



TAHIRA KASHYAP AND AYUSHMANN KHURRANA HAVE BEEN SOCIAL DISTANCING SINCE, WELL, FOREVER
pg 08

I WAS A NURSE ON THE FRONT LINES OF EBO- LA, AND I SAW THAT NURSES NEED SUPPORT FOR THE TRAUMA AND PAIN THEY EXPERIENCE
pg 04

RISHI KAPOOR AND MOTHER KRISHNA, "REUNITED" IN DAUGHTER RIDDHIMA'S THROWBACK PIC
pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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WEDNESDAY, 06 MAY ODD NUMBER TAXIS ALLOWED TO PLY TODAY

No private vehicles, except those with permits, allowed to ply from today.

Govt issues SOP for return of Indians stranded abroad

NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):

The government on Tuesday issued a standard operating protocol (SOP) for the return of Indians stranded abroad and those who are stuck in India and wish to travel to international destinations for urgent reasons.

In an order, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said priority will be given for return to India to compelling cases in distress, including migrant workers, labourers who have been laid off and those faced with expiry of short term visas.

Persons with medical emergency, pregnant women, elderly, those required to return to India due to death of family member, and students will also be given preference, the home ministry said.

The cost of travel will be borne by such travellers.

Based on the registrations received, the Ministry of External Affairs will prepare flight or ship wise database of all such travellers, including details such as name, age, gender, mobile phone number, place of residence, place of final destination; and information on-PCR test taken and its result.

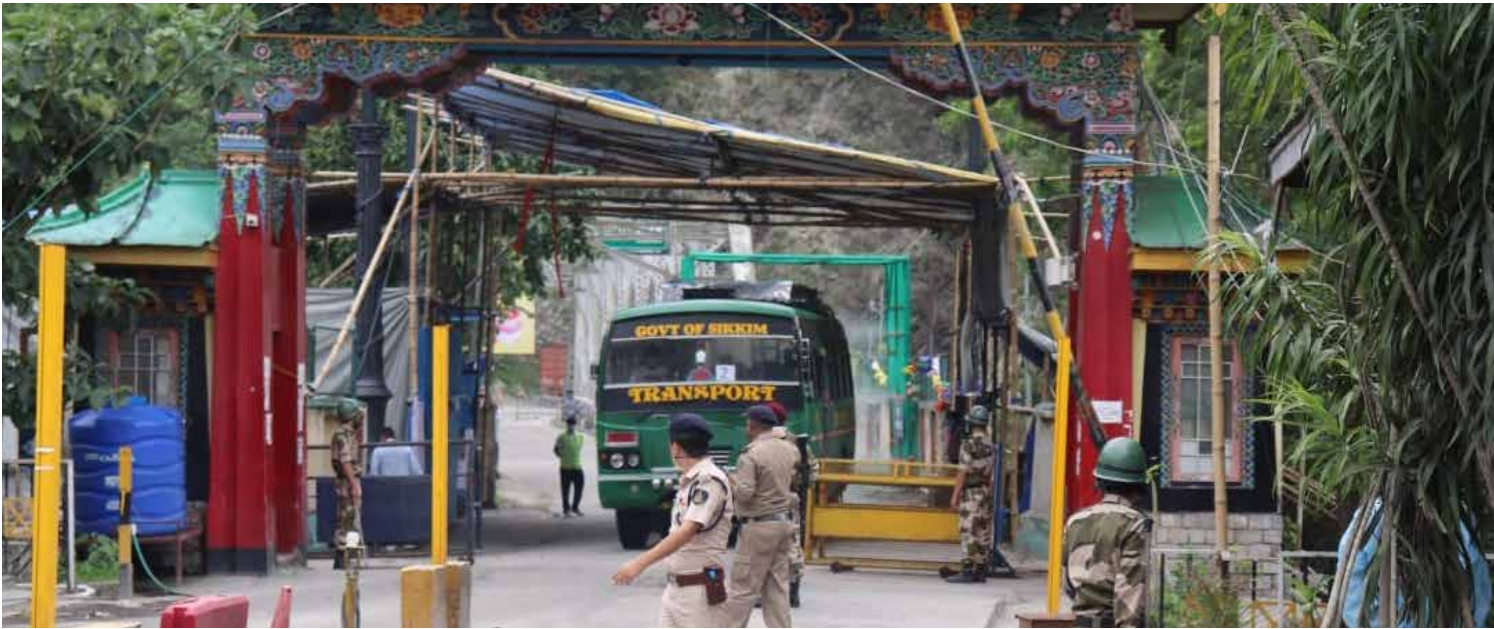
This data base will be shared by MEA with the respective state and union territories in advance.

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 05 MAY:

The first batch of Sikkimese stranded outside the state arrived today on four SNT buses via Rangpo and Melli. Those who arrived today were mostly students and some health workers who have come from Siliguri with the exception of a group of students from Kota, Rajasthan. However, there is no clarity on the exact number of persons who arrived today.

Three buses carrying 69 persons for East Sikkim arrived at Rangpo today. While, one bus entered from Melli carrying 07 persons belonging to South and West districts.

According to a post on Government of Sikkim page on Facebook, DC East reported that 76 persons arrived in East Sikkim today while an IPR report said that 07



persons checked in at Melli checkpost wherein 05 were from West Sikkim and 02 were from South Sikkim taking the total to 83.

However, in a different post on the same page, State Nodal Officer [Evacuation Cell],

Rinzing C Bhutia said that total 79 persons entered Sikkim today. Mr Bhutia informed that in this first batch, there were 52 students [33 from Siliguri and 19 from Kota, Rajasthan] and 27 health workers.

Earlier, in a video

post on Facebook, Additional Chief Secretary, Education Department, GP Upadhyaya informed that 50 students were expected to arrive in the State today. Till evening, he informed, that 13 students from Kota, Rajasthan had arrived; 07 boys

and 06 girls. He added that 06 more from Kota are expected to arrive.

For the students, SMIT Majhitar hostel has been set up as quarantine facility for girl students and Himalayan Pharmacy Institute for boys, informs Mr Upadhyaya fur-

ther adding that the 13 students have been sent to these facilities.

As for the quarantine facility in East Sikkim, DC Raj Yadav informed that facility quarantine has been set up at Rangpo, Pakyong and Rongli and all the persons who

arrived in the state today have been sent to the respective quarantine facilities since they have all come from red zones.

People belonging to South district were sent for Institutional Quarantine at SIRD, Karfector. Out of the five persons of West district, four were sent to OBC Hostel Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim while one opted for paid quarantine

The DC informed that the administration has set up teams comprising of ASHA, Panchayat and Anganwadi worker to monitor people who will be sent for home quarantine.

Meanwhile, ACS Education Department, Mr Upadhyaya has appealed to students stranded outside the state to stay where they are if they can and only return to Sikkim if they have to.

3 MG Marg shops sealed for violating social distancing rules

SAGAR CHHETRI GANGTOK, 05 MAY:

East District administration today sealed three shops at MG Marg for violation of social distancing rules.

Meanwhile, the administration has appealed to shopkeepers in bazaar areas to ensure that social distancing norms are maintained in their respective shops and warned of strict action in case of any violations.

SDM [Gangtok], Tshering Bhutia and SDM [Headquarter], Gangtok, Robin Sewa accompanied by officials and personnel from Sadar Thana took a round of MG Marg to check whether shops have been following the



prescribed norms, conditional to which businesses have been allowed to resume in phase-3 of the lockdown.

The officials also appealed to the people to wear masks when out in public and warned

that fines will be imposed on violators.

Speaking to media persons, SDM Gangtok, Mr Bhutia confirmed that three shops were sealed for violating social distancing rules and added that the district administration

will be keep strict vigil.

Likewise, SDM Headquarter, Mr Sewa highlighted that the State government has been working hard to keep Sikkim COVID-19 free and that support from the people was necessary to keep the State safe.

Stranded students asked to contact CMO if they have still not received financial relief

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 05 MAY:

The Chief Minister's Office has asked Sikkimese students stranded outside the State to contact the CMO helpline if they have still not received the financial relief released by the State government.

A notice from the Chief Minister's Office issued today states that the

state government had announced financial relief of Rs 5,000 per student to mitigate hardships faced by students stranded outside the state owing to the nationwide lockdown.

"However, it is learnt that there are few cases wherein students have not been able to avail the same due to various reason.

Such students are requested to contact the helpline 90643-67559 or email at cmo.helpline@gmail.com. Further, patient stranded outside the state [except for Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri] may contact at 81169-54005 for availing assistance as per the office memorandum dated 14/4/2020," the notice adds.

Liquor shops in border towns ordered shut

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 05 MAY:

District Collector [West Sikkim] today ordered restrictions on the sale of liquor in border towns of the district.

In an order issued on Tuesday, the DC has directed that no licensed liquor shop in towns and villages in border areas will be allowed to open till 17 May or till further

orders. As per the order, these places are Naya Bazaar, Mangsari, Budang, Tharpu, Daramdin, Lungchok-Salandang, Sombaria, Siktam-Tikpur, Okhrey, Ribdi and Uttarey.

The orders mentions that the Excise Department will maintain an inventory of the stocks at all the liquor shops in the above-mentioned

areas and strict vigil will be maintained along the border.

The order further states that any violation will lead to licenses being cancelled and inventory being seized.

Similar orders were issued by the District Collector [South] covering liquor shops in Jorethang, Majhitar, Rolu, Melli and Lower Paiyong.

Where India's government has failed in the pandemic, its people have stepped in

Bharati Ramachandran

New Delhi, 05 May [theGuardian]: The highways connecting India's overcrowded cities to the villages had not seen anything like it since the time of partition 73 years ago. Hundreds of thousands of workers were on the move, walking back to their villages with their possessions bundled on their heads.

On 24 March, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a nationwide 21-day lockdown to contain the coronavirus pandemic. States sealed their borders, and transport came to a halt. With no trains or buses to take them home, India's rural-to-urban migrant population, estimated at a staggering 120 million, took to the roads. On 5 April a statement from the home ministry said 1.25 million people moving between states had been put up in camps and shelters.

The rest started walking. With their jobs in cities lost overnight, and no clear social welfare package, hunger is a more real threat to these millions of people than a pandemic.

"Everyone is talking about migrants - those who started walking back to their villages," said Anshu Gupta, founder of



Goonj, a Delhi-based charity. "There are also people who reached their villages, people who were stuck in the cities, and the millions already living in the villages. They are all in distress."

The lockdown was announced without a clear plan for the consequences and Indian civil society stepped in immediately.

With 92 partner NGOs, Goonj started work in 18 states. By 20 April, field teams

had delivered rations to 17,700 families, and 16,600kg of rice, flour, lentils, potatoes and oil and 77,800 ready-to-eat meals to community kitchens. They had also produced 42,800 face masks and 24,900 sanitary pads.

Mahatma Gandhi Seva Ashram-Ekta Parishad is doing the same in 39 districts across 10 states. In Madhya Pradesh alone, they say, 99,225 migrants have returned home, comprising daily wage workers,

landless farmers and tribals. Thousands of workers and volunteers are feeding migrant labourers and maintaining community kitchens, as well as distributing masks and soap and protective equipment for frontline health workers.

An India Today analysis established that in 13 states and union territories, NGOs are outperforming state governments in feeding people. It found that in states like Kerala, which has been

praised for its response to Covid-19, and Telangana, "all meals were exclusively provided by NGOs during the lockdown, while in states such as Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Mizoram, NGOs provided 92.8%, 91.7% and 88.5% of all the meals, respectively".

Days after the lockdown was imposed, the finance ministry announced a relief package of Rs 1.7 lakh crore (£18bn). This included food, grains and cooking gas, but there was no roadmap for how this aid would reach people. Cash transfers of Rs 500 a month were announced for women with bank accounts under the government's Jan Dhan scheme.

