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# SummitTIMES

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**ON TOP OF THE NEWS**

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## Lockdown 3.0 to begin with open shops, no cabs and returning Sikkimese

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 03 MAY:**

Phase-3 of the nationwide lockdown begins Monday for a two-week run, and with Sikkim placed in the Green Zone, marking it out as safe from Novel Coronavirus, this edition will be much more relaxed with all shops, except those in shopping complexes or massive multi-brand outlets like Pantaloons at MG Marg, opening and private vehicles returning to the roads through a complicated numbering system.

Several relaxations have been notified to mitigate lockdown hardships being faced by the general public and most are extensions of what the Centre has allowed for Green Zones. Sikkim, however, has opted for a stricter version of the nationwide relaxations allowed for safe areas, most noticeable being the continuing ban on any form of public transport [buses and taxis].

Speaking to media persons here on Sunday, District Collector [East], Raj Yadav, detailed the relaxations notified for the ease of the people in the third phase of lockdown starting 04 May.

He mentioned all stand-alone shops can now open and will need to strictly maintain social distancing. Standalone shops are explained as shops with only one front, explained by the DC as

shops, which when the shutter is lifted, open into only one shops. What this means is that except shopping complexes, all shops, including those at MG Marg can now open.

The Central directive, it is learnt, has allowed opening of standalone shops only in residential areas and directed that market complexes be kept closed.

Meanwhile, hotels, restaurants and bars are still not allowed to resume business.

Some sections have been pointing out that restaurant kitchens have remained open in most metro cities exclusively for home deliveries [with no dine-ins allowed] and wonder why a similar relaxation was not available for Sikkim restaurateurs. There do not appear to be any discussions on this front yet though.

On vehicular movement, the DC mentioned that inter-state movement would be allowed only for identified trucks and that drivers will need to go to transit camps on return for a 14-day quarantine. He added that public transport including buses and taxis were not allowed.

On intra-state movement, the DC informed that the government has decided to allow private vehicles to ply during

lockdown on a staggered registration number regime with only vehicles with last digits 0 and 1 allowed on Mondays, 2 and 3 on Tuesdays, 4 and 5 on Wednesdays, 6 and 7 on Thursdays and 8 and 9 on Fridays and no movement of vehicles on Saturdays and Sundays. Clearly, this relaxation was considered only because government offices are also reopening with skeletal staff on Monday.

Vehicles for which relaxations had already been instituted can ply one day only.

Speaking on the arrangements made to bring stranded Sikkimese back to the State, the DC reiterated that online registration was necessary for this and that the State plans to begin the process with patients stranded in Siliguri and then bring back students and others.

He informed that the administration has received around 700 registrations from people stranded in Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling area. The administration will now make contact with them and plan their return on SNT buses from Siliguri.

The DC mentioned that the role of the district administration would start on their arrival at Rangpo check-post. He mentioned that people coming from the outside would go through strict

screening process by a medical team at Rangpo check-post which will decide which kind of quarantine – facility or home - the returnees need to go into.

He added that people coming from the red zone will be sent to facility quarantine and even the final decision on quarantine for people coming from green zones will be made by a medical team after screening. He informed that after getting the decision of the medical team vehicles will take them for the quarantine facilities.

Mr Yadav mentioned that the administration has identified 16 hostels for free facility quarantine and meals and mattresses will be provided by the government but blankets, pillows and bedsheets have to be arranged by the family of the person in quarantine.

For paid quarantine facility, the government has identified seven hotels [281 beds] in the first phase. These hotels will charge Rs 1,000 plus taxes per person per day.

The DC informed that committees with the respective GPU presidents and ASHA and Aganwadi workers have been constituted at the GPU level to supervise home quarantines.

He added that strict medical protocol has to be followed for 14 days.

## Deptt keeps up Vet Services in South Sikkim

**NAMCHI, 03 MAY [IPR]:**

With the nationwide lockdown, many activities related to animals, birds and general livestock are limited. While taking note of this, the State Government has appraised the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Service Department to provide unhindered medical and nutritional assistance to various livestock, animals and birds in need.

The veterinary centres and dispensary services remains open 24x7 in south district to ensure continuous emergency services during the lockdown period. The veterinary officers and staff are working diligently with 50 percent staff working on roster basis.

Veterinary paramedical teams have also actively reached out and helped livestock and animals from minor to major health issues thereby providing timely medical care to livestock such as cows having dystocia and other ailments.

During the lockdown, surgical operations on dogs, goats and pigs have also been done at the District Veterinary Polyclinic, Namchi. In the course of their services, the officials and staff are also maintaining personal hygiene, avoiding public gatherings and following the safety protocols of COVID-19.

Due to strict restrictions on inter-state movement, the department has initiated several steps to help and support progressive farmers in the district.

The poultry farmers of Melidara, Payong, Sadam,



Turuk and adjoining areas, who boast the highest poultry output, are being assisted to procure these chickens from each farm at nominal prices to ease the distress of selling.

After dressing of these chicken at the designated slaughter house in Majhitar, East Sikkim, the meat is supplied to the markets in Gangtok, Namchi, Mangan and Dentam. In addition, live poultry is also being supplied to Denzong Agricultural Cooperative Society Limited for Indian Army stationed in the State.

The department has also collaborated with the Sikkim Milk Union, Karfector under

the guidance of in-charge Dr Phurba Lepcha (Deputy Director) who has actively taken charge of supply and demand of cattle feeds, protein and nutrition supplements from Siliguri for the district.

Dairy farmers are availing these supply from Mother Dairy farm and Sikkim Milk Union, both located in Karfector, Jorethang on payment basis.

Additionally, Good Samaritans and animal lovers of Namchi have also taken it upon themselves to feed the strays of the surrounding area with home-cooked meals during the lockdown period.

## STF preps to facilitate return of stranded Sikkimese

**GANGTOK, 03 MAY (IPR):**

Chief Secretary SC Gupta convened a meeting of the State Task Force today to discuss final preparations to facilitate a systematic return for Sikkimese stranded outside as per the details being received on the online registration portal.

The Chief Secretary informed that the portal was active and has been receiving quite a few registrations from Sikkimese stranded outside.

The Chief Secretary sought the views of the District Collectors and SPs on the following issues: Inter District and Intra District movement of stranded people, Registration of outbound stranded people of other States, Briefing on the quarantine arrangements, and Vehicle movement regulation post 03 May, 2020.

The District Collectors detailed the action taken on the above points in their



respective districts.

Based on the views shared by the District Collectors and detailed discussion with members of the State Task Force, the Chief Secretary gave

specific directives with regard to facilitation of smooth implementation of the above points.

This was done in order to ensure that adequate safety norms are adhered to, while at

the same time people are not inconvenienced.

The Chief Secretary categorically stated that there should not be any role ambiguity and each and every activity should be carried out

with utmost coordination.

The Chief Secretary stressed on the need for strict enforcement of compliance to all safety norms such as social distancing and wearing of masks.

## Irrfan Khan: An actor who broke all boundaries

**RAJESH ABHAY**

**NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):**

Actor Irrfan Khan was a unique talent who broke class, caste and religious barriers to reach out to people and make a space for himself in their hearts through his distinct and alive acting style.

This is why, his passing away feels like a personal tragedy for his fans across the globe.

Irrfan, known for “The Warrior”, “Maqbool”, “Paan Singh Tomar”, “The Namesake”, passed away on Wednesday after losing his battle with a rare form of cancer at the age of 54.

I met Irrfan in my third year at National School of Drama (NSD). We soon became friends and remained friends till his death.

Irrfan was known in his friend circles as a Sufi-esque man who was never detached from any incident,

person or situation. On the contrary, he would try to live through whatever he was confronted with, often seeking out the meaning behind the same.

He was someone who believed in drawing the reality of the man and community through his portrayals.

When one would ask him about his process of picking up his projects, he would thoughtfully say, “A film with a tight structure and characters that are both interesting and highlight the complexities of the society.”

London-based filmmaker Asif Kapadia’s The Warrior and Tigamanshu Dhulia’s feature directorial debut Haasil , established Irrfan as a prolific actor in India as well as world cinema.

