some mutations occur after the bacteria's DNA has been damaged. This can happen naturally during cell replication, or after exposure to genotoxic chemicals, which damage the cell's DNA. Another route is if bacteria acquires resistant genes from another bacteria.

We usually (and correctly) associate antimicrobial resistance with the misuse of medications, such as antibiotics. Misuse could include failing to complete a course of antibiotics, or ignoring daily dose intervals. Both of these can increase the chance of the most resistant strains of bacteria in a population surviving and multiplying.

But bacteria can also acquire resistance after the inappropriate or excessive use of certain chemicals, including cleaning agents. Diluting sanitising agents, or using them intermittently and inefficiently, can provide a survival advantage to the most resistant strains. This ultimately leads to greater overall resistance.

Making matters worse are internet and social media “experts” offering advice about making homemade hand sanitisers they claim can kill the virus. For most of these products, there's no evidence they're effective. There's also no consideration about any possible

adverse effects from using them. What we do know is that many of these homemade products contain ingredients, such as alcohol, that have antibacterial properties in the right quantities. Anything that's antibacterial has the potential to increase antimicrobial resistance.

COMMON INGREDIENTS

As a toxicologist, I'm concerned that more microorganisms could become antimicrobially resistant as a result of mutations caused by exposure to chemicals found in store-bought and homemade cleaning and hand sanitising products. Many of these (including phenols and hydrogen peroxide) have the potential to damage or alter DNA, and are sometimes referred to as genotoxic agents.

A small amount of DNA damage from normal cellular metabolism is common, particularly in rapidly multiplying bacteria. This damage is normally repaired properly. But if there's extensive DNA damage, or if the repair isn't correct, the cell may not survive.

However, mutations are more likely to happen in the few cases where the genotoxicity is not accurately repaired and the cell survives. A few of these cells may now have a survival advantage, such as antimicrobial resistance. The more frequent the genotoxic events, the more likely a few surviving cells will acquire antimicrobial resistance.

Many of the ingredients in various cleaning agents and hand sanitisers recommended by the

World Health Organization have the potential to cause DNA damage and could lead to mutations necessary for antimicrobial resistance.

Common ingredients in many cleaning supplies and hand sanitisers include alcohols, quaternary ammonium compounds, phenols, hydrogen peroxide, surfactants, benzalkonium chloride and triclosan. The use of some of these compounds have already been linked to an increase in antimicrobial resistance. The current encouragement by the government to use products with these compounds – without clear warnings about the consequences of misuse – needs to be addressed.

When using hand sanitisers and cleaning products, treat them as you would a prescription medication. Read the instructions carefully, as any deviation can render them ineffective. Avoid diluting or combining pre-prepared products with other ones. Only make homemade sanitiser and cleaning products using recipes from government sites with ingredients bought from reputable stores.

Our attempts to protect ourselves from COVID-19 may also be creating an environment where even more antimicrobial resistant microorganisms can emerge. Given that antimicrobial resistance already causes more than 700,000 deaths a year worldwide, it's important we act with caution to prevent further impact.

[the writer is Reader in Toxicology and Clinical Biochemistry, University of East London]

RBI bans banks, cooperatives from paying dividends

MUMBAI, APR 17 (PTI):

The Reserve Bank on Friday debarred all commercial and cooperative banks from paying dividends to shareholders and promoter groups as the regulator fears the Covid-driven economic shocks would continue longer and may put the health of the financial system at risk.

The decision will hit the already scuppered finances of the Centre, given the massive shocks to the economy from the coronavirus-driven lockdown and the already falling growth rates which has brought down demand for loans and thus the profitability

of banks which were anyways grappling with high bad loans.

"It is imperative that banks conserve capital to retain their capacity to support the economy and absorb losses in an environment of heightened uncertainty.

"In this regard in view of the Covid-19-related economic shocks, commercial banks and cooperative banks shall not make any further dividend payouts from the profit pertaining to FY20 until further instructions," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said while announcing a slew of liquidity enhancing measures to prop up the



economy.

"This restriction shall be reviewed on the basis of the financial position of banks as of the September 2020 quarter," he added.

Avnish Jain of Canara Robeco AMC said "stopping dividend payments from banks would be impact

government's non-tax revenue, further worsening the already stressed fiscal situation."

While most private sector banks pay only very low dividends, state-run banks have to make hefty payouts to the government annually. In fact, since 2018 the government

has made it mandatory for all its profit making companies to pay at least 20 percent of their net income as dividend.

Budget 2020 has shifted the dividend distribution tax from the hands of the company to the shareholder/investor, thus appeasing the promoters.

The Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on economies across the world and has taken the lives of over 1.45 lakh globally, including around 440 in India. The virus that began in mid-November 2019 in China has infected over 2.1 million globally including around 13,387 in the country.

First time in 167 years, railways not ferrying passengers on its birthday



ANANYA SENGUPTA

NEW DELHI, APR 17

(PTI): The Indian Railways turned 167 years old on Thursday and for the first time ever, its trains did not carry any passengers on its birthday and instead stood idle in the yards waiting for the nationwide lockdown to end.

On this day 167 years ago, the wheels of the first passenger train in the country from Mumbai to Thane started rolling.

In 1974, Indians experienced life without trains for the first time. In May 1974 during the strike of the railways that lasted for around three weeks, drivers, station masters, guards, track staff and many others went on 'chakka jam' demanding fixed working hours for train drivers and an across-the-board pay hike.

"I can recall those times vividly. I remember that our leader George Fernandes had almost secured a deal with the then railway minister,

but it fell through when it was taken to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi," All India Railwaymen's Federation General Secretary Shiv Gopal Mishra, who was an apprentice in the railways at that time, told PTI.

"Fernandes was arrested in Lucknow. The workers went through a lot at that time. But those were days that angry workers had refused to give in and took great risks to get their demands met," he said.