An itemised analysis by IndiaSpend concluded that the financial package announced by the central government is not all additional funding for Covid-19, but a reallocation and often, reiteration, of existing budgets. Some state governments announced cash transfers, while Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh announced money for destitute women.

But the chances of people ever seeing the money or provisions allocated to them are remote.

turn to pg 02

Misinformation leaves bereaved family ostracized

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 MAY:**

A social-media fake news posted on Tuesday claiming that a patient who was undergoing treatment in New Delhi and staying at DKK Bhawan there succumbed to COVID-19 led to the family of deceased here at a village in South Sikkim being ostracized by the villagers.

It was later clarified by the Health Department that the person who passed away in Delhi had succumbed to the illness he/she was receiving treatment for and not to COVID-19. But the misinformation circulated on "Sikkim Messenger," a Facebook page, had already circulated among the people and the insensitivity of some people led to the family of the deceased getting ostracized by the village.

Today, the bereaved

family filed a police complaint against the Facebook page at Namchi Police Station.

An SKM press release issued by its secretary [press & publicity], Ranjana Pradhan, while informing about how this piece of misinformation had led to the social boycott of the family, adds that it was only after the "fake news" was dispelled and people learned that the patient had not died due to COVID-19 that villagers started visiting the bereaved family.

Under normal conditions, villagers would call on a bereaved family immediately on learning of a death in the family.

The SKM press release states that the posting of such sensitive information without bothering to confirm its veracity was unethical and mischievous.

COVID-19 death toll rises to 1,568 in India; cases climb to 46,433

NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI): The death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 1,568 and the number of cases climbed to 46,433 in the country on Tuesday, the Union Health Ministry said.

The number of active cases stood at 32,138, while 12,726 people have recovered and one patient has migrated, it said.

The total number of cases also includes 111 foreign nationals

A total 179 deaths have been reported since Monday evening, of which 98 were from West Bengal, 35 from Maharashtra, 29 from Gujarat, six from Rajasthan, five from Uttar Pradesh, two from Punjab and one each from Chandigarh, Haryana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

Of the 1,568 fatalities recorded so far, Maharashtra tops the tally with 583 deaths, followed by Gujarat at 319, Madhya Pradesh at 165, West Bengal at 133, Rajasthan at 77, Delhi at 64, Uttar Pradesh at 50 and Andhra Pradesh at 36

The death toll reached 31 in Tamil Nadu and 29 in Telangana, while Karnataka has reported 27 fatalities due to the respiratory disease. Punjab has registered 23 deaths, Jammu and Kashmir eight, Haryana six and Kerala and Bihar have reported four deaths each. Jharkhand has recorded three COVID-19 fatalities so far

Meghalaya, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh,

Odisha, Assam and Uttarakhand have reported one fatality each, according to the ministry data

More than 70 per cent of the deaths are due to co-morbidity, the ministry said on its website

According to the health ministry data updated in the morning, the highest number of confirmed cases in the country are from Maharashtra (14,541), followed by Gujarat (5,804), Delhi (4,898), Tamil Nadu (3,550), Rajasthan (3,061), Madhya Pradesh (2,942) and Uttar Pradesh (2,766)

The number of confirmed cases has gone up to 1,650 in Andhra Pradesh and 1,259 in West Bengal. It has risen to 1,233 in Punjab, 1,085 in Telangana, 726 in Jammu and Kashmir, 651 in Karnataka, 528 in Bihar and 517 in Haryana.

Kerala has reported 500 coronavirus cases so far, while Odisha has 169. A total of 115 people have been infected by the virus in Jharkhand and 102 in Chandigarh

Uttarakhand has reported 60 cases so far, Chhattisgarh 58, Assam 43 and Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh have registered 41 cases each so far

T h i r t y - t h r e e COVID-19 cases have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Tripura has registered 29 cases, Meghalaya has reported 12, Puducherry eight and Goa has recorded seven cases so far.

Where India's...

"Even if the money has come into their bank account in the city, how do they access that now, in the village?" asks Gupta.

The inadequacy of the state's preparedness to tackle this crisis has led to local and central governments scrambling to build relations with civil society to deliver relief, a relationship that has been compromised over the past five years.

Between 2014 and 2020, the Indian government cancelled the licenses of over 20,000 NGOs to receive foreign funds under the Foreign Contributions Regulatory Act.

NGOs have been demonised, especially those working on human rights issues. Their bank accounts have been frozen, their staff have been harassed, and their intent has been questioned. Now, as the state grapples with a response to Covid-19, the government think-tank NITI Aayog has requested that more than 92,000 NGOs help the government fight the pandemic.

Gupta is unequivocal: "Civil society – NGOs and ordinary Indians – are fully taking care of the hunger problem."

The sooner this government starts to see civil society as allies in fair and foul weather, the better – particularly for India's poorest and most vulnerable people over the next few, very difficult months.

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Manipur has two cases. Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have reported a case each

"Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website. State-wise distribution is subject to further verification and reconciliation, it said.

DC and SP West inspect Gyalshing bazaar



GYALSHING, 05 MAY (IPR):

DC West, Karma R Bonpo and SP West, Tenzing Loden Lepcha along with DSP, Sonam Wangdi visited the Gyalshing Municipal area to assess the situation and view the implementation of the Lockdown 3.0.

During their visit, shopkeepers and customers were asked to maintain social distance and not to make groups in the areas near the shops. They were also directed to follow the

orders taken out by the State Government.

The shopkeepers were asked to put a rope at the entry of their shops so that the numbers of customers inside their shops are regulated to a minimum. Further, the shopkeepers and general public were directed to wear masks properly.

It was also observed that the number of public at the bazar had increased, however, social distancing was being

maintained and almost all the people were seen wearing masks.

DC and SP West also visited the Quarantine Centres at Kyongsa Girls Hostel which would be used for the stranded people to be brought in West Sikkim from today.

The 1st batch of stranded Sikkimese people have arrived in Melli and soon will be brought to OBC Hostel Quarantine Center at Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim.

India should put in large enough stimulus package to revive demand: Abhijit Banerjee

NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI):

India should come out with a large enough stimulus package to revive demand, Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee said on Tuesday, asserting that putting cash in the hands of people would be the best way to boost the economy post lockdown.

Banerjee, while talking to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi through video-conferencing, suggested giving money into the hands of the bottom 60 per cent population to help revive demand.

He was deliberating on the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with Gandhi as part of a series of dialogues broadcast on Congress' social media handles.

Banerjee said it was important for India to announce a large enough stimulus package to deal with the crisis on the lines of what the US, Ja-

pan and the Europe are doing.

"We really haven't decided on a large enough stimulus package. We are still talking about 1% of GDP. The United States has gone for 10% of GDP," the noted economist said.

"We have done one thing that I think is wise, which is to kind of put a moratorium on debt payments. We could do more than that. We could even say that the debt payments for this quarter will be cancelled and will be taken care of by the government," he said.

To Gandhi's question as to whether some form of the Congress-proposed NYAY scheme or direct cash transfer to people was the need of the hour, Banerjee answered in the affirmative saying it should not be limited just to the poorest.

"I would say bot-

tom 60% of the population, we give them some money, nothing bad will happen in my view. If we gave them money, well some of them might not need it. Fine they'll spend it. If they spend it, it would have a stimulus effect," he said.

Banerjee also suggested that the government should hand out temporary ration cards to people to deal with the problem of food distribution.

He said another concern looking ahead post-COVID-19 and is a chain of bankruptcies.

"Maybe writing off a lot of debt is the way to go," he suggested.

The other concern, the noted economist said, is the demand shortfall.

"Getting some cash into the hands of the population is the best way to kick start the economy," he said.

Nawin Kiran accuses govt of indecisiveness

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 MAY:**

Sikkim Subject Committee vice-convener, Nawin Kiran Pradhan, continued his criticism of the State Government today and demanded that the State take a firm decision to provide relief to the people and prepare a proper plan in the event that a COVID-19 infection

in reported.

He also rued that repeated changes in notification by the State administration in this difficult situation was creating unnecessary confusion among the people and alleged that if the present government does not have the capacity to take firm and consistent decisions, it must quit.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Pradhan mentioned that the government needs to assess whether it was medically prepared if any situation develops in the state.

Repeated changes in lockdown norms and rules reflected poorly on the administration, he said.

West prepped to receive returning Sikkimese

**RUDRA KAUSHIK
GYALSHING, 05 MAY:**

District Collector [West] Karma R Bonpo today assured that West District administration was leaving no stone unturned to deal with the COVID-19 challenge effectively.

Informing that the district administration has set up 13 quarantine centres having the capacity to accommodate more than 600 persons along with a paid quarantine centres at some hotels in Pelling.

Today, 4 Sikkimese

stranded outside the State since the lockdown began returned to the district and have been quarantined, it is informed.

In addition to this, there are the isolation centres at Ayush Hospital [20 beds] which can be upgraded to 40 beds if required.

He further informed that waste generated from the quarantine centres will be disposed near the centres in a scientific manner.

With lockdown relaxations having come into effect, he informed that shops flouting the prescribed safety norms will be sealed for the duration of the lockdown and legal action taken against the shop-owners under the disaster management act.

Taxis will also be monitored to check against overloading and people coming out in public without face-masks will be fined Rs 300, he further informed.

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Minister visits Veterinary hospital at Ravangla

RAVANGLA, 05 MAY (IPR): Animal Husbandry Minister, Lok Nath Sharma paid a visit to Sub-Divisional Veterinary Hospital and Horticulture farm at Ravangla, today.

During the visit, Minister Sharma also met with the Area MLA, Barfung Constituency, Tashi Thendup Bhutia at the Veterinary Hospital and interacted with the officials on the current scenario of Agriculture, Horticulture Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services under Barfung Constituency.

Likewise, he also urged for proactive co-operation to enhance farmers produce and to address their requirements, collectively. The Minister also assured to provide all essential services from the state government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minister Sharma interacted with the Additional Director AH&VS, Dr. Mala



Bajgai along with other officials and took stock of the veterinary services availed in the hospital and other veterinary centres in the district. Besides, matter related to registration of the landed property was also discussed for further strengthening of the infrastructure.

After visiting the Veterinary Hospital, Minister Sharma and the Area MLA carried out joint

field inspections of Horticulture Farm at 14th Mile, Ravangla. Minister Sharma thoroughly visited farms of vegetable nursery production, potato seed production and multiple polyhouses.

He also interacted with the officials, field functionaries and the labourers of the farm and advised for setting up of an exemplary Model Inte-

grated Farm with the initiation of dairy farming as well. He also stressed for proper utilisation of uncultivated area spread over twenty eight hectare to enhance productivity in large scale.

The Minister also extended financial support and advised to undergo medical treatment for the labourers. He also suggested to follow the gov-

ernment guidelines for the lockdown and to abide all preventive and safety measures to protect from COVID-19 pandemic.

During his visit, the Minister was accompanied by the Deputy Directors (Horticulture) South, Dikendra Bhujel and Robin Gurung and the Deputy Director (Agriculture), Pratap Subba and other officials.

Bring back Sikkimese from states beyond WB, says SPYF

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 05 MAY:

Sikkim Progressive Youth Forum [SPYF] has urged the State government to bring back Sikkimese stranded in states other than West Bengal as well.

In a press release, SPYF has claimed that Sikkimese stranded in states other than West Bengal have not heard

from the state government till now. The forum has said that those working outside belonging to lower middle class families are in dire need of help and need to be brought back as soon as possible.

SPYF has requested the government to speed up the process of bringing back stranded students and workers.

Fuel prices hiked in Delhi, diesel by Rs 7.10

NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI): Petrol price in the national capital was hiked by Rs 1.67 a litre on Tuesday and diesel by a steep Rs 7.10 per litre after the Delhi government raised local sales tax or value-added tax (VAT) on the two fuels.