In his NSD days, Irrfan was known for striking a balance between the acting techniques of Russian theatre legend Konstantin Stanislavski and German

theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht.

While Stanislavski emphasised on method acting, Brecht believed in imbining the mental and emotional statement of the character and develop a relationship with it.

Irrfan’s friends, including Tigamanshu, believe he had gone beyond method acting and had developed his own technique, which could resonate with the public. They believe it is impossible to learn what Irrfan could do. Tigamanshu said Irrfan stood out because other than his passion for acting, he never behaved like a star.

The most special thing about Irrfan was that apart from his passion for acting he had no other quality of a star. He was like any other normal person around. He was free from the shackles of the glitz and glamour of movie business.

For the actor, social objective was

more important than money but he was also someone who didn’t believe that cinema is ‘pure art’.

Some ‘artistes’, he thought, made films on social issues for their own satisfaction and when such movies get acclaim from a handful of people, they felt content. But these films never reach their target audience.

The National Award winner, who went on star in Bollywood films and world cinema such as “The Lunchbox”, “Life of Pi”, “Piku”, “Hindi Medium”, believed a good film is over and above the boundaries of language, country and cultures and speaks to the audience as someone their own.

Talking about the time when he was selected in NSD, the actor said his family members were not supportive but they had to bend before his passion.

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## Lockdown 3.0: More shops expected to re-open but confusion reigns, say retailers

**NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** Retailers and traders expect to re-open more shops from Monday under the new relaxed guidelines by the government for the extended lockdown period till May 17, although they are still seeking clarity from local authorities.

Retailers Association of India (RAI) said it will have to be seen how it works out at the ground as there is confusion, and many states are yet to come up with guidelines to follow the Centre’s decision. It has already stated that what constitutes market places could be misinterpreted.

Similarly, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) also claimed they will be in a “dilemma” as there is confusion over “what constitutes a neighbourhood shop and a standalone shop”, while organised retailers such as Future Group and V-Mart Retail said they are also seeking permissions from local authorities.

“Some parts of the businesses will reopen. What we see is that there is the possibility of opening of some standalone stores...We will open wherever we can and we will talk to the local authorities to open. We will have to see how it works out.

“In any case individual states will have to come out with clear

guidelines. While some states have come out with the guidelines but they are the same as what Centre has said. I think the states are also confused and they are printing the same thing that Centre is sending,” RAI CEO Kumar Rajagopalan told PTI.

Expressing similar concerns, CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said, “The traders will be in a dilemma”.

When asked whether things are expected to change on the ground with the phase 3 of lockdown beginning Monday, he said there is “lack of clarity and confusion over what constitutes a neighbourhood shop and a standalone shop”.

He asserted that the “clarification should come from the right quarters. Not only the Centre, it is the duty of the state governments to issue that clarification because most of the issues are under the domain of the state governments, the law enforcement authorities also function as per their directives”.

National General Secretary of the Federation of All India Vyapar Mandal, V K Bansal said, “The biggest problem with the guidelines is that it all depends on the states. The states frame their own policies and do not want to take any responsibility. The Centre wants relaxation but states are

restrictive”.

While wholesale markets are not allowed to open in red zones in Delhi, he said, standalone shops can open but the state government’s role was crucial in implementation of the Centre’s guidelines.

Bansal added that unavailability of migrant labour was a major issue faced by shop owners, restricting their operations.

According to the leading retailer Future group, the company would now start retailing other than non-essential and food items wherever allowed after the new notification.

“Inside Big Bazar, we would be now able to sell not just food and essentials only but also other items as crockery, kitchenware and general merchandise. Even at Big Bazaar, at certain places we would start selling other products apart from food,” said a Future group official.

The Future Group, which operates in several formats such as large stores Big Bazaar and neighbourhood store Easyday, said that the company is in the process of obtaining permission to open the stores in the green zone.

“Wherever, we have standalone stores in the green zone, we are also figuring out with the authorities when to start operating,” the official said.

According to another Future group official, most of its big format stores like Big Bazaar are in malls, which have been kept closed even during the second phase of the lockdown.

“The standalone stores of Big Bazaars were already operating. Some of our stores are in non-mall areas and we have written to the local authorities seeking permission for that,” he said.

Around 80 per cent stores of Big Bazaar are operational with several restrictions such as timing, number of visiting and retailing activities limited only to essential items, the official said.

Value fashion and lifestyle products retailer V-Mart Retail also said it is gearing to open the stores in the green and orange zone but reiterated that there is a need for clarification on the difference between malls and standalone stores, specially in small towns.

“We have around 62 stores are in green zone and 98 are in orange, where there are chances that the stores would open. We are in talks with the local administration to allow the stores to open,” V-Mart Retail Chairman and MD Lalit Agarwal said.

He, however, said it will be a gradual opening as initially people would hesitate to come into the store.

“We expect all our stores to be opened in phased manners and in the initial month only 20 per cent customer would visit,” Agarwal said.

He sought greater clarity from the government on the differentiation between a mall and standalone retailers.

“In the small towns, there are no malls and they [local authorities] misunderstand small standalone stores like us for a mall and prohibit us from operating,” Agarwal said.

Under the MHA guidelines, malls will continue to remain shut in all zones.

In red zone all malls, market complexes and markets will remain closed in urban areas, which are within limits of municipal corporations and municipalities. However, shops selling essential goods in markets and market complexes are allowed.

All standalone shops, neighbourhood shops and shops in residential complexes are permitted in urban areas without any restrictions of essential and non-essential. In rural areas all shops, excepts malls, are permitted to open without any distinction of essential and non-essential but social distancing has to be maintained in all cases.

In green zones there are no such restrictions for marketplaces, neighbourhood and standalone shops.

## COVID-19 not an end to coworking culture, says industry

**BENGALURU, MAY 3 (PTI):** Reeling under pressure due to sharp drop in footfalls following the COVID-19 pandemic, operators in the country’s coworking industry believe the blip could be temporary and demand for flexible space would go up again as some key factors are going for them.

But challenges remain for the sector, which has posted remarkable growth in recent years and seen by many as a catalyst of sorts for modern office spaces, as large corporates are still wary of depending on them for their expansion, citing restrictions and limitations.

With many employees working from home amid indications that a significant section of them would continue to do so even after the coronavirus-induced situation returns to normalcy, coworking space providers would now have to rethink their strategy, particularly in workplace, interior and design areas, and make the segment more attractive for consumers.

While concerns around Covid-19 have also led to reduced footfalls in co-workspaces which have been growing at a rapid pace for the last few years, this blip could be temporary and last till precautions are deemed necessary, said Manas Mehrotra, Chairman of coworking company 315Work Avenue.

According to him, any businesses would now seize the opportunity to rethink their working arrangements to provide more flexibility to their employees than ever before, especially considering the benefits of productivity and engagement, and, this will push up the demand for coworking spaces.

Once the lockdown period ends, companies would also lay more emphasis on cost optimisation and prefer flexible workspaces. Most corporates would avoid capital expenditures and look to coworking facilities to expand their business, Mehrotra said.

Ashutosh Limaye, Director & Head - Consulting, ANAROCK Property Consultants, said coworking is likely to see subdued demand over the next few quarters, but will also see the fastest revival.

Once the pandemic pressures eventually ease out, several businesses would look to restart in these flexible workspaces, he added.

Coworking spaces are not only the most cost effective, but also offer flexibility in terms of time period of rental agreements. Coworking spaces can be rented on a monthly, day- to-day and even hourly basis, Limaye noted.

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## Total lockdown will continue in Jharkhand: Soren

**RANCHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Sunday said a “total” lockdown will continue in Jharkhand for the next two weeks and the Centre’s relaxation guidelines will not be applicable in the state. The relaxations given by the central government during the lockdown would not be applied in the state to protect the health of people, he said.

On May 1, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced a “limited” lockdown. The suspension of air, train and

inter-state road travel will continue to remain in force across the country for two more weeks from May 4, but some activities will be allowed after a classification of districts into “Red”, “Orange” and “Green” zones, based on COVID-19 risk-profiling, it said.

Taking to Twitter, Soren said, “As a precaution, the lockdown will continue in Jharkhand for the next two weeks.”