However, just like this time, four decades ago too freight trains carrying essential supplies were run and the unions agreed to let some passenger trains run on the trunk routes like the Kalka Mail from Howrah to Delhi.

"Never ever in its history, there has been such a long interruption of services. Not during the World Wars, not during the 1974 railway strike, or any other national calamity or natural disaster," a railway spokesperson said.

The first Indian Railways passenger train was flagged off on April 16, 1853, from Mumbai to nearby Thane.

On Thursday, the Railway Ministry wished the railways a happy birthday on Twitter - "Today, 167 years ago with the zeal of 'never to stop' the wheels of the first passenger train from Mumbai to Thane started rolling. For the first time, passenger services are stopped for your safety. Stay indoors & make the nation victorious," it said.

Railway has suspended all passenger services since March 25 till May 3 due to the coronavirus outbreak. Around 15,523 trains run by the railways have been affected including 9,000 passenger trains and 3,000 mail express services which are run daily. It caters to over 20 million passengers every day.

According to the Union health ministry, the death toll due to coronavirus rose to 414 and the number of cases to 12,380 in the country on Thursday.

IAF delivers medical equipment to Nagaland

NEW DELHI, APR 17 (PTI):

Amid the coronavirus lockdown, the Indian Air Force's C-17 plane has lifted the first consignment of medical equipment to Nagaland from Delhi for setting up a bio safety level-3 laboratory, the Civil Aviation Ministry said on Friday.

The ministry said on Twitter, "The first consignment of equipment required to set up a Bio Safety Level-3 laboratory in Nagaland was delivered with the help of the C-17 Globemaster III, the biggest transport aircraft of Indian Air Force on 16th April

under Lifeline UDAN."

The consignment was planned to depart from Mumbai to Kohima on Wednesday but was cancelled due to bad weather. Instead, it was taken by the IAF's plane to Hindon Airport in Delhi.

"Due to the collective efforts of stakeholders and high level of coordination, the flight reached Kohima with 18 tons of medical equipment on April 16," the ministry said.

Under Lifeline UDAN scheme, the government has now flown 262 flights across 2,64,181 kms with 454 tons of medical & essential



cargo since March 26, said Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday.

India is under a lockdown to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, which

has infected more than 12,700 people and killed 400 plus people in the country.

445 people from various states stranded in Mizoram: CM

AIZAWL, APR 16 (PTI):

At least 445 people from various states are stranded in Mizoram due to the nationwide lockdown that began from March 25 to contain the spread of novel coronavirus, Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga said on Thursday.

He said the stranded people are lodged at various relief camps and the state government was providing all possible assistance, including food.

Zoramthanga said hundreds of Mizos are also stranded in different parts of the country due to the ongoing lockdown.

He said that his

government is in close contact with the other state governments to give humanitarian aid to the stranded Mizos as per the Centres directive.

The chief minister expressed an apology to the Mizos, who stranded in the Northeast, for failing to bring them home due to the extension of nationwide lockdown.

Before the extension of the nationwide lockdown, the Mizoram government had decided to make elaborate arrangement to ensure the return of those Mizoram residents, who are stranded in different parts of the Northeast

region.

"Although we have planned to bring back the Mizos stranded in the Northeast when our government announced the extension of lockdown on April 13, we could not execute the plan because the Centre extended the nationwide lockdown till May 3 and prohibited inter-district and inter-state movement," he said.

Urging the stranded Mizos to stay where they are, Zoramthanga said the state government would make effort to take back all the stranded state residents once lockdown is over and normalcy returned in the country.

'No mask, no oil' at petrol pumps across West Bengal

KOLKATA, APR 17 (PTI):

Petrol pumps across West Bengal have decided not to sell fuel to those visiting without a mask, an official of the dealers' association said on Friday.

To create awareness about the measures to contain the spread of coronavirus, it has been decided not to sell petrol or diesel to those drivers and bike owners who are not wearing masks, said S Koley, general secretary of the West Bengal Petroleum Dealers Association.

The decision was

taken on Thursday evening and has since come into effect, he said, adding that the pumps are now putting up placards saying "no mask, no oil".

"Many are coming to the pumps without masks, but when told about the decision, they are taking them out from their pockets," Koley told PTI.

He said that the response so far has been satisfactory and those not having masks are being turned away. The exercise will continue till the lockdown is lifted or

the scourge subsides, Koley said.

The association, which has oil marketing companies Indian Oil Corp, Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum as its members, has nearly 2,000 retail outlets under its fold across the state.

An IOC spokesperson said, "This is a welcome move by the petroleum dealers' association. This personal protection measures should continue till the disease is contained or fully eliminated.

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When “ice cool” Dhoni lost his cool for first time in 20 years, recalls Kuldeep



New Delhi, Apr 17 (PTI): Kuldeep Yadav was mortally scared that day and he had every reason to be. After all, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, by his own admission, had lost his cool for the first time in 20 years.

And it was the left-arm chinaman, who got a verbal lashing from the veteran for not adhering to his instructions while bowling during an ODI against Sri Lanka in 2017.

“Kusal (Perera) smashed a boundary over the covers. Dhoni Bhai shouted from behind the wickets and asked me to change the fielding. I did not listen to his suggestion and next ball, Kusal hit another boundary with a reverse sweep,” Kuldeep told sports anchor Jatin Sapru during an instagram chat.

And what happened next was something that Kuldeep hadn't factored in.

“...angry Dhoni came up to me and said, ‘main pagal hu? 300 one-day khela hoon, aur samjha raha hoon yahaan pe.’ (Am I mad? I have played 300 ODIs and you are not listening to me).”

So scared was the UP spinner that he went upto Dhoni in the team bus to apologise and asked if he had ever lost his composure like this in the past.