Petrol in Delhi now costs Rs 71.26 a litre as against Rs 69.59 previ-

ously, oil industry sources said.

Diesel price has been hiked to Rs 69.39 per litre from Rs 62.29.

This follows Delhi government's decision to raise VAT on petrol to 30 per cent from 27 per cent, previously. In case of diesel, VAT has been almost doubled to 30 per cent from 16.75 per cent.

One billion people will live in insufferable heat within 50 years - study

JONATHAN WATTS

LONDON, 05 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]:

The human cost of the climate crisis will hit harder, wider and sooner than previously believed, according to a study that shows a billion people will either be displaced or forced to endure insufferable heat for every additional 1C rise in the global temperature.

In a worst-case scenario of accelerating emissions, areas currently home to a third of the world's population will be as hot as the hottest parts of the Sahara within 50 years, the paper warns. Even in the most optimistic outlook, 1.2 billion people will fall outside the comfortable "climate niche" in which humans have thrived for at least 6,000 years.

The authors of the study said they were "floored" and "blown away" by the findings because they had not expected our species to be so vulnerable.

"The numbers are flabbergasting. I literally did a double take when I first saw them," Tim Lenton, of Exeter University, said. "I've previously studied climate tipping points, which are usually considered apocalyptic. But this hit home harder. This puts the threat in very human terms."

Instead of looking at climate change as a problem of physics or economics,

the paper, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, examines how it affects the human habitat. The vast majority of humanity has always lived in regions where the average annual temperatures are around 6C (43F) to 28C (82F), which is ideal for human health and food production. But this sweet spot is shifting and shrinking as a result of manmade global heating, which drops more people into what the authors describe as "near unliveable" extremes.

Humanity is particularly sensitive because we are concentrated on land - which is warming faster than the oceans - and because most future population growth will be in already hot regions of Africa and Asia. As a result of these demographic factors, the average human will experience a temperature increase of 7.5C when global temperatures reach 3C, which is forecast towards the end of this century.

At that level, about 30% of the world's population would live in extreme heat - defined as an average temperature of 29C (84F). These conditions are extremely rare outside the most scorched parts of the Sahara, but with global heating of 3C they are projected to envelop 1.2 billion people in India, 485 million in Nigeria and more than 100 million in each of Pakistan, Indonesia and Sudan.

Dharavi COVID-19 cases up by 33 to 665: BMC

MUMBAI, MAY 5 (PTI): Mumbai's biggest slum sprawl Dharavi on Tuesday reported 33 new COVID-19 cases, taking the total count to 665, a Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) official said.

The overall death toll stood at 20, as no

fresh fatality has been reported in the last 72 hours.

New cases were reported from areas like Ambedkar Chawl, Kumbharwada, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, Madina Nagar, PMGP Colony, Vijay Nagar, Mukund Nagar, Social Nagar,

Tata Nagar among others, he said.

So far, 83,500 people have been screened in Dharavi.

While 2380 people are under institutional quarantine, 196 others were discharged from hospitals after recovery, the official added.

Liquor shops remain closed in MP as contractors move HC



BHOPAL, MAY 5 (PTI): Despite the Madhya Pradesh government allowing reopening of booze shops from Tuesday, the outlets remained closed in the state with liquor contractors approaching the high court fearing potential loss of business in the coming days, mainly due to exclusion of bars and vends from the government order.

The government had on Monday ordered reopening of liquor and hemp (bhang) shops from Tuesday, excluding Bhopal, Indore and Ujjain falling under Red zone, after a gap of 40 days as per the relaxations allowed under the extended coronavirus-induced lockdown.

On the decision of the liquor contractors to not reopen the outlets, state Home and Health Minister Narottam Mishra said, "They (liquor contractors) should have honoured the government's order".

"If they had some grievances they should

have come to the state government instead of approaching the court. If they have any issues the government will look into them, but they have to reopen (their shops). The government's order should not be violated," he said.

He said complaints of black marketing of liquor are being received by the government.

"All liquor shops in MP remained closed on Tuesday. A top government official told us in evening that our grievances will be looked into. We are yet to take a call (on the government's appeal to open shops)," MP Liquor Association President Akhilesh Rai told PTI over phone from Sehore district.

Earlier in the day, the liquor contractors moved the HC fearing the potential loss of business in view of the state government's order excluding bars and 'ahatas' (low budget drinking vends usually attached to liquor shops) from reopening

and thinning of business after initial euphoria of first few days.

They sought the HC's directive to the government that their contracts be either reviewed or recalled in view of the "unstable" market condition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, responding to a query, Mishra said the government had spoken with liquor retailers on Monday.

Liquor contractors had alleged that the government had issued the order on reopening of outlets before taking them into confidence.

They said that it was difficult to maintain social distancing at shops in the wake of rush in the initial two or three days.

Meanwhile, liquor consumers demanded that the booze outlets be reopened immediately.

"The government should come out with a planned strategy to get the liquor shops opened in the wake of coronavirus spread," they added.

Philippines' main channel forced off-air amid coronavirus lockdown

REBECCA RATCLIFFE

MANILA, 05 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]:

Television screens tuned into the Philippines' biggest broadcaster ABS-CBN went blank on Tuesday evening, after the network was forced off air by a cease-and-desist order that has been condemned as a brazen attack on press freedom.

The media group, which has been repeatedly attacked by the country's president, Rodrigo Duterte, has faced months of uncertainty over its future. An application to renew its franchise, a requirement in order to continue operations, had been delayed in congress.

It had been expected that the network would be allowed to continue broadcasting during the coronavirus lockdown, when access to reliable information is crucial to public health. Millions of people living in the country's capital and main cities remain under quarantine measures until mid-May.

On Tuesday, however, the network went off air just before 8pm, following the decision by the country's telecoms body, National Telecommunications Commission. Its 25-year congressional fran-

chise ended on Monday.

Danilo Arao, a journalism professor at the University of the Philippines, said the order was likely to have a chilling effect on journalism in the Philippines.

"The government has hated ABS-CBN right from the very start but somehow we were expecting that it would not be so brazen, given the need for timely information. ABS-CBN, hate it or not, you cannot discount that its reach is very, very far in terms of its listenership and viewership," said Arao.

"[The order] will send a strong message to other journalists and news media organisations that if you continue with critical reportage, or even if you are at the crosshairs of the powers that be, you might end up like ABS-CBN," he added.

Duterte has repeatedly threatened to stop ABS-CBN, and previously accused it of failing to broadcast his campaign advertisements and not returning the payments. In a speech in December, he taunted the network, stating: "ABS-CBN, your contract is about to expire. If I were you, you're better off selling it ... I will make sure that you will remember this episode of

our times for ever."

In February, government lawyers moved to strip the media group of its franchise by filing a petition with the country's top court alleging that it had violated rules on foreign ownership.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said in a statement on Tuesday that Duterte had left the fate of its franchise to Congress, adding that "ABS-CBN's continued operation is entirely with the NTC's decision". Duterte had accepted an apology from the network in relation to a disagreement over advertisements, he said.

Media groups point out that the network has provided critical coverage of Duterte's presidency, including his brutal anti-drugs crackdown in which thousands of people were killed.

It is not the first time that ABS-CBN has been shut down. In September 1972, the company's headquarters were seized and its channels used to relay government propaganda, after then-Philippines president Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law. It reopened 14 years later, when Marcos was toppled.


More recently, media freedom in the Philippines has de-

clined under Duterte, and the country now ranks 136th out of 180 countries on the Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) World Press Freedom Index. Its analysis cited threats of violence against journalists, online harassment campaigns waged by pro-Duterte troll armies and the multiple legal charges facing the website Rappler and its editor, Maria Ressa.

Ressa described Tuesday's decision as "a death knell and a call to action", adding: "We stand with ABS-CBN and all journalists who continue to shine the light and expose wrongdoing despite state-sponsored efforts to silence them," she said.




ABS-CBN, which employs more than 11,000 people, has 10 days to respond and say why frequencies assigned to it should not be recalled, according to the order. Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra said the decision could be appealed in the courts, Rappler reported.

In a statement, the network said millions of Filipinos will lose their source of news and entertainment at a moment when "people need crucial and timely information as the nation deals with the Covid-19 pandemic".



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

<p>Symptoms of nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<p>Precautions to Prevent nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
<p>Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">    </div> <p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7028372100</p> <p>WEST : 9593297809</p> <p>NORTH : 9641957468</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407691463</p> <p>New STNM</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p>

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Allow Girls Their Real Due

Before we can become gender-neutral we will have to become pro-women

A recent research in the UK has revealed that brighter than average girls, especially if they hail from financially underprivileged families, are more susceptible to depression in their teens than their peers. The same does not, however, apply to the boys, in whose case, they have been found to grow more confident as the years progress. That says a lot about how disadvantaged girls are even in “progressive” societies, and if one were to look with the same prism at the environment we have created around us, the picture would be rather dismal because we have internalized instincts which must leave our daughters look at intelligence and ambition as character flaws. Okay, character flaw appears to be too strong a word, but let’s accept it, too many women must be feeling frustrated with having to constantly recalibrate their potential to lower aspirations even as they watch mediocre men receive opportunities which had much better contenders.

Take the board exam results [something that year 2020 appears uncertain to receive] for instance, while policy changes are being proposed on how students are graded at this watershed evaluation of their learning, what will probably not change is the fact that girls will continue to outshine boys in the overall results. The board exam results replay a data which everyone who has been through school has experienced – girls outperforming boys. In all probability, Sikkim will also mimic this national pattern. It is important, however, that these statistics are not taken to suggest that gender equality is somehow approaching closer, and it should definitely not be plugged as a success of the Beti-Bachao, Beti-Padhao tokenism. If anything, such data only goes on to confirm that equality remains a distant goal.

When it comes to education, one could safely argue that girls in our country are short-changed when it comes to accessing it since only the more academically consistent of them or those hailing from financially stable families reach the class X and XII levels and hence a higher percentage of them get through. This would however also be a superficial reading of the situation because girls outperforming boys has been a trend which has been consistent for a while now. What has not been consistent though is the access this academically more perseverant section receives in later years. In less than half a decade since the girls trump boys in class X and XII exams, they start fading away in the years when their education should be in its strongest expression and they should be reinforcing their presence in careers and research.

Centuries of societal discomfort with a women-on-top scenario starts manifesting more strongly in these years and discourage women away from ambition. The society suffers as a result, because the section which has consistently been more responsible [like learning well when in school] is pressured away from the responsibilities of policy-making and programme delivery. Male domination of these sectors has been instituted by the historic oppression of women in our country. Our major religions, Hinduism and Islam, are in scriptural and practical terms deeply inhospitable to the emancipation of women. They fool us with the celebration of women as the mother and the homemaker, a dodge which they then leverage to prescribe strongly against individualism and independent women. In Sikkim’s case, the experience with Buddhism has not been much better because at heart even this faith is not as gender-neutral as some might suggest it to be and this is made obvious by the preponderance of male reincarnates against the extremely few women who return as Rinpoches.

Returning to the theme of education and the better performance of girls and how this is subconsciously suppressed when it comes to professional positions, sample this – the first person from Sikkim to clear the UPSC exams and become an IAS officer in Sikkim was a woman. She was probably representative of the better respect for education among women, and yet, it was nearly four decades after Sikkim had an organized administrative service that a woman became the Chief Secretary here. The delay was clearly because when it comes to careers and professions, the brightest lot is expected to step aside and make way for the second rung.

There is a staggering baggage of historic oppression and its attendant prejudices that women have to negotiate in our country, which is why their outshining males in education [for long dominated by men] should be celebrated every time it happens, even if it has become routine. After that, more attention needs to be paid to ensure that they remain in careers they are best suited for and ambition among them is respected. In fact, if the country is to become gender-neutral some day, it has to first consciously become pro-women.