“The central government’s fresh instructions regarding

relaxations will not be applied in Jharkhand at present. As students, migrant labourers and others are returning home, this is necessary to protect the health of the people of the state,” he wrote on the microblogging website.

Soren’s government had, on April 27, announced that it would not implement the Centre’s guidelines on opening of standalone and neighbourhood shops due to a sudden spurt in the number of coronavirus cases in the state.

## Online car sales may gain traction post COVID-19, auto retail needs to become virtual: EY

**NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** Post the COVID-19 crisis, online car sales are likely to gain traction as customers would lean further towards contactless modes of purchasing, according to a report by consultancy firm EY.

With the fear of infection and lack of hygiene likely to move people’s preference back to personal mobility, which in turn is likely to reverse the trend of declining car sales, EY said automotive retail needs to become virtual, lean and flexible to align to the sudden accelerated change in consumer behaviour.

“Post the COVID-19 crisis, there is no denying that customers would lean further towards online and contactless modes of purchasing. Vehicles may very well fall in the same category too. While Indians are already more inclined towards researching online while buying cars, online sales are rare due to limited awareness, options and flexibility,” the report said.

Citing a recent study conducted in China, which confirmed that fear of infection and lack of hygiene will move people’s preference back to personal mobility, EY said, “One of the many fallout of the COVID-19 crisis is likely to be people’s proclivity to own and travel in a personal vehicle rather than use shared mobility or public transport.”

“This is likely to reverse

the trend of declining car sales. Consistent with this consumer sentiment, combined with better online experiences, we anticipate an uptick in online car sales,” it added.

EY India Partner and Automotive Sector Leader Vinay Raghunath said, “In a post COVID-19 world, we do expect continued adherence to social distancing norms. The path to purchase will continue to be influenced by digital enablers with some customer segments preferring a virtual path from awareness to closure.”

He further said, “A contactless purchase journey could be a win-win situation for customers, OEMs and dealers. Digital heavy processes offering flexibility in consumer connect supported by lean dealer operations is bound to become the new normal in the near future. Every player in the auto industry must invest ahead of the curve to keep pace with changing consumer dynamics.”

Stating that this raises the question of how well-equipped original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and dealerships are in managing this sudden accelerated change in consumer behaviour, the report said, “Automotive retail needs to become virtual, lean and flexible, while the existing sales channels need to become more efficient to accommodate these changes...Now is the perfect time to have our

contactless Invisible Salesman ‘Anytime, Anywhere.’”

The Indian customer’s views and behaviour towards an online car purchase platform is only going to evolve. Indian OEMs and car aggregators can take a cue from global players and gradually develop their capabilities to support this transformation. Globally, OEMs like BMW, Peugeot, Hyundai and Volvo have successfully deployed almost contactless online sales, it added.

“However, despite the increased need for digitalization, the role of dealerships will not get diluted as some customers would still visit them for test drives or final purchase,” the report said.

Dealerships will continue to connect OEMs with customers. An integrated “phygital” platform with a digitally-enabled agile salesforce will become a critical success criterion to tap into select consumer segments, according to EY.

“OEMs and dealers can plan their retail strategy in a phased manner for a seamless transformation. The invisible salesman can become a reality in India if all players in the automobile ecosystem work towards redefining the sector’s retail journey. While for the customer, it will be yet another product that they can buy online anytime, anywhere,” the report added.

## HC refuses to entertain PIL seeking telcos don’t bill for unused Net, calls during lockdown

**NEW DELHI, MAY 1 (PTI):** The Delhi High Court Friday refused to entertain a plea seeking directions to telecom firms and internet service providers (ISPs) not to charge offices, shops or business establishments which were “compulsorily closed” due to COVID-19 lockdown.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Yogesh Khanna, hearing through video conferencing, said the Supreme Court has already dealt with a similar issue and the high court is not inclined to entertain the plea.

Advocate Amit Sahni, appearing for the petitioner,

did not press the plea and withdrew it.

The counsel said due to the compulsory lockdown, people are unable to go to the workplace and, therefore, the telcos / ISP should not charge for lockdown period as the public was under compulsion not to avail services.

Petitioner SK Sharma said he had made a representation to the authorities to direct the telecom companies not to charge for the period when the services were not compulsorily utilised.

The plea has contended that shops/offices/ business

houses/factories and almost all commercial establishments remained closed in order to abide by the dictate of the government to maintain social distancing during the period of lockdown”.

He has further contended that telephone operators and ISPs ought not to charge citizens for services not used by them while following the government’s directions.

The petition has said that in the event such charges are levied, then the payments made be transferred to the relief fund set up by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

SikkimSCAN

Lost blooms of West Sikkim

RUDRA KAUSHIK GYALSHING, 03 MAY:

With the lockdown having taken away buyers and market access, flowers growers of West Sikkim have been hit hard and have seen most of their current lot of seasonal flowers rot away.

TB Sampang, a flower grower here, shared that he has suffered a major loss and that his flowers have been reduced to fodder as he could not sell any. Flowers at his nursery have either withered away, have been fed to cattle or just dumped.

Earlier, he would sell most of flowers from his nursery, Sampang Garden, and some from the flower stalls near the Gyalshing taxi stand.

Mr Sampang has been in floriculture for two decades now and is respected as one of the first commercial nursery business specializing in seasonal flowers in the district.

This has been by far the worst season for him.


Spring, the months of March and April, are peak season for floriculturists, he points out and this has been wiped out by the lockdown.

Mr Sampang is staring at the possibility of around 40,000 pots of flowers and plants wasting away this year.

“We grow a variety of flowers depending on the season and buyer-preference and the flowers grown for March and April have gone to waste in the absence of buyers,” he said.

A similar debacle has hit other flower growers in the district, all of whom rue that some form of market access was not provided for them.

Meanwhile, despite the lost season, Mr Sampang is still a believer in floriculture’s potential to provide a good livelihood and insists that this can be a rewarding enterprise with dedication, perseverance and a love for flowers as key components.



## Slain Col Ashutosh Sharma joined Army in 13th attempt

**SUMIR KAUL NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** Unlucky thirteen became lucky for Colonel Ashutosh Sharma to join the Army after attempting it for six-and-a-half years as he had no other dream than donning the olive green uniform.

Col Sharma, who was among five security forces personnel killed during an encounter with terrorists in north Kashmir, is the second Commanding Officer of the 21 Rashtriya Rifles who lost his life while combating terrorism.

Remembering Col Sharma, his elder brother Piush says that he always used to have his way, come what may. “It was like my way or the highway for him. His only dream was Army and nothing else,” says Piush, who works for a pharmaceutical company in Jaipur.

“He had waged a war to join the Army some way or the other till he finally achieved success in his 13th attempt (in . From that day, there was no looking

back for Ashu (Col Sharma),” Piush told PTI over phone.

Col Sharma joined the Army in the early 2000s.

Putting up a brave face while recollecting the childhood memories with his brother, who was three years younger to him, Piush recalled a conversation that he had with him on May 1.

“It was the Raising Day of Rashtriya Rifles and he informed us about how they had celebrated it amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I used to caution him many a times and he had fixed a standard reply ‘muje kuch nahi hoga, bhaiya’ (nothing will happen to me, brother)...,” he said, struggling to hold back his tears.

Col Sharma sent some pictures and that is the last memory that the family has, he said and added “wish I knew that I am speaking to him for the last time, I would not have ended the call at all.”

Holding on to ‘Tamanna,

daughter of Col Sharma who studies in class sixth, Piush feels that the child was not able to understand the changed realities.

“But I must say that she is a brave child of her brave father and she will be fine,” he said.

“The only regret Ashu had that he could not join Special Forces,” he said, while remembering his nature of going out of the way for his jawans and solving all their problems.

His friend Vijay Kumar, who is a Deputy Commandant in CISE, recalls memories with Col Sharma and said, “I advised him to look for other paramilitary forces but it was all Greek to him. It has to be only army and army and army was his reply always.”

“His mannerism was always at its best and I have never seen anyone raising any complaints against him when we used to live in Bulandshahr (Uttar Pradesh),” he said.