“I was so scared of him that day. After the match, I went up to him in the team bus and asked if he ever got angry. he replied: ‘20 saal se gussa nahi kiya hai (I have never been angry in the last 20 years.)’.

Dhoni has not played since India's semifinal exit from the ODI World Cup last year.

The enigmatic former captain was expected to make a comeback with the IPL but that stands postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Vettel dismisses back-to-back racing overload as ‘not realistic’

PARIS, APR 17 (AFP): Four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel on Friday cautioned against the temptation to shoehorn too many Formula One races into a revised calendar, describing the move as “not realistic”. The 22-event F1 season has been decimated by the coronavirus with nine races either cancelled or postponed. The French Grand Prix scheduled for June 28 is also in doubt as is the Belgian Grand Prix, set for August 30.

F1 chiefs have floated the idea of making up for lost time by staging races on successive weekends or even having two races on the same weekend.

However, Ferrari star Vettel fears such a move could lead to burnout for team staff.

“We drivers are a little privileged,” Vettel told reporters by teleconference from his home in Switzerland.

“Of course, the races are tiring but there have to be limits for the staff. They must rest.

“We must also see if it is easy to reschedule races, if the circuits are not already taken.



Many questions remain. I think the schedule will be busier, but 10 consecutive weekends is not realistic.”

Vettel suggested that he would favour staging races without fans if it allowed a quick resumption as long as it did not become a common feature.

Other sports have already toyed with the idea of staging events behind closed doors.

- 'IT'S COMPLICATED' -

For example, the US PGA Tour on Thursday announced plans to resume in June, with the first four tournaments being closed to spectators.

“It's complicated,” admitted Vettel.

“On the one hand, there is the health of the sport, on the other, that of the people who work in the paddock and especially the fans.

“There are several options. No one likes to run in front of empty stands, but we will have to see if it will not allow us to resume much sooner.

“The first races will probably be a little different, but not too much, I hope, because we want to run in front of the fans.” Vettel insists that for him even a 10-race season is just as valuable as a 22-race campaign.

However, he admits that the damage to the sport caused by the coronavirus pandemic

could be fatal for the smaller teams on the grid.

Without racing, the massive TV and sponsorship revenues have dried up.

Half of the teams have already started furloughing staff.

Teams have agreed to lower the spending cap from 175 million (161.4 million euros) to 150 million.

“Clearly, some small teams are in danger and, as a family, F1 has to take care of its own,” said Vettel.

- SPECULATION -

Spending has not been the only talk in the sport.

There has also been speculation over Vettel's contract with Ferrari.

China football ultras keep ‘Chariots of Fire’ runner burning bright

SHANGHAI, APR 17 (AFP): Eric Liddell was a Scottish Olympic champion but a group of diehard Chinese football fans is determined that the legendary runner is not forgotten there, 75 years after his death.

The 400m gold medallist from the 1924 Paris Olympics, immortalised in Oscar-winning film “Chariots of Fire”, was a Christian missionary and athlete who was born, worked and died in China.

He was 43 when he succumbed to a brain tumour at a Japanese internment camp in 1945. He is said to have refused a ticket out from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, instead giving it to a pregnant woman.

Now, three-quarters of a century later, fanatical supporters of

Chinese Super League club Tianjin Teda want to ensure that the memory of Liddell's contribution to the city of his birth does not fade away.

“Eric was a great man. He was not a Chinese national but we consider him a Tianjiner,” said Sam Wang, 25, co-founder of ultras group “Tiger Wings”.

“He sacrificed his life in China.”

In his honour, Wang and his fellow Tianjin diehards made a flag depicting Liddell with a gold medal slung around his neck. They plan to send it to Liddell's family.

Wang said the flag was partly a riposte to what he sees as a rise in nationalism among fans of some other Chinese football clubs.

- STAMFORD BRIDGE LINK -

In an historic area

of Tianjin, a city of 15 million people on China's northeast coast, lies Minyuan Stadium, the former home of Tianjin Teda.

It has been turned into a cultural centre but it was Liddell's idea to base the stadium's design on Stamford Bridge, home ground of London club Chelsea.

“He brought the drawings of Stamford Bridge stadium to Tianjin in 1925 so it was one of the earliest cities in China to have a stadium,” said Bai Guosheng, director of Tianjin Sports Museum.

“I think he deserves to be remembered -- he was a selfless devotee to Chinese sports and laid the groundwork for modern sports in China.”

After his birth in 1902 in Tianjin to missionary parents, Liddell was

educated in Britain and represented his country at the Olympics.

But he returned to China as a missionary and was also a sports and chemistry teacher in Tianjin. He is regarded by some as China's first Olympic champion.

In 2015, a statue to Liddell was unveiled in Weifang, the city south of Tianjin where he died in a Japanese camp.

At the unveiling, Liddell's daughter Patricia told The Times of London: “My father was multi-faceted, he didn't just appeal to religious people.

“He was born in China, he worked in China, he died in China.

“He's their Olympic hero. He didn't leave the Chinese people when the going got tough.”

- 'WE WON'T FORGET HIM' -

There are no

suggestions China is airbrushing the “Flying Scotsman” from history but the Tianjin fans want to keep his star burning bright.

“A few years ago the nationalism in China began increasing and there were a few neo-Nazi ultras groups emerging in China,” said Wang.

“But Tianjin has a long history of having international people from around the world and it's our culture to absorb cultures from all over the world.

“We wanted our voice to be heard and Eric was born in Tianjin.

“We want to deliver the message to the locals and make sure they remember him and pass his legacy through generations of Tianjin football fans. “We will not forget him.”

Indian women’s hockey team to raise funds for poor affected by lockdown

NEW DELHI, APR 17 (PTI): The Indian women's hockey team on Friday launched a fun fitness challenge to raise funds for the migrant labourers whose families have been affected by the nationwide lockdown to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 18-day challenge aims to raise money through crowdfunding to feed at least 1000 families while also encouraging people to adopt an active lifestyle during the nationwide lockdown that has been extended till May 3.