I was a nurse on the front lines of Ebola, and I saw that nurses need support for the trauma and pain they experience

CHEEDY JAJA
theconversation.com

Since the beginning of the profession, nurses have played pivotal roles during outbreaks of disease, delivering care throughout even the bleakest of public health emergencies.

Here’s my story: In 2014, the world was slowly recognizing that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa was monumental in scale and getting worse. More than 30,000 were infected, and 11,000 would die. Transmitted from person to person, the disease was mostly in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. As local health care systems struggled to respond to the large cases of infected patients, nurses from around the world came to help; I was among them. I am an associate professor of nursing at the University of South Carolina College of Nursing and a board certified psychiatry and mental health advance nurse practitioner.

When our team arrived in Sierra Leone in December, 2014, there were 450 cases being recorded weekly. The health care infrastructure had been devastated by a decade of civil war, and it lacked trained health care workers, medical supplies and hospital beds for the surging Ebola cases.

I was drawn to serve in Sierra Leone at the height of the epidemic because of the duty to care that we nurses believe is part of our profession. I felt a calling even though I had no idea what I could offer. But I would do whatever was asked of me.

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT THAT FELT LIKE BODY ARMOR

I remember vividly the first day I donned my personal protective equipment (PPE) – hooded Tyvek bodysuit, N-95 face mask, boot, theater cap, three pairs of gloves, face shield and apron – to enter the Ebola isolation unit at Port Loko Hospital early Christmas Day 2014, only to encounter a young patient who had died overnight, lying on the cold concrete floor. The cacophony of emotions I felt – panic, fear and dread were palpable. I thought to myself, “God, I am no hero. Please get me out of here.”

As my initial fears subsided, I put my clinical skills to work. For two months, our team worked round the clock providing palliative care and psychosocial support to patients with dwindling clinical resources, constantly evolving treatment protocols, in a frighteningly dire work environment. In that sense, Ebola was also a disease of the caregiver. As health care workers, we knew we were more likely to be infected with Ebola than adults in the general population. There was no vaccine.

A constant existential feeling of unsafety and heightened sense of doom enveloped the Ebola hospital. Yet each day, we went through the meticulous process of donning and doffing PPE to assess confirmed Ebola patients, perform physical exams, provide medi-

cation, keep them hydrated and cajole them to eat. We would repeat this process three to four times each 12 hours shift.

Performing these tasks required careful deliberation. PPE are difficult to walk and to bend in. With daily temperature in the region reaching 100 degrees Fahrenheit, we were instantly drenched with our sweat. Our goggles fogged up, hampering visibility; double gloving interfered with our dexterity, and our hoods made use of stethoscope impossible. Patient assessment was sub-par and care was limited. Our patients could not see our faces, limiting ability to show empathy and establish human connections. We were terrified about safety, about getting infected. But no one saw our fear; it was our job to conceal it.

And on we worked. It was only years later that I realized the toll that the Ebola epidemic had taken on me. At the peak of the epidemic, we had an average census of 70 confirmed cases daily. Ebola was ruthless on children. For every 10 infected kids under 12 months of age, nine died. For every 10 kids under five years, seven were likely to die.

A LOOK BACK, IN WONDER

In retrospect, I wondered: Was I truly prepared for the mental pressure and anguish health care workers faced in an epidemic? While cognizant of the “duty to care,” was I oblivious to the “duty to self-care”?

Nurses have an ethical obligation to care for themselves. If nurses don’t take care of themselves, how will they be able to care for others? I did not ask the crucial question before heading to Sierra Leone: Did I have the appropriate “nursing preparedness” required in a disease epidemic?

I did not ask this question because I did not anticipate how the media hysteria over Ebola would affect my mental well-being. I did not anticipate the stigma, simmering anger and deep sense of betrayal surrounding monitoring and quarantining of returning volunteer health care workers from West Africa. I did not anticipate the psychological trauma, confusion, anger and sadness I would experience during state-mandated isolation.

As hospitals across the U.S. have ramped up diagnostic and treatment capacity for the coronavirus pandemic, it is imperative that our society also focuses on nurses’ preparedness. During disease outbreaks, nurses’ levels of preparedness and experience help them decide adroitly how much care they can provide to patients while also taking care of themselves. Nursing preparedness is a set of skills, abilities and knowledge that enables nurses to respond and prepare for varying public health emergency roles.

Preparedness training is supposedly integrated into nursing curriculum with a focus on principles of disaster management. However, studies have shown that nurses remain inadequately prepared to respond

to infectious disease outbreaks. Lack of a formal institutional preparedness plan may result in delays in initiation of treatment by nurses.

The misdiagnosis of the first Ebola patient in a hospital in Dallas, Texas in 2014, combined with two nurses contracting the disease while caring for the patient, is a classic example of lack of institutional preparedness in responding to a novel disease.

Education and training are critical to preparedness during disease outbreaks. Evidence-based recommendations to enhance nurses’ preparedness include opportunities to engage in emergency preparedness planning, mock drills and actual events when possible to increase competence in disaster management, confidence in abilities, and familiarity with disaster preparedness protocols.

Given the increase in prevalence in recent years of natural and human-induced emergency events, it is imperative that nurses understand their roles in the planning, mitigation, response and management aspects of disease outbreaks at the community, national and global levels. Studies have shown that nurses feel ill-prepared to respond effectively to disease epidemic and disaster situations.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

During an epidemic, nurses are likely to acquire new roles and perform unaccustomed tasks, often extending themselves beyond their expertise, scope and comfort level. Nurses could encounter unanticipated challenges like a shortage of needed resources, such as personal protective equipment, infection control material resource and inadequate facilities that could adversely hamper the quality of health care service delivery.

This was our reality fighting Ebola in Sierra Leone. To prevent the same thing happening here, local hospitals and health care centers should include nurses in resource triaging to ensure accurate identification of front-line priorities in maintaining core nursing services.

Nurse should not work in uncertain, unsafe and morally distressing conditions with limited resources. The adverse consequences on nurses’ short- and long-term mental health could be significant. Establishing a supportive atmosphere at the front-line is of paramount importance. Specific interventions to promote psychological well-being should be implemented as part of ongoing support from health care institutions.

Nurses more than any other health care workers, constitute the major taskforce in responding to the disease outbreaks. For their sake and society, they need institutional support to ensure that they are trained, well prepare and ready to step into an epidemic response role.

[the writer is Professor of Nursing, University of South Carolina]



Why the WHO, often under fire, has a tough balance to strike in its efforts to address health emergencies

ANDREW LAKOFF
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The Trump administration recently declared, in the midst of the coronavirus emergency, that it would suspend the United States’ financial support for the World Health Organization, a United Nations agency that coordinates a wide range of international health efforts. The United States typically contributes more than US\$400 million per year to the organization, roughly 15% of its annual budget.

In announcing the suspension of U.S. funding, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed that WHO had failed to provide “real information about what’s going on in the global health space.” President Trump suggested that the agency had colluded with the Chinese government in withholding information about the nature of the outbreak: “I have a feeling they knew exactly what was going on,” he said. And he sought to deflect blame for his administration’s disorganized response by pinning responsibility on global health officials: “So much death has been caused by their mistakes.”

To assess these claims, it is important to understand the context in which WHO officials make critical decisions at the early stages of a disease outbreak. As I explore in my recent book, “Unprepared: Global Health in a Time of Emergency,” WHO is constrained in its ability to gather knowledge about disease outbreaks and to intervene in national settings. It must rely on national governments for information about an outbreak and for permission to send investigators to learn more details. The agency’s power is limited to pro-

viding technical assistance and issuing recommendations.

CRITICAL MOMENTS OF DECISION

In January 2020, infectious disease experts scrambled to understand key aspects of the novel coronavirus, such as its rate of transmission and its severity. At that point, it was not yet possible to know exactly what was going on with the disease. Nonetheless, WHO officials had to make urgent decisions – such as whether to declare a global health emergency – in a situation of uncertainty.

More generally, much critical information about what is happening in the global health space can be known only in retrospect, once data on the event has been gathered, analyzed and disseminated by the scientific community. Two other recent global health emergencies are instructive: the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic and the 2014 Ebola epidemic. In the aftermath of each of these outbreaks, WHO was sharply criticized for its early response.

When a novel strain of H1N1 influenza was first detected in the spring 2009, global health officials feared that it could spark a catastrophic pandemic. Within weeks of the virus’s appearance, WHO officially declared a global health emergency. The declaration urged countries to put their existing pandemic preparedness plans into action. In response, a number of national governments implemented mass vaccination campaigns, making advanced purchases of millions of doses of H1N1 vaccine from pharmaceutical companies.

Over the next several months, as the vaccine was manufactured and vaccination campaigns were implemented, epidemiological studies revealed that H1N1 was a relatively mild strain of in-

fluenza, with a case fatality ratio similar to that of seasonal flu.

In many countries, when the H1N1 vaccine finally became available in the fall 2009, there were few takers. National governments had spent hundreds of millions of dollars on campaigns that immunized, in some cases, less than 10% of the population.

Critics in Europe accused WHO of having exaggerated the pandemic threat in order to generate profits for the pharmaceutical industry, pointing to consulting arrangements that the agency’s influenza experts had with vaccine manufacturers. According to one prominent critic, the WHO declaration of a health emergency in response to H1N1 was “one of the greatest medical scandals of the century.”

A later investigation exonerated the WHO experts from wrongdoing, noting that the severity of the disease had not yet been determined when vaccine orders were made, and that “reasonable criticism can be based only on what was known at the time and not on what was later learned.”

RETROSPECTIVE CRITICISM

Five years later, in the aftermath of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, WHO officials again found themselves under sharp attack for their initial response to a disease outbreak. This time, officials were accused not of acting too hastily but rather of having failed to act in time.

At the earliest stages of the epidemic, in Spring 2014, the agency’s experts did not consider the event to be a “global emergency.” Based on prior experience, they felt that Ebola, while dangerous, was easily containable – the disease had never killed more than a few hundred people, and had never spread much beyond its initial site of occurrence. “We know Ebo-

la,” as one expert recalled the early stages of response. “This will be manageable.”

It was not until August 2014, well after the epidemic had spun out of control, that WHO officially declared a global health emergency, seeking to galvanize international response. By this point it was too late to avoid a region-wide catastrophe, and multiple critics assailed the agency’s slow response. “WHO’s response has been abysmal,” as one commentator put it. “It’s just shameful.”

WHOSE FAILURE?

Today, as the world confronts the coronavirus pandemic, the agency finds itself again under a storm of criticism, now with its very financial survival under threat. To what extent can we say that the agency did not provide adequate information in the early stages of the pandemic – that it failed to “do its job,” in Secretary of State Pompeo’s scolding words?

It is worth remembering that we are still in the early stages of the event as it unfolds, still seeking answers to critical questions such as how quickly the virus spreads, what its severity is, what proportion of the population has been exposed to it, and whether such exposure confers immunity. We also do not yet know whether the Chinese government fully informed global health officials about the seriousness of the initial outbreak. We do know, however, that while WHO made its most urgent call for vigilance by national governments in late January, with the declaration of a global health emergency, it was not until nearly two months later that the U.S. began – haltingly – to mobilize in response.

[the writer is Professor of Sociology, University of Southern California – Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences]

West Bengal registers liquor sales of Rs 40 cr on Day 1

KOLKATA, MAY 5 (PTI): West Bengal recorded liquor sales of Rs 40 crores on the first day of reopening of standalone shops on Monday, a wine traders' body of the state said.

Forty-two days after the lockdown was enforced, the state government allowed only 'OFF' shops to reopen in all the red, orange and green zones, except those located in containment areas from Monday.