## Haryana to send migrants in buses, trains: Khattar

**CHANDIGARH, MAY 3 (PTI):** The Haryana government has decided to send migrant labourers from states bordering it in buses and those from other states in trains, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said on Sunday.

During a video conference with labour unions affiliated to various political parties, Khattar said the Haryana government is committed to ensure all migrant labourers stranded in the state due to lockdown reach their homes at the earliest, according to a government statement.

It was decided during the meeting that agricultural labourers from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh will be sent home in buses and those from Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh by Shramik

Special trains.

The return of migrant labourers of the remaining states, being relatively fewer in numbers, shall be ensured through special trains from New Delhi, the statement quoted Khattar as saying.

On Saturday, Khattar appealed to migrant workers in the state to not leave and start working in industrial units that have been allowed to resume operations according to the Centre’s guidelines.

He, however, said if anyone still wants to leave, the state government will make arrangements for their return.

At Sunday’s conference, there was consensus that as far as possible industrial labourers should be encouraged to assist in early reopening of their units, the statement added.

The Haryana government

has also launched a web page where migrant workers who want to return to their home states can register themselves. The move is aimed at facilitating the inter-state movement of migrant workers.

Khattar also said that the migrants must observe social distancing, try to engage in useful work and learn new skills until arrangements are made for their return home.

The government is committed to ensure that no person would go hungry during this crisis, he said.

It was also decided in the meeting that district-level committees including representatives of labour unions will be set up to review the progress of disbursement of salaries for March and April to workers.

Khattar assured the labour unions that there was no plan to cut down the 17 per cent Dearness Allowance being paid to government employees.

### COVID-19 not...

According to Anuj Puri, Chairman ANAROCK Property Consultants, on an average, coworking spaces offer a substantial price difference of 15 per cent over traditional spaces in the top cities.

While Pune offers the maximum cost advantage of 33 per cent, Gurugram in the National Capital Region has the least at six per cent, he said.

While start-ups and budding entrepreneurs make a beeline to coworking spaces, large corporates remain wary of depending on them for their expansion. This trend is quite contrary to what is witnessed in developed European nations, Puri, however, added.

Despite all the indubitable upsides of coworking spaces largely patronised by enterprises, freelancers, small and medium businesses and startups, they do have limitations and restrictions, it was noted.

Apart from most of them lacking separate canteens or pantries for occupiers, they also bar corporates from organising events in common areas.

One of the industry players said maintenance of these properties is another challenge. While some large companies do use coworking spaces, these limitations have generally put some others off the notion of embracing them despite the lower rents.

Former Chief Financial Officer of IT major, Infosys Ltd, T V Mohandas Pai told PTI: Co-working facilities have to maintain social distancing, so they will take a hit because density is very high, so I think there will be a problem.

A leading operator in the coworking space said social distancing would now mandate the density in the open work stations.

While the desk sizes have reduced, occupants would now need to sit six feet apart. Newer air-conditioning systems need to be installed to take care of air quality and prevent airborne viruses and cross-contamination between offices within a coworking setup, this player said.

Mehrotra said the coworking industry might also see some consolidation soon and companies will explore acquisition opportunities, adding, the current situation will also see larger enterprises seeking smaller spaces to ensure synergised business continuity in the near future.

The COVID-19 is certainly not an end to the coworking culture as people would discover that the benefits of social gatherings in terms of emotional and intellectual fulfillment would be a crucial necessity for the overall health of a society, he said.

People need options and access to a collaborative environment is needed for success in life and work, he added.

### Irrfan Khan....

“With a lot of arrogance and a belief that ‘I’m embarking on a new journey of my life’, I sat in the rickshaw with a holdall to catch a bus from Jaipur. I lied to my mother, I said I will become a professor after graduating from drama school,” he once said.

Irrfan’s father Shahzade Yaseen Ali Khan belonged to the respected Nawab family of Tonk, Rajasthan and his mother Saeeda Begum was also from a Nawab family. Irrfan has elder sister Rukhsana Begum and brothers Imran Khan and Salman Khan.

During an interview, I had asked him about the moment acting drew him in.

Irrfan said he realised the power of acting as a teenager after watching a film featuring Hollywood icon Marlon Brando.

“There were scenes in the film in which he had no dialogues. But as an audience I could understand his feelings and confusion. I was shocked to see this magic, where without even saying a single word, he could explain everything.

“This was the first step towards falling in love with acting. Looking at Brando I felt as if there was electricity in the air around him. There was an energy which made it possible for him to touch the heart of the audience.”

Once I quizzed if NSD made him an actor, to which he replied, “An organisation can never make anyone an actor as acting is like meditation. An actor has to work a lot on himself and needs to build a relationship with anything in front of him without any preconceived notion.

“But every actor should develop his own definition of acting. To be a good actor, one needs to be a good person first. When you sink into the details of a character, then even your silence starts speaking, which connects the audience with you on a spiritual level.

# Rural Economy is Real Economy, Very Important Economy

HIREN KUMAR DEVA SARMA

COVID-19 pandemic has brought the entire world to a halt. Primarily this is a health issue. There has been no vaccine or no direct medicines available so far for the disease caused by novel corona virus. Social distancing essentially being the protective measure to avoid the infection that can be caused by the novel corona virus, the entire world has chosen lockdown to be the primary weapon to fight against the virus. Some nations have implemented lockdown very strictly and some could not. Result of lockdown is seen to be positive and therefore, is an effective measure. But the question is how long a nation can go under lockdown. Lockdown brings everything into halt. People are expected to be inside houses and the work life is very badly affected. The mobilization of money has become tremendously low and probably never happened before. All sectors are affected. This health issue has gradually become an economic issue continuing to be a health issue also. Economy all over the world has suffered and damaged and also gone under uncertainty for indefinite time. Public health and public economy both have become a challenge at present time. Pandemic is not a new thing in the society, but the nature of pandemic like covid-19, is off course different. It has brought the entire civilization to a halt at the same time, which has happened for the first time in the history.

Every nation has different status regarding public health and economy. Being a developing nation, India faces challenges everywhere. Education, health, finance, agriculture, disaster management and defense are very important sectors for any nation. As a nation, probably we are still struggling to achieve a healthy status in all the sectors mentioned above. Covid-19 like pandemic can cause significant damage to the sectors and we need to think to tackle this issue in all possible ways and probably new dimensions are required to be opened which were never thought of before. We have to be ready for a new dawn, new thoughts, new life styles, new society, new nation and therefore, for a new world. It seems new age is at our door step.

It is a fact that more than 70 percent of Indian population live in rural areas. And it is the story of almost every nation, with a little fluctuation from the percentage mentioned. Still rural areas do not have adequate infrastructure for anything like

education, health, transportation, communication and most importantly job opportunities. Such a situation in rural areas has always been an encouraging factor to migrate to different cities. People are migrating from rural areas to urban areas primarily for employment and therefore, essentially for finance and livelihood. Although people look for other opportunities also which might be available in urban areas or in other nations as well, search for economic opportunities is one of the main reasons which instigates the idea of migration in the minds of rural population in our nation. As a result, this is yet another fact that cities are gradually becoming over burdened mainly because of huge population. Cities were never developed in so planned manner that such migration could be handled at ease. Cities in general are facing few major problems like crimes, dense population, unhealthy atmosphere, cleanliness, water supply and most importantly polluted environment etc. One of the motivating factors worldwide behind the concept of development of smart cities, is this overburden of ever increasing population.