“...every day we are reading in the newspapers and social media about so many people struggling for food, we decided to do something to help these people as a team,” captain Rani Rampal said in a Hockey India press release.

“...we thought an online fitness challenge



would be the best way to do it and this way, we can also urge people to stay active during the nationwide lockdown. Through this initiative, our goal is to raise enough funds to feed at least 1000 families,” she said.

The money from the crowd-funding effort will be donated to a Delhi-based NGO Uday Foundation and the proceeds will be used to provide basic necessities for patients at various locations, migrant workers and

slum dwellers.

Apart from providing food/dry ration, the fund will also be used to provide sanitary kits that will include soaps and hand sanitisers.

The challenge will see members of the Indian women's hockey team come up with fitness tasks that range from burpees, lunges, squats to spider-man pushups, pogo hops and more.

Each day, a player will give a new challenge and tag 10 people on her social media handles to

take up the challenge and donate Rs. 100 for the cause.

“Everyday, we will give a fun new challenge that can be done by anybody. Those who take up the challenge can donate Rs 100 or more to the fundraiser. We really hope people support us in this cause, vice-captain Savita said.

“All of us in the Indian Women's Hockey Team come from poor economic backgrounds and we have seen days when we have struggled

Project runway: Olympian Morris builds own pole vault setup

WASHINGTON, APR 17 (AP): Sandi Morris set the bar high with her latest do-it-yourself project.

Soon, she will be clearing it, too.

The Olympic pole vault silver medalist didn't have a place to practice and plenty of down time due to the coronavirus pandemic. So she and her father constructed their own pole-vault setup near Greenville, South Carolina.

Built out of plywood, the 120-foot (36.6-meter) runway is situated between a soccer field and a tennis court on neighborhood land two blocks from her parents' place. Their pole vault project could be operational as soon as this weekend (they just need the landing mat to arrive).

Viewing is definitely encouraged from windows for now (social distancing and all).

There are tons of houses that can see the field from their windows, said the 27-year-old Morris, who usually trains in Fayetteville, Arkansas, but traveled home to start the project with the Tokyo Games postponed to next summer and no foreseeable competitions.

So I'm being literal when I say they're going to watch me from their windows. It will be fun. This project has been in the back of their mind for ages. Morris would always venture home and wouldn't be able to stay long because she had to return to practice.

Now, her coach can simply send along a workout.

This virus kind of pushed us to do something that we've always wanted to do, said Morris, who finished second to Katerina Stefanidi of Greece at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

The entire endeavor took about three weeks and cost around 4,000 (not counting the landing mat, which usually runs around 30,000 but was loaned to her). There's a rubber surface covering the runway for better traction, too. No concrete was used so it can be moved (although, not easily).

Each day, the routine went something like this: Sandi would train in the morning while her father, Harry, worked from home as a geologist. When their day jobs were complete, they headed to the field about two blocks out their front door to finish the pole-vault project (friends volunteered their time, too, on property the owner gave a green light to use). The father and daughter would be down there until nearly dark.

Most times, she would head home first with her dad saying he would be along shortly.

An hour later, he then comes home. My mom's like, ‘Where were you?’ And he's like, and this is always the answer, ‘Oh, I was just tinkering,’ explained Morris, who's earned the silver medal at the last two world outdoor championships. This project brings him a lot of joy and that brings me a lot of joy.

The blueprint was provided by Scott Kendricks, the father of two-time world pole vaulting champion Sam Kendricks. The Kendricks family built a similar setup years ago in Mississippi (they've since switched to a fabricated runway).

It's no easy task.

Almost like building a skate-park you can really mess it up if you don't know what you're doing, Sam Kendricks said.

But I saw her running on it and I was like, ‘Wow, that's a fine runway you guys have built.’ He's eager to try it out once shelter-at-home restrictions are eased and it's safer to travel again, of course.

Heck yeah. I'd definitely drive through Atlanta to visit Sandi and try that, Kendricks said.

Maybe even a competition on it one day? The runway is mobile enough and could be moved to, say, the streets of downtown Greenville for an event like the Liberty Bridge Jump Off.

If you build it, they will come, Kendricks joked.

Or they'll ask to. To stay sharp, Morris is working out with recently purchased weight room equipment. She's also enjoying some down time at home. She recently purchased a bunny for her niece (“scored some cool points,” she laughed).

It was one highlight after another last fall for Morris, who grabbed second at the world championships in Doha, Qatar. Soon after, she married Bermuda long jumper Tyrone Smith. They're currently in different locations, though, as he balances training for the Olympics with business school at the University of Texas.

Maybe down the road, a long-jump project.

“There's not really a great place for him to jump here, she explained.

There are high school tracks that have long-jump pits, but most of them don't have a long enough runway. As for the Olympics being pushed back until next summer, she's trying to look at the positive no matter how hard it may be. Diamond League meets are postponed until at least June.

Building this has been such an incredible distraction, Morris said. “The pole vaulting here will allow me to just go out and have fun.

China revises coronavirus figures in epicentre Wuhan; death toll jumps to 4,632

K J M VARMA
BEIJING / WUHAN, APR 17 (PTI): China's coronavirus death toll mounted to 4,632 on Friday as the country revised figures in its epicentre Wuhan with 1,290 additional fatalities amid international criticism of under-reporting of COVID-19 data.

The Wuhan municipal headquarters on Friday revised the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths due to the disease, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

As of April 16, the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Wuhan was increased by 325 to 50,333 and the number of fatalities up by 1,290 to 3,869.

The revised figure raised China's overall COVID-19 death toll to 4,632. The total number of cases also increased to 82,692.

The Wuhan municipal headquarters in a notification said the revisions were made in accordance with related laws and regulations as well as the principle of being responsible for history, the people and the deceased.