"The state registered liquor sales of around Rs 40 crores yesterday. Seventy per cent of the states liquor shops located in red, orange and green zones reopened yesterday," said Sushmita Mukherjee, Assistant Secretary of West Bengal Foreign Liquor, ON, OFF, CS Shops and Hotel Owners Association.

The remaining 30 per



cent shops are in containment zones, she said on Tuesday. The outlets that resumed operation from Monday after 42 days witnessed unruly crowd behaviour, forcing

the authorities to shut down many of them soon after they opened shutters.

"The sales figure could have been higher if the shops remained open during the

stipulated hours -- from 3 pm to 6 pm," Mukherjee said.

The government changed the timing and from Tuesday onwards, the shops will remain open

from 12 noon to 7 pm.

"Today also people made a beeline outside shops but the crowd was manageable. Licensees have deployed volunteers to help maintain social distancing among the customers standing in queue," Mukherjee said.

She said sales of Tuesday are expected to be higher than Mondays as the shops functioned for the entire seven-hour period.

The West Bengal government last month decided to impose 30 per cent sales tax on wine and beer. The duty would be applicable to the existing stock.

The government disallowed liquor outlets located in shopping complexes to reopen. Beer pubs, clubs, restaurant-cum-bars and hotel-restaurant-cum-bars will also remain closed.

Shops and markets open in Manipur

IMPHAL, MAY 4 (PTI): The Manipur government on Monday allowed relaxation in opening of shops, markets and offices as the whole state is in the the green zone, officials said.

With the relaxation of the lockdown from 6 am to 4 pm, the Pao-na Market and Thangal Market in capital Imphal town opened and people in large number visited

both the markets to buy essential commodities, they said. Police used the public address system to tell the people to maintain social distancing and wear masks while visiting public places.

Government offices also witnessed more attendance as under the new guidelines all government offices were allowed to function with 50 per cent attendance.

Traffic cop in Kolkata tests positive for COVID-19



KOLKATA, MAY 5 (PTI): A sergeant of the Kolkata traffic police has tested positive for COVID-19 and is currently undergoing treatment at a private hospital here, sources said.

The sergeant, posted at Jorabagan traffic guard here, was taken to MR Bangur Hospital and then moved to a private facility, after he showed symptoms of COVID-19, the police sources said.

The traffic police

department is trying to trace all officers who came in touch with him, a senior officer said.

"Once they are traced, we will conduct swab tests on them and, if required, place them under home quarantine," the officer said.

Last month, too, a few senior officers of the Kolkata Police were diagnosed with COVID-19.

West Bengal has so far reported 1,259 coronavirus cases.

Shops in Arunachal Pradesh to be open on rotation



ITANAGAR, MAY 5 (PTI): The Arunachal Pradesh government has decided to allow the opening of shops on a rotational basis in order to avoid and regulate crowding amid the COVID-19 outbreak, officials said on Tuesday.

In the state capital, all the shops on the right side of the National Highway-415 from Hollongi to Banderdewa would be open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Those on the left side of the highway would remain open on Tuesday,

Thursday and Saturday, they said.

The state government also permitted the resumption of construction works with existing labourers. All hardware shops have been allowed to operate to meet the requirements of the construction works.

Cinema halls, swimming pools, gymnasiums, bars and auditoriums will continue to remain shut, they said.

Bonded warehouses, wholesale vends and retail wine shops

have been permitted to be open in the state capital, while transportation of liquor consignment has been allowed.

The state government has allowed wineries to remain open from 9 am to 5 pm.

The government has, however, banned the selling of cigarettes and other tobacco products in the state.

Some government and private offices have started functioning with around 50 per cent staff.

Standalone shops selling non-essentials reopen in Bengal

KOLKATA, MAY 5 (PTI): A handful of standalone shops, which sell non-essential items, reopened on Tuesday in green zones across West Bengal, even as such outlets and business establishments remained shut in the red, orange and containment areas.

The state government had on Monday announced a host of relaxations during the third phase of the lockdown to resume economic activities. All shops, barring the ones selling essential items, in the state have been shut since March 25, when the nationwide lockdown was imposed to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

Long queues were seen outside standalone liquor shops with either police or local administration ensuring that tipplers maintain social distancing.

The liquor shops have been allowed to operate from 12 noon to 7 pm, as per the latest government order, which also set the guidelines for both customers and shop

owners. The government allowed private buses to ply intra-district in green zones with not more than 20 passengers.

However, buses operated by private owners remained off the road as they found it "economically unfeasible" to resume services with maximum 20 passengers at a time, while autos and rickshaws were seen running in various parts of the state.

Bus Minibus Coordination Committee general secretary Rahul Chatterjee said that it is "not viable to run buses with only 20 passengers" as the revenue from ticket sale would not be enough to meet even fuel expenses.

"We urge the government to requisition the buses as such practice is followed during the elections period for movement of polling personnel and security forces. The government can then run the buses on payment of a daily fee to the owners," he said.

State Chief secretary Rajiva Sinha had also an-

nounced that standalone shops in all the zones, barring the containment areas, will be allowed to open from 10 am to 6 pm.

A few shops reopened in green zones across districts. "There is panic among traders as the number of COVID-19 cases is rising with each passing day. In most parts of the city and the state, shopkeepers preferred not to open their shops both due to anxiety and low level of business.

"In green zones, a few shops have opened but most of the traders are waiting for public transportation services to resume," Confederation of West Bengal Trade Unions president Sushil Poddar said.

The traders' body, which has a membership base of 10 lakh across the state, has issued an advisory to its members about how to stay safe and sanitise their outlets.

There are four red, eight green and 11 orange zones in the state.

The state government has announced the lockdown since March 23.

Medical worker assaulted by cops in Ulhasnagar



THANE, MAY 5 (PTI):

A medical worker has lodged a complaint against a group of policemen for allegedly assaulting him in the premises of a hospital in Ulhasnagar town of Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Tuesday.

According to the police complaint, Satish Wagh had gone to Central

Hospital in Ulhasnagar on Monday to hand over some equipment and was parking his two-wheeler near the building when some policemen objected to it, an official said.

An argument ensued, following which the complainant alleged that he was assaulted by the policemen, he said.

Around 500 to 600

people were present at the hospital at the time and police personnel were trying to control the crowd, senior inspector S C Suradkar said, claiming that the complainant's vehicle was blocking the way.

The allegations were being investigated and no case has been registered so far, he said.

UP: Over 2,000 workers arrive from Maharashtra, Gujarat

LUCKNOW, MAY 5 (PTI):

Over 2,000 migrant workers arrived Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday in two special trains from Maharashtra and Gujarat where they were stranded due to the coronavirus lockdown.

While the train from Maharashtra's Akola brought 1,195 labourers to Lucknow in the morning, 1,115 workers arrived at Gorakhpur around 4 pm from Gujarat's Nadiad.

On Monday, over 3,000 labourers stuck in Maharashtra were brought to Uttar Pradesh in three special trains.

Uttar Pradesh State Roadways Transport Corporation MD Raj Shekhar said 54 buses were deployed to take the Akola workers to districts of Jalaun, Kanauj, Allahabad, Farukhabad, Kanpur, Gorakhpur and Jaunpur on Tuesday.

Gorakhpur (Sadar) SDM Gaurav Singh Sagarwal said the workers were sent to 29 districts after thermal scanning and verification of documents.

A senior official of the roadways corporation in Gorakhpur said 57 UPSRTC buses took them to their destinations.

The workers also seemed relieved after returning to their home state.

Ravi (38), who returned from Nadiad, said he worked at a brick kiln there and belonged to Noorpur village of Hathras district.

After the lockdown, I had no work. I was living on my little savings and it was difficult for me to feed my family. I was depressed. Thankfully, I was left with some money and I was able to return, he said.

"We were served food twice in the train,"

he added.

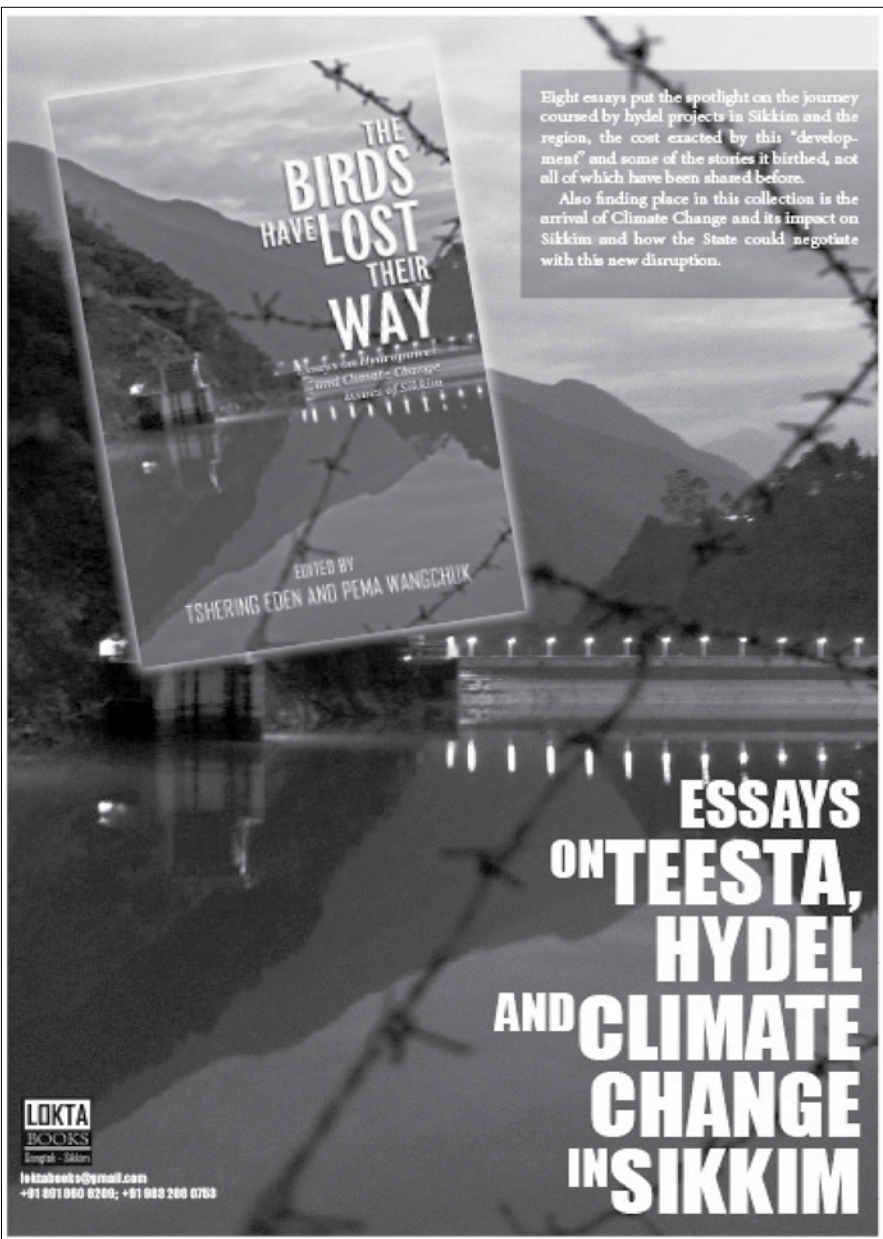
Zahir Alam (55) of Kasganj district said he was only bread winner for his family and was worried about them.

I am still not able to believe that I have reached my state. I am very thankful to the government for this train."

Earlier briefing reporters here, Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Information) Awanish Awasthi had said so far, nearly 65,000 labourers and students have been brought to the state or sent to other places.

"Over 10 trains have brought labourers from other states to UP," he said.