Agriculture is a prime mover of Indian economy. Agriculture in massive scale is not possible in cities due to lack of land. And at the same time, there are many villages where land is in abundance but not adequate workforce to do agricultural activities since they have already migrated to urban areas. Rural lifestyles and urban lifestyles are very different. Even economy of rural areas and urban areas are different. If we look at the rural economy, it is seen that apart from agriculture, there are daily workers who are engaged on the basis of daily wages in different households. Unorganized sector from employment point of view, is very much profound here in rural areas. Majority of the rural population belong to low income group. They also lead simple and humble lifestyle which is possible with even low income and so with low economy. When it is the question of survivability, such a lifestyle may prove to be robust and sustainable. Small business houses and rural entrepreneurs are also contributing to the rural economy significantly. However, the potential of rural areas and rural economy has not been untapped so far. Government always has budget and different plans and schemes in place to engage youth and uplift rural lives along with rural

economy, however the effect on ground is not so visible. And wherever it is so, it is very slow. Free distribution of anything like rice and other ration may not be a very smart way of leading a life, rather we need opportunities through which we can be self sustained and lead a self-dependent life. Discovering hidden opportunities and also showing such paths to others is a call of the time. The potential of rural areas are to be understood properly and appropriate measures are to be taken to uplift the society along with economy, without copying any model available in cities. This is because, our intention should not be to develop yet another city by converting or transforming a village into it. It requires geography specific studies and ability to foresee or long distance vision. Considering agriculture as the focal point, if rural areas are developed further and rural people are supported to take lives to a different height, it may be possible to achieve even more sustainable economy. There is time and energy available in many healthy populations living in the rural areas but what is lacking is opportunity or guidance to convert that strength into an economic force. It is very much possible to uplift rural economy even further keeping villages as villages, and present atmosphere in the villages intact. There is no need of urbanization or industrialization in rural areas and agriculture may be the great weapon for it. Rural economy is a very important tributary of the main stream economy of any nation.

Such a pandemic is neither expected nor desired in the society. Since it is there, we are scared. We are scared because we do not know how to fight against it. We do not have plans and we were never ready for such a situation. This could be a great learning. This will improve the wisdom of mankind. Apart from health, our major threat at this moment is economy. We should not neglect rural economy at any cost. Rural economy cannot be neglected in the name of industrialization or information economy which is a very modern concept. Where the majority of Indians live their lives, where simplicity in many aspects of lives still exists, where nature is aligned with human lives or vice-versa, we should not think that sustainability is not possible there. We may focus in developing smart villages also, defining acceptable scopes for it.

In present scenario, rural areas in our nation do not have adequate public health systems in place through which rural people can get enough health support. However, the situation is expected to be better in the days to come.

There are at least seven areas in connection to the rural uplift which need urgent attention. These areas are not only going to make villages or cluster of villages self sustainable but they shall contribute to the economy of the nation significantly. Following dimensions of rural lives should be given priority in the mid corona or post corona situation.

1. Agricultural activities should increase avoiding artificial chemicals and manure. Huge productions are not that important the way healthy productions are. Healthy means good for human health in all ways. Organic farming is more required. Modified supply chain to the end users of the agricultural produce should be established avoiding middle man.
2. Strengthening education infrastructure in rural areas not only at primary or high school levels but at all levels.
3. Roads should make transportation very easy. Improved road condition is a need.
4. Plans to mitigate disasters including storm, flood etc. which are very much seasonal.
5. Availability of digital infrastructure in general and Internet in specific, seamlessly.
6. Generating electrical power through Small Hydro Power Stations from streams available in rural areas. Wind Mills and other eco-friendly measures should also be adopted avoiding construction of Big Dams.
7. Plan to utilize the time and energy of healthy population living in rural areas keeping the population in the same place; Massive industrialization in rural areas is to be avoided. Cottage industries are to be encouraged and supported. E-commerce shall facilitate trading even in rural areas in the days to come.

We must understand one thing, when the entire world is in halt, almost all sections are static at present, still one activity can go on uninterrupted even maintaining social distancing and also having promise to produce desired results in time fulfilling the needs of people and strengthening the economy as well, is nothing but agriculture, which is very much possible in rural areas at this difficult time.

[The writer is a Professor at SMIT, Majhitar]

Rising demand for PPE products provides huge opportunity for domestic exporters: AEPC



**NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** The increasing demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in local as well as global markets provides a huge opportunity for domestic exporters, industry body AEPC said on Sunday. The Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) said the sector is gearing up to start producing these goods, which comes under the medical textiles segment, with a view to making

India a hub for sourcing of PPE kits over the next few years. The council had recently organised a webinar on 'Manufacturing of PPE Products under Medical Textiles', which saw about 2,000 participants, mainly apparel exporters from across the country. "According to a study, there will be domestic demand of Rs 10,000 crore for the next one year and internationally there will be a USD 60 billion

business in 2025, whereas India has done only USD 260 million so far last year," AEPC Chairman A Sakthivel said. Though many of the PPE products needed for frontline health workers are banned for exports currently, he said once the local manufacturers meet the Indian demand, they should be allowed to export. AEPC has already submitted a request for this to the government. "I believe all the apparel

manufacturers can enter into the coverall garments (segment) provided they have a seam sealing machine. That's the one machine we need for our factories. We will have to import this machine if we want to go for PPE kits," he added. Sakthivel further said AEPC will have a separate cell for PPE as its immediate task is to provide sufficient kits domestically to prevent their further imports. Indian Technical Textiles Association (ITTA) Chairman KS Sundaraman said there is a strong anti-China sourcing sentiment right now and this presents an opportunity for India. "We have a vibrant Indian and global market. Please reach out to doctors who are near you and understand these medical professionals who will wear these PPE. "Connect with them and understand the practical aspects of breathability, wearability issues that they are having and create garments for that. If you are able to satisfy that customer then the world is at our feet," Sundaraman said.

Mahindra Holidays to first reopen resorts near metro cities post lockdown

**NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd (MHRIL) on Sunday said it plans to first reopen resorts that are at drivable distance from the metro cities once the coronavirus lockdown is lifted. The Mahindra Group firm has currently suspended operations at its resorts in compliance with the government directives. "At Club Mahindra we have over 255,000 member families and once travel restrictions are relaxed and state borders open up, and people feel comfortable enough to travel again, we expect our members and their families to start travelling to our resorts in their own vehicles, since we are at drivable distances from major cities," MHRIL MD and CEO Kavinder Singh told PTI.

The company is gearing up for this by putting in place all the necessary safety related standard operating procedures (SOPs). It will ensure the highest levels of hygiene standards (hospital grade) to achieve a quick return to normalcy, he added.

"We will first open resorts that are at a drivable distance from the major metro cities," Singh said. He, however did not share the number of resorts that would be opened in the first phase. The company has over 100 resorts in India and abroad. Asked about the steps the company is taking to ensure the health and safety of guests and employees at the resorts, Singh said: "In view of the current situation we are implementing various SOPs which will cover hygiene and disinfection norms at all the touch points in our resorts." The company will ensure social distancing norms for members at its resorts. The resorts are much bigger than traditional hotels, have open spaces and are spread out and this helps in facilitating social distancing norms, he added. "The entire guest experience right from check in to resort experiences including F&B will be contactless. Our best-in-class experiences will help keep our members and their families engaged, while maintaining the

highest safety and hygiene standards," Singh said. Club Mahindra is partnering with experts in the healthcare and technology spaces for implementing these enhanced safety procedures and contactless services, he added. Asked about the impact of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown on the hospitality industry, Singh said: "COVID-19 is a true Black Swan event that presents an unprecedented challenge to the hospitality and aviation industries in India and globally. It has deeply impacted the hospitality industry with occupancies declining sharply, as India went into lockdown from March 25." According to recent estimates, the overall revenue of the Indian hotel industry will decline by about Rs 90,000 crore in 2020, an erosion of 57 per cent compared to last year. More importantly, it is estimated that there will be around 38 million job losses, he said. On the way forward for the industry, Singh said the sector expects a slow recovery as there will be many strict travel restrictions even as the

lockdown begins to get lifted. Domestic travel will begin much faster than international travel, but both will take some time to fully recover. He further said the industry is expecting support from the government for its survival. "Most of the hospitality players have debt on their books and industry is hoping for a debt recast and for the moratorium to be extended to 12 months. This would certainly provide much-needed relief," Singh said. The industry is also hoping for waiver or deferment of statutory payments and minimum electricity demand charges as this will help it with the working capital situation, he added. "The industry also employs millions of people, so it would be helpful if there is some level of support for them, such as a direct benefit package for the staff who keep the industry running," Singh said.

For the revival of the industry, the annual leave travel allowance (LTA) should be made tax-free, every year, so that people have more money to spend on travel once things get better, he added.



SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 03 MAY:

Dry ration being distributed to pre-school children enrolled at the ICDS Centre under Singtam Rural Project at Rangpo Bazaar

Ground in Sunday to help them tide over the ongoing lockdown during which these provisions cannot be provided at the ICDS Centres.