The revision of figures came amid sharp criticism of China by the US and other nations for its alleged under-reporting of the coronavirus cases and cover-up of the origin of the viral strain, which emerged in Wuhan in December last, reportedly from the local Hunan sea food market.

Explaining the reason for the figure revision, the

Wuhan municipality said it was done to ensure that the information on the city's COVID-19 epidemic is open and transparent, and that the data are accurate.

Listing the reasons for the data discrepancies, it said the surging number of patients at the early stage of the epidemic overwhelmed medical resources and the admission capacity of medical institutions. Some patients died at home without having been treated in hospitals.

Besides, during the height of their treating efforts, hospitals were operating beyond their capacities and medical staff were preoccupied with saving and treating patients, resulting in belated, missed and mistaken reporting.

Also, due to a rapid increase of designated hospitals for treating COVID-19 patients -- including those administered by ministries, Hubei Province, Wuhan city and its districts, those affiliated to companies, as well as private hospitals and makeshift hospitals -- a few medical institutions were not linked to the epidemic information network and failed to report their data in time.

The registered information of some of the deceased patients was incomplete, and there were repetitions and mistakes in the reporting, the Wuhan authorities noted. Citing an official of the Wuhan municipal headquarters, Xinhua reported that a group for epidemic-related big data and epidemiological investigations was

established in late March.

The group used information from online systems and collected full information from all epidemic-related locations to ensure that facts about every case are accurate and every figure is objective and correct.

"What lie behind the epidemic data are the lives and health of the general public, as well as the credibility of the government," the official was quoted by the report.

The timely revision of the figures, among other things, shows respect for every single life, the official said.

Meanwhile, the revised cases were not included in the overall national figures released by China's National Commission (NHC) in its daily report on Friday as it reports previous day's cases.

As per NHC data, as of Thursday the overall confirmed cases of coronavirus was 82,367, including 3,342 deaths.

As many as 1,081 patients are being treated and 77,944 people discharged after recovery, it said.

NHC said it received reports of 26 new confirmed COVID-19 cases from the mainland on Thursday, of which 15 were imported.

The other 11 new cases were domestically transmitted, it said, noting that five cases were reported in Guangdong Province, three in Heilongjiang Province, two in Shandong Province and one in Liaoning Province.

No death was reported on Thursday on the mainland.

Bolsonaro fires popular Brazil health minister amid pandemic

Rio De Janeiro, Apr 17 (AP): Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, whose dismissive stance toward the COVID-19 pandemic has angered many health experts, fired his popular health minister following a series of disagreements over the proper response to contain the virus' spread in South America's most populous country.

Luiz Henrique Mandetta, an orthopedist, had garnered support for his handling of the pandemic that included promotion of broad isolation measures enacted by state governors, even drawing comparisons to Dr. Anthony Fauci, U.S. President Donald Trump's top virus expert.

His dismissal comes as experts say the peak of the new coronavirus outbreak in Brazil is expected in the coming weeks.

You should have absolute certainty that we fought a good fight until here, Mandetta told fellow ministry workers in a televised press conference Thursday after announcing his departure.

But we're at the start of the battle. Bolsonaro, for his part, has repeatedly characterized the virus as a little flu, said shutting down the economy would cause more damage than confining only high-risk Brazilians, and touted the yet-unproven efficacy of an anti-malarial drug.

Life is priceless, but the economy and



employment need to return to normality, Bolsonaro said at a press conference on Thursday. He also said he would neither condemn nor criticize Mandetta.

It was a consensual divorce because more important than me and more important than him as a minister is the health of the Brazilian people.

For Mandetta's replacement, Bolsonaro named Nelson Teich, an oncologist and senior consultant at medical services company Teich Health Care. He also has a Master's in Business Administration, according to his LinkedIn page.

Speaking alongside Bolsonaro, Teich said he didn't want to announce any changes abruptly, as little is known about the virus. He added that he and the president are completely aligned.

Health and the economy are complementary, Teich said.

While Fauci isn't a politician like Mandetta, both have often made public statements about the virus that differed with those of their bosses. The White House has said this week that Fauci's job is secure. Still, Republicans close to the White House say Trump has complained about Fauci's positive media attention and sought to leave him out of task force briefings.

Bolsonaro, likewise, had convened doctors without inviting Mandetta and, in a televised interview earlier this month, said Mandetta had failed to show humility.

A few days later, on April 5, Bolsonaro told a group of supporters that he would act against officials in his

government who are full of themselves.

Those comments were widely understood as signaling an end to Mandetta's tenure, so much so that the minister said the next day his subordinates had cleaned out his desk.

He survived, but questions swirled over whether Bolsonaro had indeed backed away from dismissing the man whose COVID-19 response was welcomed by many Brazilians, or if he were just biding his time while recruiting a replacement.

That uncertainty vanished on Thursday.

While rising quickly, the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Brazil is still relatively low in relation to the country's massive population of 211 million, though it does have the most cases in

Latin America. There have been almost 2,000 deaths. Its peak is expected in May.

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

Following Mandetta's announcement of his firing, people in apartment buildings in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro could be heard yelling insults at Bolsonaro from their windows. A survey earlier this month by pollster Datafolha showed three-quarters of Brazilians approved of the health ministry's handling of the crisis, versus just one-third for Bolsonaro.

At his press conference, Mandetta offered thanks to individuals with whom he had worked, and even to Bolsonaro.

I leave the health ministry with a lot of gratitude to the president for having nominated me and allowing me to nominate each of you, Mandetta said. I know I am leaving the best team. Work for the next minister like you worked for me. Don't spare any effort.