Awasthi said UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has told them that in coming days, Indians stranded abroad are likely to return, for which screening and quarantine facilities should be ensured.



South Korea ready to kick off football season – with the world watching on

JOHN BUERDEN
SEOUL, 05 MAY [THEGUARDIAN]: In a pre-season friendly in the penultimate week of April in South Korea, two Incheon United players picked up water bottles, went to drink, stopped, laughed and then swapped. Name labels on bottles will be easy to adapt to but it remains to be seen if other measures will be widely accepted.

There are sure to be plenty watching to see what happens when the K-League starts on 8 May. South Korea has been a global inspiration in battling coronavirus and now has the chance to provide a similar example in the field of football.

In its 37-year history, the league, Asia's oldest, has never had the kind of attention it will get on Friday evening as the 2020 season finally kicks-off. The year started with a frustrating search for a new domestic broadcasting deal but now media companies from around the world, desperate for live sport, have been knocking on the door of the league's headquarters in Seoul. Ten international deals have been done – from China to Croatia – with others being negotiated.

"Live football is, really rare these days," Kwon Oh-gap, the president of the K-League, says. "It is a great opportunity to let the world know about Asia's top league. We hope fans



will forget about the virus when they watch the K-League."

Taiwan and Turkmenistan may still be playing but the K-League, which has produced more Asia champions than any other, is a different level. It should have kicked off on 29 February, the champions Jeonbuk Motors, coached by José Mourinho's former assistant José Morais, facing the cup holders Suwon Bluewings. That day, however, saw the country record 909 coronavirus cases, its highest number. Now with new local infections down to single digits since mid-April – and down to zero on 4 May – the situation is deemed to be safe enough.

"In the process of preparing for the league to begin we consulted with medical experts and their common opinion

was that we can consider starting the league when the number of confirmed patients was under 30 for at least two weeks," Kwon says.

To get from February to May has been a slog with lots of hard work. All 1,100 staff and players were tested last week and within six hours, all came back negative, with the K-League picking up the tab.

There is no concern about football taking resources away from other sectors. Such is South Korea's capacity it has been exporting tests around the world. Aggressive and extensive testing and tracing have helped it limit the number of deaths to 252 and on 15 April, 66% of a 44 million electorate voted in national elections without any apparent ill-effect.

There is no compla-

cency, however. The 12-team league has already reduced the number of games this season from 38 to 27 and the campaign will be count as long as 22 fixtures are completed.

"The virus has calmed down but it hasn't completely ended," the president says. "If a case of the virus is confirmed in a team during the season, then their fixtures, as well as their opponents, will be suspended for at least two weeks."

Other leagues have been in touch. "Various national football associations have asked questions about the K-League's step-by-step response process and how to operate in the current situation. We are more than happy to cooperate and share the manual."

The manual helps map out the process but

there will be differences on matchday. There are no fans but that should change sooner rather than later and, like at the Asian Champions League games in February, fans will be wearing masks and have their temperatures taken before entering the stadium.

Post-match interviews will take place on the pitch, not in a cramped stadium corridor, with reporters staying two metres away. There will be no shaking of hands and coaches are exploring ways to get their instructions across while wearing masks.

"Excessive spitting or blowing of the nose is prohibited and players should refrain from close conversations," says the K-League communication officer, Woo Cheoung-sik. "During the game, players who habitually spit or talk closely will be warned."

Sanctions for those who spit and talk repeatedly and/or deliberately will be decided by the league.

There has been some pushback on this. The Incheon captain, Kim Do-hyeok, said not spitting is fine but not talking is impossible. Officials believe a middle ground will be found with everyone just happy to get back on the pitch.

"Our goal this year is to complete the league," Woo says. Anything else is a bonus but whatever happens the world will be watching.

Akhtar keen on becoming India bowling coach; says can groom faster, more aggressive pacers

NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI): Former Pakistan speedster Shoaib Akhtar says he is interested in becoming India's bowling coach if there is an offer, asserting that he is capable of grooming "more aggressive, fast and talkative" pacers.

Akhtar expressed his willingness in an interview on social networking app 'Helo'.

Asked if he would like to be associated with the Indian bowling unit in future, he responded in the positive. India's current bowling is Bharat Arun.

"I will definitely. My job is to spread knowledge. What I have learned is knowledge and I will spread it," Akhtar said.

One of the fastest bowlers to have played the game, he added, "I will produce more aggressive, fast and more talkative bowlers than the current ones who will tell-off the batsmen in a way that you will enjoy a lot."

He said he has always wanted to share his knowledge among budding cricketers and that



he is looking to produce more aggressive bowlers.

He also added that he would like to "coach" IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders, for whom he has played in the cash-rich T20 league's inaugural edition.

The former pacer also spoke about his early interactions with Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar in the 1998 series.

"I had seen him but didn't know how big a name he was in India. In Chennai, I got to know that he was known as a god in India. Mind you, he is a very good friend of mine. In 1998, when I bowled as fast as I could, Indian public celebrated with me. I have a big fan following in India," Akhtar said.

I am not jealous of you: Harbhajan tells Ashwin

NEW DELHI, MAY 5 (PTI): Veteran India spinner Harbhajan Singh on Tuesday rejected the perception that he is jealous of Ravichandran Ashwin, saying the Tamil Nadu bowler is a "legend in making".

Ashwin, who had replaced Harbhajan in the Indian team, is among the leading off-spinners in the world alongside Australia's Nathan Lyon.

Harbhajan is not yet retired but last played for India in 2016. The 39-year-old has played 103 Tests with his final

game coming in 2015.

Ashwin, on the other hand, has played 71 Tests since making his debut in 2011.

"A lot of people think I am jealous, this and that. They can think whatever they want to. I just want to say that you are the best off-spinner presently playing the game," said Harbhajan during an Instagram live chat with Ashwin.

"Of course I Like Nathan Lyon as well. I always put him right up there because he plays in Australia and it is a

tough place to bowl (for spinners). You (Ashwin) are one of those legends in the making. I wish you the very best and lots and lots of wickets." The chat was focused on India's remarkable comeback in the 2001 home Test series against Australia.

Trailing 0-1 in the three-match series, India went on to win the next two Tests including second one in Kolkata, where India won after following-on, thanks to a iconic stand between VVS Laxman and Rahul Dravid.

Tennis plans virus-related financial fund: 800 players, \$6M



WASHINGTON, MAY 5 (AP): The governing bodies of tennis plan to announce as soon as this week they are launching a fund of more than 6 million aimed at lessening the financial effects of the coronavirus pandemic for about 800 singles and doubles players.

According to an email obtained by The Associated Press on Monday, the WTA and ATP professional tours, the groups that run the four Grand Slam tournaments and the International Tennis Federation are expected to establish eligibility rules that will factor in the players' rankings and past prize money earnings. If 6 million were evenly distributed to 800 players, each would get 7,500.

The seven entities involved in the initiative are contributing to what the email refers to as the Player Relief Programme, and the money will be divided equally among men and women. The

hope is additional funding will come via other sources, including donations from higher-earning players and auctions.

The email also confirms the WTA and ATP would oversee the distribution of the financial aid, something mentioned when word emerged last month of some sort of tennis fund in the works.

Like most sports around the world, tennis has been on hold since March because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

More than 30 tournaments have been postponed or canceled Wimbledon was scrapped for the first time in 75 years, for example and no sanctioned events are on the calendar until mid-July at the earliest.

That has left many players ranked outside the top 100, along with coaches and others in the industry, trying to figure out how to deal with economic issues. Some exhibitions are be-

ing organized without fans, including an eight-man event in Germany that began Friday and wrapped up Monday.

Most lower-ranked players depend on participating in tournaments to make their income; if they can't compete, they can't earn.

It's obviously very unprecedented. Most tennis players ... most of their income is basically 100% prize money. Not everyone has endorsement deals that have guaranteed money. So it's obviously a really big struggle when there's no tournaments, Mitchell Krueger, a 26-year-old American currently ranked 195th, said in an interview last month.

Outside of maybe getting injured where you're maybe laid off for a month, two months, three months, depending on however bad your injury might be you're kind of in a situation right now that most players have never been in.

England have to make do with limited chances to prepare for T20 World Cup: Morgan

LONDON, MAY 5 (PTI): England's white-ball captain Eoin Morgan says his team will have to make do with limited opportunities that come its way to prepare for this year's T20 World Cup after the COVID-19 pandemic forced a cricket shutdown in the country.

The coronavirus outbreak has forced the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to suspend professional games in the country till July 1 and has put in doubt Australia's ODI and T20I tour of England in July.

Morgan feels converting England's three-ODI series against Ireland into a T20 rubber in September will be their best chance of getting some practice ahead of T20 World Cup.

"For the last month, everybody has struggled to get a sense of what's possible and what might or might not happen," he told reporters via Zoom during the launch of the Abu Dhabi T10.

"We may have to make do. If tests were going on, there would be ways and means we could have meaningful practice games in and around those Ireland games in a similar environment.

"We could have proper opposition and maybe use the England Lions there too to make it as highly competitive as possible." The global health crisis has also put under threat the T20 World Cup, which is scheduled to be held from October 18 to November 15 in Australia.

"If the T20 World Cup goes ahead in the slot that it's been allocated at the moment, we'll have certainly played a limited amount of cricket before then," Morgan said.

"Given the circumstances we'll have to see how much cricket we play and the opportunities that land on guys' laps. They'll have to make the most of them." Talking about Alex Hales, who was dropped from last year's World Cup after failing a second test for recreational drug use, Morgan said the "door is still open" for him to get into the T20 World Cup squad, provided he rebuilds the trust that he lost.

"What happened was actually quite considerably harmful to the environment, which obviously led to the breakdown in trust between Alex and our players, so to say," he said.

"How long that will take to regain, we don't know, but certainly the door is still open for that trust to be built back up...that's not just with me, that's with every member of the squad, the back-room staff, the selectors.

"And that does take time. We're in May, so it's 11 months ago that the incident happened with Alex, so it's actually not that long ago that it happened," he added.

Cricket will lose £380m if season is wiped out, warns ECB chief executive

LONDON, 05 MAY [AFP]: English cricket is braced for losses of up to £380m if no matches are played this summer due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to Tom Harrison, CEO of The England and Wales Cricket Board.

The cricket season was due to begin on 2 April, but no matches will be played now until the start of July at the earliest. "We anticipate the cost of no cricket this year could be as bad as 380 million pounds. That is the worst-case scenario for us," Harrison told the UK government's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport committee about the impact of coronavirus.

"That would be the loss of 800 days of cricket across all of our professional clubs and the ECB. It is the most significant financial challenge we have ever faced."

The sport's new competition, The Hundred, which Harrison described as a "profit centre" for cricket that was expected to add 11 million pounds of revenue to the game in its first year, has been postponed until next year.

A three-match Test Series with the West Indies originally scheduled for June has been postponed until later in the summer.



England are due to play a series of T20 and one-day internationals against Australia in July and a Test series against Pakistan in July and August.

Harrison was still hopeful some Test matches would take place without spectators, which would still incur a loss of around 100 million pounds. But he said such matches were subject to serious logistical difficulties while the coronavirus continues to be a global threat.

"The complexities of lockdown in those nations means there's a huge amount of complexity to bring teams over, follow government guidelines and get players ready," he added. "But with a following wind, hopefully will be able to play a significant number of Test matches this summer which will help us mitigate those financial losses that we are facing at the moment."

However, Harrison still expects The Hun-

dred to be a success when it is launched next year. "In terms of the position we put ourselves in for The Hundred, right at the moment Covid-19 struck, we were in a very, very strong place," he said. "The game had never sold that number of tickets at that speed before, with the exception of the Cricket World Cup."