Dry ration for ICDS children

One more patient recovers from COVID-19, discharged

**PUDUCHERRY, MAY 3 (PTI):** A patient admitted to Indira Gandhi Government Medical College Hospital here for COVID-19 was discharged on Sunday after recovery from the infection, taking the total number discharges to three so far. Health Minister Malladi Krishna

Rao told presspersons that with the discharge of the patient from neighbouring Tirubhuvanai village, the number of active cases in the Union Territory has come down to three - two in the medical college hospital in Puducherry and one in Mahe. JIPMER has three active cases from neighbouring

Cuddalore district in Tamil Nadu. Of the three active cases admitted last week, one is a woman and the two others are her relatives and have had contact history, sources said. Last month, a patient, hailing from neighbouring Ariyankuppam village, was

discharged from a hospital here after recovering. Puducherry had eight active patients. While three patients have been discharged, one hailing from Mahe succumbed to the infection in a hospital in Kerala some days ago.

Kendall Jenner is changing the world with new charity collection

Kendall Jenner continues to use her platform to help those affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, this time with the launch of a new charity collection. Like many celebrities, Kendall Jenner and the Kardashian family have been actively stepping up in using their platforms to help those hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic. From donating millions through their iconic lifestyle brands, helping to create hand sanitizer to California hospitals, and providing supplies to healthcare workers on the frontlines, the Kardashians have been doing their part to help those in need. Now Kendall Jenner is using her passion for clothing and fashion in finding a new way to help raise funds for charity. Kendall Jenner launches new casual wear charity collection to benefit Feeding America. Looking to provide further support to those in need, Kendall Jenner has announced a new charity collection released through her collaborative Zaza World creative collection.



Through the new collection, fans can pick up pieces inspired by the current climate with one hundred percent of the collection's net profits being donated to Feeding America, which aims to help provide food to those in need. The current collection includes t-shirts, hoodies, tote bags, a hat, and stickers with

prices varying from \$5 to \$70, helping those will varying budgets pick up a piece from the collection and support the cause. The timely collection puts the slogans "stay home" and "this shirt feeds people" front and center, with simplistic designs available on black and white clothing. Just when we thought we

couldn't love Kendall Jenner any more than we already do, she launches a for-profit charity collection to help those in need! Will you be adding any of the items from Kendall Jenner's Zaza World creative collective items to your wardrobe and what do you think of Kendall's latest way of giving back to those in need?



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

Treatment

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



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District surveillance Officer  
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WEST : 9593297809  
NORTH : 9641957468  
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GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

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## Saving Minors

*POCSO started a process, but saving children will require more*

Cases booked under the POCSO Act come with unnerving frequency in Sikkim. The ongoing lockdown gives the impression that child sexual abuse is not happening anymore. That is unlikely although it is possible because children are now spending most of their time with their parents, they are keeping safe. But let us also accept the fact that this is not the case with every family and every setting and that it is possible that children continue to be at risk.

Returning to the topic at hand, before anyone jumps to the conclusion that child abuse is a recent phenomenon, take a pause and take stock - minors have always been at risk in the hands of sexual predators. Such violations had been occurring and with such distressing frequency that the country was eventually forced to draft a law to deal exclusively with such crimes - the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. Data on child sexual abuse also reveals that in most of the cases, 94.8% as per the Crime in India Report of 2015, the perpetrator is someone known to the child. People in this circle have not developed sexual deviance in recent years; there have always been predators in our mix.

What has happened in recent times though is that the “circle” around children has changed. Where they used to earlier fall victim to relatives, it is now neighbours and teachers. This change in the profile of who we surround our children with has probably made the decision to file police complaints easier, because the vileness is not from within the family. This higher degree of separation also perhaps makes it slightly easier for children to report the violations since it is not an elder in the family they are pointing fingers at.

Hopefully these speculations are inaccurate and the reason why more complaints are being filed nowadays is instead because parents and families have become more responsible and aware and there is a law in place to secure justice. That is however probably not the case, but let us hope for the sake of our children that we are evolving towards it, because unless there is genuine empathy and awareness about how such cases need to be handled and pursued, the children will not be ensured a safe childhood.

What is also noticeable is that while one reads often about cases being booked under POCSO Act and pedophiles being taken into custody, one does not hear often about them being convicted. Agreed, the POCSO Act itself is barely six years old, but it should have delivered much more by now given the fact that it was drafted to address a situation which was not getting enough attention and leaving too many minors scarred for life. National data on POCSO cases reveals that in as many as 85% of the cases, the victims turn hostile, retracting their allegations. This is obviously not because they were mistaken about the crime committed against them but because their families could not withstand the pressure to “compromise” and “settle” the matter. Once the family collapses, the child cannot stand up either. One needs to go back to all POCSO cases in Sikkim and verify how many cases have led to acquittals and what led to the cases being “lost”. Only in the rare cases will the investigators or prosecutors weaken such cases on their own, but would do so in a small State like Sikkim if the victim’s side settles the matter with the other side. This cannot be allowed to happen because then all institutions that a child would have trusted – the family, the police, the law and courts – would have failed them.

Let no one be surprised if these children grow up to become antisocial. This is not a matter that can be taken lightly. Not only is the harm enormous, but even the scale is frighteningly large. A top Delhi police official, while speaking at the launch of a new campaign – “It Takes Every Indian to End Child Sexual Abuse and exploitation”—claimed that 50 per cent of children in our country have suffered some form of sexual abuse. That is too much suffering without any healing.

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## While we wait for a coronavirus vaccine, eating well, exercising and managing stress can boost your immune system

JULIA J RUCKLIDGE & GRANT SCHOFIELD

THECONVERSATION.COM

Social distancing may remain necessary during the 18 months or more we'll have to wait for a coronavirus vaccine.

This can feel like we have little control, but there are several evidence-based protective measures we can take in the interim to ensure we are as healthy as possible to fight off infection and prevent mental health problems that escalate with uncertainty and stress.

CORONAVIRUS AND UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITIONS

There is recent evidence that some younger people suffer strokes after contracting the virus, but the majority of people who end up hospitalised, in intensive care or dying from COVID-19 have an underlying medical condition. One study showed 89% of those hospitalised in the US had at least one.

These underlying medical conditions include high blood pressure, high blood sugar (especially type 2 diabetes), excessive weight and lung conditions. An analysis of data from the UK National Health Service shows that of the first 2,204 COVID-19 patients admitted to intensive care units, 72.7% were either overweight or obese.

All of these health issues have been associated with our lifestyle including poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, excessive alcohol and high stress.

It's obvious we have created a society where being active, eating healthily, drinking less and keeping our stress under control is difficult. Perhaps it's time to push back. This may be important for major conditions like heart disease and diabetes as well as the added threat we face from emerging infectious diseases.

One study shows only 12% of Americans are in optimal metabolic health, which means their blood pressure, blood glucose, weight and cholesterol are within a healthy range. This rate is likely similar in many Western countries.

There is now a body of evidence linking our unhealthy lifestyle with viral, especially respiratory



diseases. High blood sugar reduces and impairs immune function. Excessive body fat is known to disrupt immune regulation and lead to chronic inflammation. Insulin resistance and pre-diabetes can delay and weaken the immune response to respiratory viruses.

IMPROVING IMMUNITY THROUGH LIFESTYLE CHOICES

If we are going to restrict and change our lifestyles for 12 to 18 months while we wait for a vaccine, and if we want to protect ourselves better now and in the future, we could address these lifestyle factors. They not only affect our recovery from viruses and respiratory infections, but are also the biggest cost to the quality of life in most countries.

Optimising the health of the nation must be at the forefront. And this is long overdue. There has been a substantial under-investment by most developed countries in preventive medicine to reduce chronic diseases and improve both longevity and quality of life through healthy lifestyles.

Healthy organisms are naturally resistant to infections. This is true in plants, animals and people. Maintaining optimal health is our best defences against a pandemic until a vaccine is available.