Ex-Trump lawyer Cohen being released from prison

WASHINGTON, APR 17 (AP): President Donald Trump's former lawyer and longtime fixer Michael Cohen will be released from federal prison to serve the remainder of his sentence in home confinement amid the coronavirus pandemic, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

Cohen is currently locked up at FCI Otisville in New York after pleading guilty to numerous charges, including campaign finance fraud and lying to Congress. He will remain under quarantine for 14 days before he is released.

Federal statistics show 14 inmates and seven staff members at the prison have tested positive for coronavirus.

After he is released, Cohen will serve the remainder of his sentence at home, according to the person, who could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Cohen's release comes

as prison advocates and congressional leaders have been pressing the Justice Department for weeks to release at-risk inmates ahead of a potential outbreak, arguing that the public health guidance to stay 6 feet (1.8 meters) away from other people is nearly impossible behind bars.

Attorney General William Barr ordered the Bureau of Prisons earlier this month to increase the use of home confinement and expedite the release of eligible high-risk inmates, beginning at three prisons identified as coronavirus hot spots. Otisville is not one of those facilities.

As of Thursday, 473 federal inmates and 279 Bureau of Prisons staff members had tested positive for coronavirus at facilities across the U.S. Eighteen inmates have died since late March.

Many federal inmates have been seeking home confinement as the number of coronavirus cases grows in the federal prison system, but advocates have accused

the Bureau of Prisons of moving too slowly to release inmates.

The Bureau of Prisons said it had moved more than 1,000 inmates to home confinement since March 26, when Barr first issued a directive to increase its use in late March.

The agency said it is a tremendous logistical lift that was accomplished through the marshaling of all of BOP's resources.

A federal judge had denied Cohen's attempt for an early release to home confinement after serving 10 months in prison and said in a ruling earlier this month that it appears to be just another effort to inject himself into the news cycle.

But the Bureau of Prisons can take action to move him to home confinement without a judicial order.

Cohen began serving his sentence last May and was scheduled to be released from prison in November 2021.

Other high-profile inmates have also been released as the number

of coronavirus cases soars. Last week, a judge ordered Michael Avenatti the attorney who rose to fame representing porn star Stormy Daniels in lawsuits against Trump to be temporarily freed from a federal jail in New York City and stay at a friend's house in Los Angeles.

Avenatti had said he was at high risk of getting the coronavirus because he had a recent bout with pneumonia and his cellmate at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan was removed due to flu-like symptoms.

Former New York state Senate leader Dean Skelos, 72, who was also serving a sentence at Otisville, is also expected to be released soon from prison to home confinement after testing positive for the coronavirus, prosecutors told a judge Wednesday.

CNN first reported Cohen was being released to home confinement.

A spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan declined to comment.

Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed rebels exchange prisoners

KYIV, APR 17 (AP): Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed rebels exchanged 34 prisoners Thursday in the latest trade aimed at creating conditions that could lead to the end of the six-year war in eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian president's office said.

Ukraine took back 20 of its citizens in the swap with the two

separatist entities in the rebel-controlled east, according to a statement from the office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Fourteen rebels were released in exchange.

It was the third prisoner exchange since Zelenskyy was elected in a landslide last year on promises of ending the conflict in eastern

Ukraine, which has killed more than 14,000 people since 2014 and aggravated tensions between Russia and the West.

All of this is being done for Ukrainians, who we must rescue from the hell of captivity, Andriy Yermak, Zelenskyy's chief of staff, said.

We're bringing back all Ukrainians (held

captive by the rebels). With no exceptions. This is what strong countries that value their citizens do. Prisoner exchanges were part of an agreement brokered last year at a summit of the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France. The aim is to take confidence-building steps toward talks to end the war.

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BROADWAY ACTOR MAY NEVER WALK AGAIN AFTER CORONAVIRUS HOSPITALIZATION, WIFE SAYS

“WE don’t know if he’ll be able to walk again,” his wife, Amanda Kloots, said. “We don’t know if he can walk again what that will look like.”

Broadway actor Nick Cordero is in the fight of his life.

After being hospitalized and placed on an ECMO machine to get cardiac and respiratory support last week, the 41-year-old’s wife Amanda Kloots said he was in critical condition.

On Thursday, the fitness trainer shared to her Instagram stories that her husband was improving — he was taken off the ECMO machine — and his recent surgery went well.

“The doctor said for Nick’s heart and lungs right now they’re in the best condition that they could be,” she explained in a video. “The fact that he’s off (the ECMO machine) is great.”

She added that his right leg was having blood flow issues, and the doctors “went in there” to get the blood flowing to his toes but they “don’t know what the damage will be.”

“We don’t know if he’ll be able to walk again,” she said. “We don’t know if he can walk again what that will look like.”



On April 1, Kloots first revealed her husband — who had most recently starred in “Rock of Ages” in Los Angeles — had gotten sick and been “misdiagnosed” with pneumonia instead of COVID-19. According to Buzzfeed, she said Cordero later tested positive for the coronavirus after two negative tests.

Throughout the ordeal, Kloots has been trying to stay positive with the help of her online community — regularly

reposting videos of friends and fans dancing, singing, all with the message “wake up, Nick!” — and said music has been helping her through this time.

“My whole world has stopped,” she wrote when she announced his hospitalization. “Please pray for my husband. Prayer warriors, prayer circles, whatever you’ve got. ... Elvis and I need you Nick Cordero. It’s time to fight daddy.”

Elvis is their 10-month-old son. It’s fitting, too, that

Kloots recently played an Elvis song for Cordero via FaceTime: “Got a Lot o’ Livin’ to Do.”

She added on Thursday the cast from “Rock of Ages” has been helping by babysitting her son so she could have a moment to herself.

“I’m exhausted and so tired. And we are doing our best over here to hold down the fort,” she said. “We got good news today ... and I want to celebrate, so I’m going to go dance.”