"So we were in a very strong position to achieve exactly what we set out to achieve in terms of growing the audience for cricket in this country. The profile of ticket buyers was extremely encouraging. Young adults and parents coming with their children. Doing exactly the job we wanted it to do."

"I wouldn't categorise The Hundred as a gamble. It's a profit centre for cricket as has been demonstrated. It was going to bring in 11m of profit to the game this year. It carries with it an extra dividend to the counties, which is critical revenue to them."

Virus deaths top 250,000 as billions pledged for vaccine push

The global death toll from the coronavirus pandemic topped a quarter of a million on Tuesday, with the US government predicting a further surge in fatalities as an international vaccine drive garnered \$8 billion in pledges.

The dire forecast from the United States came as much of the Western world emerged from weeks of lockdown, with hopes that the disease may have peaked in Europe after nearly two months of confinement.

But the global progress did little to cool a war of words between the US and China -- fueled by American claims the virus originated in a Chinese laboratory, a theory the World Health Organization (WHO) labelled "speculative."

An AFP tally of official figures showed Europe is the hardest-hit continent with around 145,000 fatalities. The US has recorded close to 68,700. Together they account for more than 85 percent of global deaths.

Since the disease first surfaced in China late last year the number of confirmed cases has reached almost 3.6 million.

The grim figures were compounded Monday by an internal government estimate in Washington that forecast the daily COVID-19 infection rate in the US could surge eight-fold to 200,000 per day by June 1, and the death toll could rise to 3,000.

- 'Evolved in nature' -

A special telethon backed by the WHO but snubbed by Washington pulled in \$8.1 billion to support international efforts to develop a vaccine against the coronavirus.

Leaders of major European powers, Japan, and Canada made the biggest pledges, along with philanthropists including Bill and Melinda Gates.

"This was a powerful and inspiring demonstration of global solidarity," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Seeming to defend its non-participation, the US State Department insisted the United States is "leading" the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and said it has spent more than \$1 billion together with US drug companies to work on a vaccine. As the country struggles to contain its outbreak, the White House has stepped up an offensive against China, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo saying there is "enormous evidence" the virus emerged in a lab in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

That claim was rejected Monday by the WHO as well as top US epidemiologist and government adviser Anthony Fauci. "Everything about the stepwise evolution over time strongly indicates that (this virus) evolved in nature and then jumped species," he said.

US President Donald Trump has acknowledged that deaths will go beyond his earlier prediction of 60,000, saying: "We're going to lose anywhere from 75, 80 to 100,000 people."

Senate to vet new intelligence chief amid shakeup, pandemic

WASHINGTON, MAY 5 (AP): A Senate panel is considering Texas Rep. John Ratcliffe's nomination for director of national intelligence, holding the in-person hearing amid President Donald Trump's shakeup of the intelligence community and under drastic new distancing rules to protect Capitol Hill from the coronavirus.

Ratcliffe's confirmation hearing in the Senate intelligence committee on Tuesday comes nine months after Trump first submitted and then abruptly withdrew the three-term lawmaker's nomination.

The August withdrawal came after bipartisan Senate criticism that Ratcliffe, one of the president's most ardent defenders during the Russia investigations and Trump's impeachment, was unqualified to oversee 17 U.S. spy agencies.

Trump unexpectedly re-nominated Ratcliffe in February, and his chances at securing the job appear far better, though confirmation is still not guaranteed.

Tuesday's hearing will be a test of the Senate's ability to conduct business safely with coronavirus cases still on the rise in the Washington area.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell called his



chamber back to work Monday, while House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., kept the House away, saying she had been advised by the Capitol physician that it was not yet safe to convene.

The intelligence panel's hearing, along with others this week, was scheduled in one of the Senate's largest meeting rooms, with precautions taken to ensure senators remained far apart during questioning. The public is still barred from the Capitol.

Ratcliffe's confirmation hearing has placed a renewed focus on the intelligence community, which has repeatedly warned this year that Russia

is trying anew to interfere in the presidential race.

The questioning is expected to be contentious, with Democrats decrying what they say is Trump's politicization of the intelligence agencies and his tendency to nominate officials who are loyal to him, regardless of expertise.

Nowhere is the need for competent, apolitical leadership clearer than in the position of the Director of National Intelligence, said Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the panel, in a statement ahead of the hearing.

Unfortunately, what we have seen from the president, ever since he came into office,

is an unrelenting and underserved political attack upon the professional women and men of our intelligence agencies.

Warner said he was willing to give Ratcliffe the benefit of the doubt, but added, I don't see what has changed since last summer, when his nomination was withdrawn.

Since then, Trump installed loyalist Richard Grenell, the U.S. ambassador to Germany, as acting director and continued his shakeup of the intelligence community.

At least six intelligence officials have been fired, ousted or moved aside since Dan Coats left the DNI post last summer. That includes the

inspector general of the intelligence community, Michael Atkinson, who first revealed a whistleblower complaint last fall that led to Trump's impeachment.

Lawmakers are concerned about the turnover and have said they are eager for a permanent, Senate-confirmed replacement for Coats, who had won bipartisan acclaim. Some senators who previously seemed cool on Ratcliffe's nomination appeared to soften.

Maine Sen. Susan Collins, a critical GOP swing vote on the panel, pointedly said last summer that she had never heard of Ratcliffe before he was nominated. But last week she said that she had spoken with him and concluded that he does have the experience to meet the statutory standard for the position.

His knowledge of cybersecurity is particularly important given the challenges our country faces, said Collins, who is in a tough re-election race this year. She added that she pressed Ratcliffe to deliver objective analysis, regardless of the president's views on an intelligence issue.

The Maine Republican's supportive statement indicates that Ratcliffe could be easily approved by the panel and then confirmed on the

floor. But he will first have to face rigorous questioning at the hearing, including from Republicans, on his thoughts on Atkinson's dismissal and on the work of the U.S. intelligence community, which Trump has repeatedly and openly criticized.

He will also be questioned on his experience and his resume, after news reports last year suggested that he had embellished some of his accomplishments as a federal prosecutor. Before being elected to Congress in 2014, Ratcliffe was mayor of Heath, Texas, and a U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Texas.

Ratcliffe, who sits on the House intelligence, judiciary and ethics committees, has been a fierce defender of the president. He forcefully questioned former special counsel Robert Mueller last summer when he testified about his investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

He was also a member of Trump's impeachment advisory team last fall and aggressively questioned witnesses during House impeachment hearings.

After the Democratic-controlled House voted to impeach Trump, Ratcliffe said, This is the thinnest, fastest and weakest impeachment our country has ever seen.

Australia 'losing \$2.5 bn a week' in virus shutdown



tions is a greater take-up of the government's contact tracing app, COVID-Safe, which to date has been downloaded by almost five million smartphone users.

Australia has recorded more than 6,800 cases of COVID-19 and 96 deaths. Despite progress in some parts of the country, large clusters of cases have emerged at an abattoir in Melbourne and a Sydney care home.

Some Australian states and territories have begun gradually easing some restrictions, and Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he hoped to lay out a "roadmap" on Friday for a return to business.

"Let's not forget when we ease these restrictions you will see numbers increase in some areas, you will see outbreaks occur in other places, that is to be expected," he said Tuesday after a meeting with regional leaders from around Australia.

"What matters is how you deal with it, and how you respond to it."

Also on Tuesday, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) kept the official cash rate on hold at 0.50 percent after slashing rates to the record low in March on virus fears.

"The Australian economy is going through a very difficult period and there is considerable uncertainty about the outlook," RBA Governor Philip Lowe said.

China reports 16 new coronavirus cases, total tally reaches 82,881



BY K J M VARMA BEIJING, MAY 5 (PTI): China has reported 16 new coronavirus cases, including 15 asymptomatic ones, taking the total number of infections in the country to 82,881, health officials said on Tuesday.

The National Health Commission (NHC) said that one confirmed imported case of a Chinese national returning from abroad was reported in Shanghai on Monday.

With 15 new asymptomatic cases reported on the mainland, the total number of such infections has reached 947, including 94 from overseas.

These cases are under medical observation. Asymptomatic cases

are those who test positive for the COVID-19 but develop no symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat. However, they pose a risk of spreading the disease to others.

No new domestically transmitted case was reported on Monday, it said, adding a total of 395 people were undergoing treatment for the COVID-19.

The total number of fatalities in the country remained at 4,633 as no deaths were reported on Monday, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The total number of COVID-19 cases has increased to 82,881, the NHC said, adding that a total of 395 patients are

still undergoing treatment. As the virus cases abated in its epicentre Wuhan, Heilongjiang province bordering Russia has emerged as the new centre for the COVID-19.

The province has reported a total of 558 locally-transmitted COVID-19 cases and 386 imported cases.

Also by Monday, 492 locally-transmitted COVID-19 patients, as well as 227 imported cases from the province, were discharged from hospital after recovery, the Xinhua news agency reported.

So far 77,853 people who contracted the virus have been discharged from hospitals after recovery, the report said.

Trump nominates Indian-American Manisha Singh as OECD envoy

BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, MAY 5 (PTI): US President Donald Trump has nominated senior Indian-American diplomat Manisha Singh as his envoy to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Currently Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs at the State Department,

Singh will be the US representative to OECD with the rank of an Ambassador, according to the nomination sent to the Senate by the White House. Paris-based OECD is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 member countries to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

On April 27, Trump had an-

nounced his intent to nominate Singh for this position.

Singh, who is in her late 40s, previously served as the acting under secretary of Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment and as a deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs at the State Department. She also previously served as

the deputy chief counsel to the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Singh was the Senior Fellow for International Economic Affairs at the American Foreign Policy Council and was a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

According to the White House, her private sector experience includes practicing law at multinational law firms and work-

ing in-house at an investment bank.

She earned an LL.M. in International Legal Studies from the American University Washington College of Law, a J.D. (Juris Doctor) from the University of Florida College of Law, and a B.A. from the University of Miami. In addition, she studied at the University of Leiden Law School in the Netherlands.

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OUT FOR A DRIVE! Actress, Ashley Greene and her husband Paul Khoury attended a social distancing drive thru party in Studio City, California.

JK Rowling donates 1 million pounds for coronavirus relief



LONDON, MAY 4 (PTI): "Harry Potter" author JK Rowling is contributing 1 million pounds to help some of those hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

The 54-year-old writer made the announcement on account of the 22nd anniversary of the fictional Battle of Hogwarts on May 2.

She has made it an annual tradition to apologise for killing off a character in the book, such as Fred Weasley, Severus Snape, Dobby, on the anniversary but this time she commemorated the event by donating instead.

"Today's the 22nd anniversary of the Battle of Hogwarts, but I'm going to be honest and say that it feels inappropriate to talk about fictional deaths today. Too many people are losing loved ones in the real world," she wrote on Twitter.

Rowling, whose husband Neil Murray is a doctor, said at a time when she has three frontline workers in her family, her heart goes out to all

essential service providers.

"So on this anniversary of a great wizarding victory, I'm thinking of the people who're out there doing their jobs to protect us and our way of life. I have 3 key workers in my immediate family, and like all such relatives, I'm torn between pride and anxiety."

The British novelist said the money will be equally split between Crisis and Refuge charities.

"As ever in a crisis of this sort, the poorest and most vulnerable are hit hardest, so in honour of the Battle of Hogwarts, I'll be making a donation of 1m, half of which will go to Crisis, who're helping the homeless during the pandemic, and half of which will go to Refuge, because we know that domestic abuse has, sadly, increased hugely during the lockdown," she said.

Last month, Rowling revealed that she showed the symptoms of COVID-19, but had "fully recovered". She said she suffered from the infection for two weeks.

Taika Waititi to direct and co-write new 'Star Wars' movie

LOS ANGELES, MAY 5 (PTI): "Thor: Ragnarok" director Taika Waititi will now decode the mysteries of a galaxy far far away by helming and co-writing the new "Star Wars" movie.