We identify three modifiable risk

factors:

1. DIET

Research shows better nourished people are less likely to develop both mental and physical problems. Certain nutrients, such as vitamins C and D and zinc have been identified as essential for improving immunity across the lifespan. A better diet is associated with a lower chance of developing mental health problems in both children and adults. Low levels of specific nutrients, such as vitamin D, have been recognised as risk factors for COVID-19. These nutrients are easy (and cheap) to replenish.

What does it mean to be better nourished? Eating real whole foods – fruits and vegetables, nuts, legumes, fish and healthy fats and reducing the intake of ultra-processed foods.

2. EXERCISE

Being physically fit adds years to your life - and quality of life. High cardiorespiratory (lung and heart) fitness is also associated with less respiratory illness, and better survival from such illnesses.

How do you get fit? Set aside time and prioritise walking at a minimum, and more vigorous activity if possible, every day. Ideally, you would get outside and be with important others. The more the better, as long as you are not overdoing it for your individual

fitness level.

3. STRESS

Stress impairs our immunity. It disrupts the regulation of the cortisol response which can suppress immune function. Chronic stress can decrease the body's lymphocytes (white blood cells that help fight off infection). The lower your lymphocyte count, the more at risk you are of catching a virus.

How do we lower stress? Meditation, yoga, mindfulness, cognitive-behaviour therapy, optimising sleep and eating well can all help in mitigating the negative impact of stress on our lives. Taking additional nutrients, such as the B vitamins, and the full breadth of minerals like magnesium, iron and zinc, during times of stress has a positive impact on overall stress levels.

Modifying lifestyle factors won't eliminate COVID-19 but it can reduce the risk of death and help people to recover. And these factors can be in our control if we and our governments take the initiative.

[Julia J Rucklidge is Professor of Psychology, University of Canterbury; Grant Schofield is Professor of Public Health and Director of the Human Potential Centre, Auckland University of Technology]

## How cafes, bars, gyms, barbershops and other ‘third places’ create our social fabric

SETHA LOW

THECONVERSATION.COM

Social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic implies many painful losses. Among them are so-called “third places” – the restaurants, bars, gyms, houses of worship, barber shops and other places we frequent that are neither work nor home.

The third place is a concept in sociology and urban planning that recognizes the role these semi-public, semi-private places play in fostering social association, community identity and civic engagement. In giving people a familiar setting for social interaction among regulars, they encourage “place attachment” – that is, the bond between a person and a place.

Now, experiencing the coronavirus from the fortress of our living spaces, we may enjoy the feeling of being in a haven that protects against this invisible new enemy. But we've lost the social and psychological intimacy of third places.

It is a significant loss. My three decades of research on urban spaces finds that both public spaces and third places contribute to a healthy and flourishing society.

PLACES TO ‘FEEL AT HOME’

Third spaces have probably always existed. From attending social clubs and religious gatherings to neighborhood festivals and burial societies, people have long formed associations that bring groups together.

Most of these associations reflected genealogical, religious, gender, cultural or class homogeneity. Often, they were formed to fulfill a social function like raising funds or completing a group task. They were not necessarily geographically located in a particular place.

Contemporary third places, in contrast, are always space-based. When urbanists use the term, they're referring to a physical setting with a boundary or entrance designed to allow, even encourage, access to a variety of people – like a coffee shop with a bright

sign and an open door.

Staff and regulars are part of the scene here. But so are strangers. While not as diverse or accessible as public spaces, third places rely on a certain amount of heterogeneity to convey social importance and bring vitality.

In this way, third places complement public spaces like parks, plazas, playgrounds, streets and sidewalks – free and open places that offer contact, cooperation and even conflict with a range of mostly unknown people.

If public spaces expand our social relationships and liberalize our world view, third places anchor us to a community where we are recognized and our needs accommodated. Third places are predictable and comfortable – a setting where we feel “at home.”

‘IT IS NOT THE SAME’

Those sheltering in place are now missing their third places acutely.

Recently, I spoke with some young men who are still gathering in a local state park near my home. They were sharing a pizza, hidden from view. They told me how hard it is not to be able to hang out at the pizza shop itself. It was their third place.

Grace, an older friend of mine from Manhattan, told me she feels “cut off” because she can't go to the neighborhood restaurant where she knows the chef by name and enjoys sitting at the bar after work.

I still get coffee every morning at the Golden Pear on the east end of Long Island, where I live, wearing a mask and gloves. Normally, I'd eat breakfast there while exchanging greetings and conversing in English and Spanish with friends and staff.

Now I take my coffee to an empty beach to drink. It is not the same.

As my colleague Judy Ling Wong observes, from London, where she lives alone, this lockdown is a time of “severe disorientation.”

Phoning friends has almost a “ritualistic feel to it,” she writes. It is “done to maintain our hold

on social connections.”

GATED AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

Our collective loneliness during the pandemic exposes how dependent we are on one another for happiness – and how interconnected we really are.

Healthy societies depend on continuing interaction among people who are different in a multiplicity of ways. Third places are prime venues for such interactions because our shared enjoyment of its services – a love of coffee, music, or for working out – assures that even strangers have at least one thing in common.

I have studied people who live in gated communities – places bereft of such diverse interactions. I found that even in a supposedly secured space, they worry about crime and feel anxiety when they walk outside the gates of their neighborhood. Children who grow up in such places learn, implicitly or intentionally, to fear those who are outside the walls, including their own families' workers, nannies or delivery people.

Because of the potential of contagious strangers, the coronavirus creates a similar us-versus-them mentality. Without third places and public spaces where people come into regular contact with others outside their circle, such thinking can become ingrained. It can metastasize from prudent public health advice to paranoia and prejudice.

The coronavirus, in other words, challenges not only our physical, mental and economic health but also our social health.

Third places provide the daily glue that binds us to a particular location and to the people who frequent it. With them, we construct a chosen community, a broader public realm. Without them, I worry, the associations that weave a complex society together will fray.

[The writer is Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Geography and Psychology and Director of the Public Space Research Group, CUNY Graduate Center]

# Five new COVID-19 cases in Odisha, total rises to 162

**BHUBANESWAR, MAY 3 (PTI):** Five more persons, including two returnees each from Surat and Kolkata, tested positive for COVID-19 in Odisha on Sunday, taking the total number of such cases in the state to 162, officials said.

The five fresh cases were reported from Ganjam (two), Jharsuguda (one), Balasore (one) and Keonjhar (one) districts, the Information and Public Relations department said.

The latest COVID-19 case was reported from Hatadihi in Keonjhar district of a 30-year-old man, who had recently returned from Kolkata and was asymptomatic of the disease. He was kept in quarantine in view of his travel history,

an official said, adding that the mineral-rich Keonjhar district now has two coronavirus patients.

Similarly, a 34-year-old man from Balasore district with a travel history to Kolkata also tested positive for COVID-19. With this, the total number of coronavirus patients in Balasore increased to 21.

Ganjam district, which had so far been a green zone, reported its first COVID-19 cases after two migrant workers (males aged 17 and 22 years), who returned from Gujarat recently, were diagnosed with the disease.

With Ganjam, the home district of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, registering two cases, the number of districts under



the grip of COVID-19 increased to 16 in the state. Odisha has a total of 30 districts.

A 40-year-old woman from Jharsuguda district also tested positive for the disease. She contracted

the infection after coming in contact with a COVID-19 patient. With this, the total number of coronavirus cases in the industrial district of Jharsuguda has increased to two.

Contact-tracing and

follow-up action relating to all the fresh cases have been initiated.

A total of 2,065 samples were tested for COVID-19 on Saturday, an official in the Health and Family Welfare department

said. So far, Odisha has examined a total of 38,658 samples.

The number of active cases in the state stands at 105 as 56 people have recovered. One person from Bhubaneswar succumbed to the disease on April 6.

Jajpur district has reported the highest number of 48 novel coronavirus cases in the state, followed by Bhubaneswar (47), Balasore (21), Bhadrak (19) and Sundergarh (10).

Two COVID-19 cases each have been detected in Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Kendrapara, Bolangir, Keonjhar and Kalahandi and one case each has been reported from Cuttack, Puri, Dhenkanal, Deogarh and Koraput districts.

## Journalists must perform duties fearlessly: Mamata

**KOLKATA, MAY 3 (PTI):** Hailing the role of press in a democracy, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday urged media persons to work fearlessly.