Pink Floyd Announces YouTube Concert Series

The band will stream its 1995 concert film, Pulse, on Friday

To keep fans occupied while in quarantine, Pink Floyd is following the lead of Radiohead and Metallica and launching a YouTube concert series. In the coming weeks, the band will release unseen, rare, or archived material from their vault and stream it for free (via Forbes).

“We’d like to wish you all the best, and hope that you and your families are staying safe and well in these difficult times,” Pink Floyd said in a statement posted to Facebook. “We will continue to post as normal to hopefully give you some interesting and diverting images, music and video to help us all get through this.”

The first such release is Pulse, Pink Floyd’s 1995 concert film. The 22-song set documents “The Division Bell Tour,” filmed at London’s now-defunct Earls Court during the band’s record-breaking 14-night residency. Of particular note is the inclusion of the first-ever film recording of Pink Floyd playing The Dark Side of the Moon in full. Mixed in 5.1 surround sound and digitally re-mastered by James Guthrie, Pulse also includes some of original screen films used for the 1970s concert performances



of The Dark Side of the Moon (which were never filmed) as well as the visual components for the piece which were remade for the 1994 tour.

Pulse will stream for free on Pink Floyd’s YouTube channel beginning Friday, April 17th at 12:00 p.m. EDT.

Because of the coronavirus, Roger Waters was forced to postpone his “This Is Not a Drill Tour” until 2021. Meanwhile, David Gilmour has been covering Leonard Cohen songs from the comfort of his home while in quarantine.

Brian Dennehy dead: ‘First Blood’ and ‘Cocoon’ actor and Tony-winning stage star, was 81

Brian Dennehy, the burly actor who started in films as a macho heavy and later in his career won plaudits for his stage work in plays by William Shakespeare, Anton Chekhov, Eugene O’Neill and Arthur Miller, has died. He was 81.

Dennehy died Wednesday night of natural causes in New Haven, Conn., according to Kate Cafaro of ICM Partners,

the actor’s representatives.

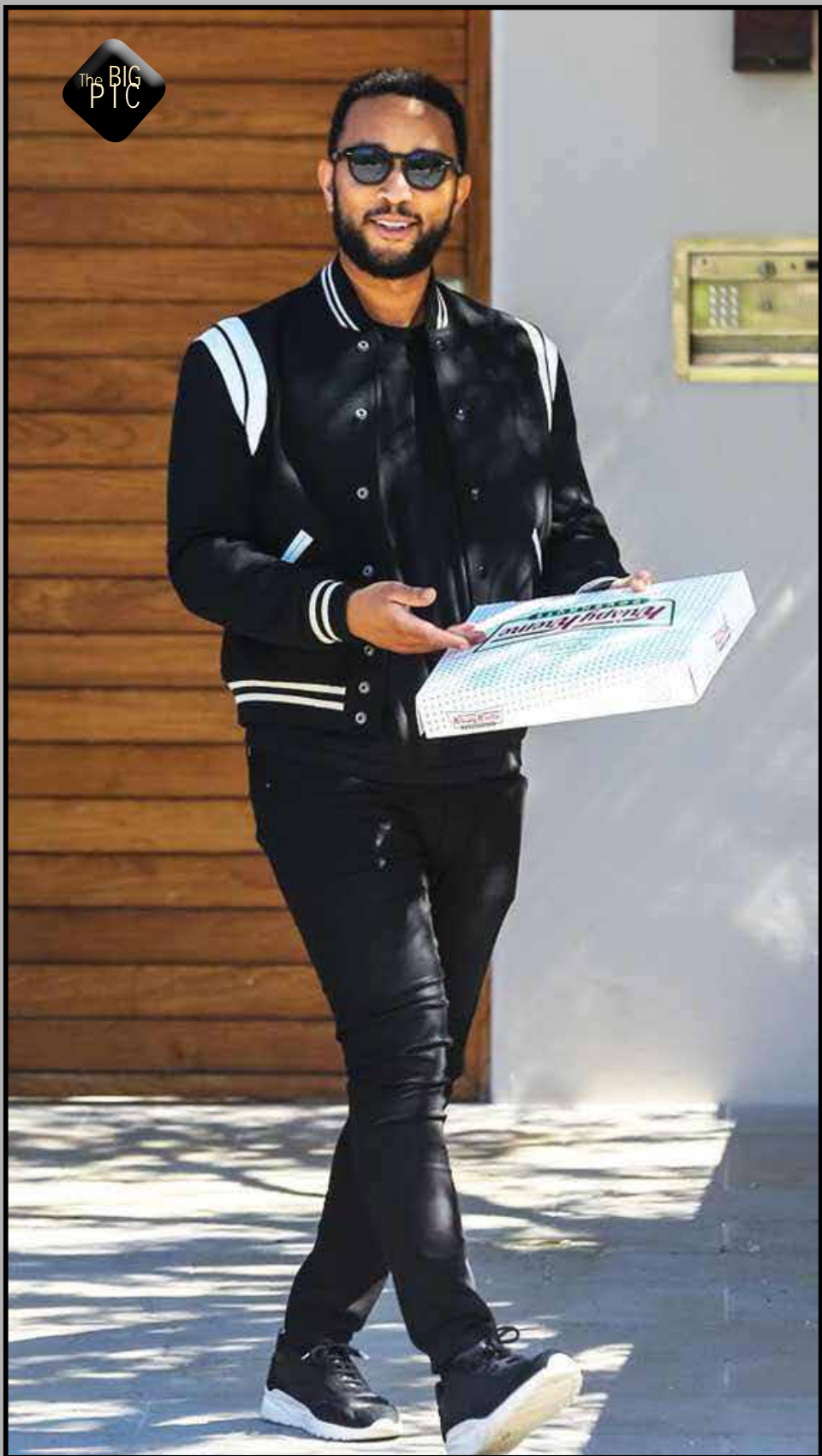
Known for his broad frame, booming voice and ability to play good guys and bad guys with equal aplomb, Dennehy won two Tony Awards, a Golden Globe and was nominated for six Emmys. He was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 2010.