The director, who won the best adapted screenplay Oscar for "Jojo Rabbit", will co-write the film with the "1917" scriptwriter Krysty Wilson-Cairns.

Waititi directed the acclaimed season finale episode of "The Mandalorian" for Disney+.

In addition to Waititi, Leslye Headland of "Russian Doll" fame has been roped to develop a new untitled "Star Wars" Series for Disney+. Headland

will write, executive produce, and serve as showrunner for the in-development series, which adds to a growing list of "Star Wars" stories for Disney's streaming platform.

The service already has "The Mandalorian", now in post-production on second season, and two other previously-ordered series: one based on Cassian Andor prior to the events of "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" and another following the adventures of Obi-Wan Kenobi between "Revenge of the Sith" and "A New Hope".

The release date for Waititi's project has not yet been announced, while Headland's project is in development.

Joe Russo closes deal to write 'Extraction 2'

LOS ANGELES, MAY 5 (PTI): Filmmaker Joe Russo has started working on a sequel to Chris Hemsworth-starrer "Extraction".

The director wrote and co-produced the action thriller, which debuted on Netflix in April and has been praised by both the critics and viewers. Russo told Deadline that he has inked a deal for the sequel that might build upon the open ending of the first movie.

"The deal is closed for me to write 'Extraction 2', and we are in the formative stages of what the story can be," the filmmaker said.

"We're not committing yet to whether that story

goes forward, or backward in time. We left a big loose ending that leaves question marks for the audience," he added. Sam Hargrave, who worked with Russo and his brother Anthony on Marvel blockbuster "Avengers: Endgame", directed the movie about a black ops mercenary (Hemsworth) who must rescue an Indian drug lord's kidnapped son in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The movie also featured Rudhraksh Jaiswal, Randeep Hooda, Golshifteh Farahani, Pankaj Tripathi, Priyanshu Painyuli and David Harbour. Joe and Anthony both produced the movie through their banner AGBO.

Tahira Kashyap And Ayushmann Khurrana Have Been Social Distancing Since, Well, Forever

Ayushmann Khurrana and his wife Tahira Kashyap practiced social distancing way before it was mandatory and we have proof to back that up. Actually, Tahira Kashyap does. The filmmaker posted a throwback picture of herself along with Ayushmann and revealed that it happens to be from the "first year of dating." Bespectacled, Ayushmann can be seen dressed in a striped blue shirt as he smiles at the camera, while Tahira, sitting pretty in a black outfit can be seen looking away from the camera. Tahira captioned the post: "First year of dating and we were strong believers of social distancing." She added the hashtags

#futuristic, #throwbackthursdayontuesday, #throwbacktuesday #something #lockdown and #kitnabadalgayainsaan. Ayushmann's brother Aparshakti Khurana left heart emojis in the comments section. Yami Gautam, who starred with Ayushmann in his debut film Vicky Donor and recently in Bala, wrote: "Haha... This so sweet."

Tahira Kashyap married actor Ayushman Khurrana in 2011. The couple are parents to a son named Virajveer and daughter Varushka. Last month, they shared pictures from their

daughter Varushka's 6th birthday, where they used recycled paper for decorations. Ayushmann wrote: "Happy birthday Varushka! This quarantine is teaching us a lot. Using waste products and recycling paper for decorations



for her birthday. This birthday will be remembered forever."

Ayushmann Khurrana received the National Film Award for his performance in AndhaDhun, last year. On the work front, the actor was last seen in Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan. He has Gulabo Sitabo, co-starring Amitabh Bachchan, in the pipeline.

Tahira has directed a short film titled Toffee, which was screened at the 30th Cinekid International Film Festival, Amsterdam and at the 14th Bahamas International Film Festival.

Tracee Ellis Ross says being Diana Ross' daughter had no role in success

LONDON, MAY 5 (PTI): Actor Tracee Ellis Ross says having a famous parent in singer Diana Ross may have opened some doors but she had to always prove her talent.

The 47-year-old star said Ross and her father Robert Ellis Silberstein's name did land her some auditions but it also invited more scrutiny.

"When I was starting in my career, being the child of somebody famous was not what it is today. It might unlock the door, but the people sitting on the other side have their arms crossed and are asking: 'OK, is she as good as

her mom?'" Tracee told The Guardian Weekend magazine.

The "Black-ish" star said her parents taught her to work hard for what she wanted, for which she took a job through her teens in order to pay for her own clothes.

"I've always been taught that you work for the things you want. My mom always joked: 'I'm not leaving you guys any of this money. I made this money for me! I'll make sure there's a roof over your head. You can have health insurance and food. But other than that...' I mean, I had a job in high school. I

worked as a salesperson at Ralph Lauren. My mom was like, 'If you want to keep buying those clothes, you're going to have to figure out how to pay for them.' There was a commitment on her part to a normalcy that I have taken into my adult life." Tracee had a happy childhood as her mother was always around despite career commitments.

"My mom always put us in bed, then she'd go to the recording studio while we were sleeping. She'd sit with us for dinner and she never left for more than a week," she recalled.

Rishi Kapoor And Mother Krishna, "Reunited" In Daughter Riddhima's Throwback Pic

Rishi Kapoor's daughter Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, who couldn't be present for her dad's funeral on Thursday, can't stop revisiting

memories of Rishi Kapoor.

The 34-year-old jewellery-designer has been flooding her Instagram stories with throwback pictures of her dad. On Tuesday, Riddhima shared a throwback memory of Rishi Kapoor with his mother Krishna Raj Kapoor. In the monochrome picture, Rishi Kapoor can be seen dressed in a suit while he holds Krishna Raj Kapoor's hands. Krishna Raj Kapoor can be seen looking away from the camera. Krishna

Raj Kapoor died in October, 2018. Rishi Kapoor, who was undergoing treatment in New York at that time, was unable to be present for his mother's funeral. Riddhima shared the picture of Rishi Kapoor and Krishna Raj Kapoor together and wrote, "Reunited." Sharing the priceless throwback memory and referring to Krishna Raj Kapoor as Rishi Kapoor's "most favourite

person," Riddhima wrote, "Reunited with his most favourite person."

Riddhima has been sharing priceless throwback pictures on her Instagram stories. A few days ago, Riddhima shared a set of pictures featuring Rishi Kapoor with herself and brother Ranbir Kapoor. She also shared a picture of Rishi Kapoor and wrote, "legends live forever."

Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, who lives with her husband Bharat Sahni and daughter Samara in Delhi, was unable to be present with her family on the day Rishi Kapoor died. Due to the nationwide lockdown, she

got permission only to travel by road from Delhi to Mumbai. On Thursday, Riddhima wrote a heart-wrenching post for her "papa" Rishi Kapoor. "Papa I love you. I will always love you - RIP my strongest warrior. I will miss you every day. I will miss your FaceTime calls every day! I wish I could be there to say goodbye to you! Until we meet again papa.



ARIES:

You may find yourself pushing against the flow, Aries. But where is your inability to move forward stemming from? Is the lack of physical energy getting in the way or are your unprocessed emotions keeping you stuck? Remember, your body is not a machine. If you're being called to slow down and acknowledge the pain, so be it. As you do, take a moment to become aware of the guilt you are holding onto. Tip: Practice kindness and compassion towards yourself.

TAURUS:

Tragic tales are overrated. The best love stories are the ones where the protagonists find a way to work things out despite the odds. Who says this can't be you, Taurus? The cards are urging you to embody courage and take a great risk. You won't come to regret your decisions. We promise! This is a time of beginning a new and beautiful adventure. As our homegirl Tina Fey says, "Say yes and you'll figure it out afterwards."

Tip: Put your heart on the line. Take a great risk.

GEMINI:

You did your best, but was it enough? The cards are urging you to adopt the philosophy of "less is more", especially in the realm of your interpersonal relationships. Put a price on your energy and make yourself scarce. Contrary to what you believe, this is the secret to being valued, appreciated, and reciprocated.

Tip: Less is more.

CANCER:

The week ahead promises to be full of ideas and aha moments. You want to keep that journal handy, Cancer, for

when inspiration strikes unexpectedly. Communication of all kinds is also taking centre stage. Embrace the virtue of authenticity, stand in your truth, and tell it like it is. Those who are jamming on the same frequency as you will appreciate your honesty, not judge you for it. As such, this is a time of fame and public recognition. Take a bow, wild one. You are in the spotlight for all the right reasons.

Tip: Inspiration strikes unexpectedly.

LEO:

To be a rose in a world full of thorns is truly a gift, Leo. The world needs your kindness and generosity of spirit. But, so do you. The cards are urging you to find a balance between what you give to others and what you give yourself. So, just for today, ask yourself what makes you feel nurtured. Dance to your own rhythm. Listen to the song of your soul. This is the secret to being the most radiant version of yourself "and" fulfilling your sacred purpose.

Tip: But first, pour into your own cup.

VIRGO:

Sometimes you need to let your practical side take the reins. At other times, you need to weave in a little bit of magic. But this week, you're being asked to marry the yin and yang aspects of your personality. Use the law of attraction to invite what you desire into your experience as you take concrete steps towards the realisation of your goals. You're getting closer and closer to the destination, Virgo. On the downside, you may have to deal with somebody who has a chip on their shoulder. Their attitude has little to do with you and everything to do with them. Remember who you are and what you came here for. This is the secret to rising above

the drama.

Tip: You came here to conquer.

LIBRA:

What you're experiencing right now is a classic case of bad timing. You want things to move forward, to take a turn for the better, but the other person isn't quite ready. Don't take this as a personal failure, Libra. Their actions have nothing to do with you and everything to do with them. Accept what the Universe is showing you and turn your energy towards yourself. What is yours will find its way to you. But for now, you're being asked to practice patience.

Tip: Trust the timing of everything in your life.

SCORPIO:

Everything you need is available to you right here and in this moment. Focus on the good, Scorpio, and in doing so you will give the good in your life the power to multiply. The cards are also bringing your attention to your community and your family ties. When your cup is overflowing, your relationships are likely to mirror the energy of love, harmony, and fulfilment right back at you. In weak and vulnerable moments, know that you have these ties to lean onto. There is no shame in asking for help.

Tip: When your cup has runneth over!

SAGITTARIUS:

The Universe is under no obligation to make you feel comfortable. Comfort equals stagnation and stagnation is the enemy of growth, Sagittarius. Accept what you are being shown in this moment. The dead end you have reached is a sign that it's time to redirect the sails. Don't be in a rush to start afresh, though. Let the plan reveal itself, bit by bit.

In moments of stillness, the answers you are seeking will come to you.

Tip: Be still.

CAPRICORN:

We may be in self-isolation, but we're more aware of the threads that bind us together than ever before. It's true that you are experiencing emotional turmoil at this point, but you don't have to do this alone. There's great strength in vulnerability, Capricorn. So, give yourself the permission to reach out. Disillusionment is likely to be a constant as well. The old plan is feeling out of alignment for a reason. But the ground isn't fertile for new seeds either.

AQUARIUS:

Given the chaos that is unfolding, things are unlikely to go according to plan. For some of you, this could have a direct impact on your career and finances. Make peace with the uncertainty, Aquarius. Become cognisant of the soul lesson that is being revealed to you. There's a good chance this rejection is merely a redirection.

Tip: Make peace with the uncertainty. Your true path will be revealed in due course of time.

PISCES:

The cards are indicating a new and beautiful beginning in the realm of love. The real question: are you willing to open yourself to what's coming through, or will you go back to the old paradigm of fear? Know that choosing the latter will keep you stuck. Embracing the spirit of love, on the other hand, will help your soul evolve. Take a great risk, Pisces. The Universe will catch you if you fall.

Tip: Take a great risk.