Among his 40-odd films, he played a sheriff who jailed

Rambo in “First Blood,” a serial killer in “To Catch a Killer” and a corrupt sheriff gunned down by Kevin Kline in “Silverado.” He also had some benign roles: the bartender who consoles Dudley Moore in “10” and the levelheaded leader of aliens in “Cocoon” and its sequel.

On Broadway, he was awarded Tonys for his portrayals of the hard-luck,

economically despairing Willy Loman in “Death of a Salesman” (1999) and the grandstanding, self-deceiving father, James Tyrone, in “Long Day’s Journey Into Night” (2003). In Los Angeles, he most recently starred in a fall 2018 double bill at Geffen Playhouse of O’Neill’s “Hughie” and Samuel Beckett’s “Krapp’s Last Tape.”



SWEET GESTURE! The musician, John Legend leaves a box of Krispy Kreme donuts for the paparazzi at their Malibu home.

Selena Gomez Sues Mobile Game For US\$10mil For Stealing Her Likeness

American singer Selena Gomez has filed a US\$10 million lawsuit against two companies for allegedly stealing her likeness and using it in a mobile game called “Clothes Forever - Styling Game”.

According to Variety, the defendants were identified as Guangzhou Feidong Software Technology Co. and MutantBox Interactive Limited.

The former is the China-based seller of the game while the latter is the British company that holds copyrights to the game.

Gomez alleged that one of the characters “is obviously based on her”, and that she has never gave permission to any individuals to use her likeness in a mobile game.

“Defendants never requested, consulted, or informed Gomez regarding the use of any of her publicity rights in connection with the Game,” read the suit filed by Gomez.

“Nor, if asked, would Gomez have



consented to such use for the Game, which apparently relies on the unsavory practice of luring its users to make in-game purchases in amounts as much as \$99.99 to fund imaginary spending in the Game and unlock features.”

The game, which is available on Apple’s App Store, allows players to purchase “diamonds” for between US\$0.99 and US\$99.99 and go on virtual shopping sprees with celebs.

The suit also points out that the mobile game not only rated lowly in the App Store (3.5 stars out of 5) but is also riddled with bugs.

personally. Their behaviour has nothing to do with you, and everything to do with them. What you want to do instead is redirect your attention towards yourself. Standing in your truth is the answer to surviving life’s many storms.

Cancer: Maybe you don’t want to put a label on it. Maybe you don’t want to ‘define’ the relationship. You do you, Cancer. What matters is that you and your special someone are on the same page. The opinions of others (including your close friends) should matter little at this point. Coupled Cancerians are also letting go of the old ways of relating and making peace with where they are now—a place of joy, love, and creativity.

Leo: Sharing space 24/7 is seldom easy, even with your loved ones. Statutory warning: you will be triggered, Leo. Resist the urge to project your anger and hatred onto the other. It’s best to announce a time out well in advance. Chances are, something on the domestic front could become a cause of friction between everyone. The solution: dividing responsibilities in a fair manner. Make time to listen to what other people have to say. Their suggestions could actually assist you in your journey.

Virgo: The journey to where you are standing now has been full of compromises. But you regret nothing. You realise that every step you took in the past has brought you to this point in your existence. Send out a prayer of gratitude for the peace and harmony you are experiencing. Coupled Virgos, this period could usher in a whole new level of security and stability. If you’ve been thinking about family planning or bringing your own into this world, the Universe wants you to know that there is no time like the now. Tip: You are experiencing a whole new level of security and stability in your relationship.

Libra: If you’ve been feeling the feels for somebody, the cards are urging you to take the first step; to open your heart and mind and hold space for conversation. Nothing frees you like the truth does, Libra. You may have struggled with giving your relationships a concrete form in the past, but you’re in a different place now. You have consistently worked on yourself and healed the past. Trust what the Universe is opening up for you. This is the start of something brand new!

Scorpio: Scorpio, you’re slaying dragons and looking

your demons in the eye! This is a turning point in your journey. Reclaiming your power is making you the most glorious version of yourself. Remember, those who stand in their truth are sure to intimidate the common folk. Don’t let the limitations of others get to you. This is also a magical time in the Plutonian HQ. You are learning the ways of the Universe and establishing new rituals that help you stay connected to the mysterious forces above.

Sagittarius: The cards are pointing towards a special collaboration that’s coming your way, Sagittarius. Keep your judgements and biases aside and learn to be receptive. The work you create together has the potential to change your life for the better. As such, this is also a romantic time for you. You’ll find that your partner is going that extra mile to express their love, support, and gratitude. Couples who don’t have the luxury of sharing space should consider setting up an oh-so-special date night!

Capricorn: Things could have been a lot worse but you have a roof over your head, food on your plate, and the company of at least some of the people you love. If that isn’t a good enough reason to express gratitude then what is? Bonding with

your family is going to be a big theme in the Capricorn HQ. Move past the differences and focus on the similarities. You are connected in more ways than one. Your partner or a loved one could be in the midst of a storm right now, but this is not your drama to deal with. Staying centred is the key to offering support in a healthy manner.

Aquarius: The truth has been in front of you for a while, Aquarius. It took you this long to open your eyes to it! But now that you are awake, resist the urge to go back to sleep or brush things under the carpet. Address the pain. Ask your wounds to reveal the hidden lesson. Know that this trigger is assisting your soul’s journey towards the light. Some of you could find yourself pining for an emotionally unavailable partner.

Pisces: Here’s to epiphanies that change the course of your life! You are now realising what you are worth and what you don’t deserve. You are disengaging with people who disrespect you or make you feel dishonoured. Trust that this ending will lead to a brand new beginning. Your soul is being aligned with fellow warriors who possess the same sensitivity and receptivity as you do. Walk through the doors that are opening for you right now.