Taking to Twitter, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the CM said she respected journalists for their contribution to the society.

Banerjee iterated that her government was providing a health insurance cover of Rs 10 lakh for frontline COVID-19 workers, including scribes.

“Our Govt in #Bangla has also announced health insurance with up to 10 lakh coverage for frontline

COVID workers, including journalists #PressFreedomDay,” she tweeted.

“Press is the fourth pillar in a democracy and must perform its duties fearlessly. We respect journalists for their contribution to society,” Banerjee added.

The United Nations General Assembly has declared May 3 as World Press Freedom Day or just World Press Day to remind governments the need to respect their commitment to press freedom. May 3 also marks the anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, a statement of free press principles put together by African newspaper journalists in Windhoek in 1991.

## IAF chopper showers rose petals on Assam hospitals

**GUWAHATI, MAY 3 (PTI):** An Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopter on Sunday showered rose petals on doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians and sanitation workers of two hospitals in Guwahati to express gratitude for their fight against COVID-19.

The Mi-17 chopper showered the petals on the staff assembled in the premises of the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital and the MMC Civil Hospital here.

Three Sukhoi SU-30 fighter jets also flew past the Assam Legislative Assembly building.

An IAF band also played patriotic songs to express gratitude to the

frontline personnel.

The doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers said they were overwhelmed by the gesture.

“This expression of gratitude is a blessing and encouragement to us to serve the people in this battle against COVID-19 and other diseases,” a doctor at GMCH said.

An emotional nurse at GMCH said that the medical fraternity has been encouraged by the gesture to continue the fight against COVID-19.

Volunteers of a local NGO also honoured the health personnel with ‘Gamosa’, a traditional hand-woven Assamese scarf.

## No fresh coronavirus cases reported in Kerala, 4 more regions declared as hotspots

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 3 (PTI):** No new positive cases of COVID-19 were reported in Kerala on Sunday, even as the government declared four more regions in the state as hotspots, taking the total to 84.

The total of number of affected people in the state remains 499.

The state had on May 1 reported no fresh cases of the virus, even as one person tested positive for the disease on Saturday.

“One person from Kasaragod, who was under treatment in Kannur, was cured of coronavirus on Sunday and there are no fresh cases of COVID-19 in the state today,” Health Minister K K Shailaja said in a



medical bulletin.

Till now, 401 people have been cured in the state and there are 95 under treatment in Kerala.

“As of today, there are 21,720 people under observation in the state, out of which 388 are in isolation wards of various hospitals.

Till now, 32,217 samples have been sent for testing,” she said.

The government has declared four more regions in state as hotspots, taking the total number to 84.

Kannur has 37 positive cases, the highest in the state, followed by Kottayam with 18 cases and Idukki and Kollam with 12 cases each.

## Migrant workers stage protests in two towns in Telananga



**HYDERABAD, MAY 3 (PTI):** Days after 1,200 migrant workers returned to their homes by a train from Telangana, scores of them staged a protest in two towns on Sunday, demanding they be allowed to leave for their native places, while rumours of operation of a special train led to many gathering here.

At Ramagundam in Pedapalli district, about 500 migrant workers staged a protest and argued with police when told that those wishing to leave have to apply for ‘e-passes’ to enable them to reach their respective states.

“They squatted on the road and argued with police personnel.

Anticipating violence and in order to prevent any law and order problem, police dispersed them,” a police official said.

Around 600 migrant

workers employed at a cotton mill in Urkonda in Nagarkurnool district staged a protest in front of the unit with the same demand.

Police explained to them that there are procedures to be followed and that they should apply for e-passes, after which they dispersed.

Meanwhile, over 1,000 migrant labourers assembled at Tolichowki area in Hyderabad to reach the railway station following rumours that the government would operate special trains for them.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (West Zone) A R Srinivas told reporters that the workers from Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka, employed at various establishments in the city, gathered in the area following the rumours.

“We collected their names and told them that as and when arrangements for trains and buses are made, we will inform them,” he said.

Police also assured them that arrangements would be made for them to get food, following which they left, he said.

Police had on Saturday said that those stranded in Telangana and intending to leave for their native states can apply for e-pass by submitting the required information at <https://tsp.koovid.ai/epass>.

“After due verification ur E-PASS will b sent to u, to move ahead,” Telangana Director General of Police (DGP) M Mahendar Reddy had tweeted.

In another tweet on Sunday, Reddy said “Those who have already applied will receive

E-PASS at the earliest possible hour.

Due to heavy load of hits, some issues still persist & our teams are on it to restore the services by best.

Hope u all understand the concern behind this initiation & u all are requested to support”, he said.

Meanwhile, several people, including women and children from Andhra Pradesh alleged that though they had collected the e-passes, they were stopped by Andhra Pradesh police at different areas on the Telangana-Andhra Pradesh border.

The Railways on Friday ran its first special train to ferry 1,200 stranded migrants from Lingampally in Telangana to Hatia in Jharkhand since its services were suspended due to the coronavirus lockdown.

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*Sparring in times of social distancing: Not for boxers till guidelines on safety in place*

**NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** There is still some time before training resumes at national camps but even when it does, boxers will not engage in any sparring till clear guidelines are in place to ensure their safety in a world scarred by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Six-time world champion M C Mary Kom has made it clear that she won't recommend sparring at a time when even a touch of the hand is being seen as potentially infection-causing.

"For the time being, I don't see any sparring happening in training at least, I would be totally against it. I believe training itself will become very individualistic," she told PTI in a recent interaction.

Sports minister Kiren Rijju, following an online interaction with the Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh and the boxers, including Mary Kom, on Sunday said all necessary precautions will be put in place before sparring can commence again.

"We will have to discuss with technical officials, high performance directors and most importantly health professionals to assess the precautions we have to put in place before our athletes begin practising with their sparring partners," he said.

"We have to do thorough medical check-ups, put the partners in quarantine if needed before training can begin," he added.

The minister, earlier in the day, said national camps, shut since since mid-March due to the coronavirus-forced lockdown, will restart in a phased manner by the end of this month at least for Olympic-bound athletes.

Indian Boxing's High Performance Director Santiago Nieva told PTI that camps, when they resume, will not have sparring sessions unless clear instructions are provided on the protocol to follow.

"There will not be any sparring without a protocol in place," he said.

"In my opinion, in a closed environment, from which nobody goes out after checking in, sparring can take place. We just have to ensure that the selected group is isolated from others," he added.

The deadly infection, which has changed the world in a matter of months, has caused over 2 lakh deaths across the globe.

In India, the death toll has crossed 1300 and more than 39,000 have been infected by the virus which originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in November last year.

# Pogba using lockdown to prepare for return after injury woes

**LONDON, MAY 3 (AFP):** Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba is using the coronavirus lockdown to step up his return to fitness after an injury-plagued season.

Pogba had made just eight appearances for United this season before the health crisis forced the suspension of the Premier League in March.

The French World Cup winner hasn't played a single match in 2020 due to his persistent ankle problems.

His last appearance came in a December 26 win over Newcastle, but Pogba has been keeping fit during the virus break and hopes to be ready if the Premier League can return in the summer.

"I have a little home gym in my house," Pogba told United's website.



"I can do some training, some running, some bike, go outside and do some things with the ball. I am just keeping busy and keeping

healthy.

"We have got to stay motivated, there is no other choice. It is a period and we don't know until when it will be like this, but I still

have goals in my head and one day hopefully this (pandemic) will stop.

"And then we have to get back on the pitch, so we have to be ready.

## I thought of committing suicide thrice, reveals Shami

**NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** In a startling revelation, India speedster Mohammed Shami has claimed that he thought of committing suicide thrice while battling personal issues a few years ago, forcing his family to keep a watch over him at all times.

He said his family members feared he "might jump" from their 24th floor apartment.

Shami, one of India's leading bowlers in recent years, opened up on his personal and professional life during an Instagram chat with teammate and limited overs squads' vice-captain Rohit Sharma.

"I think if my family had not supported me back then I would have lost my cricket. I thought of committing suicide three times during that period due



to severe stress and personal problems," Shami revealed during the session on Saturday.

Now one of the mainstays of Indian bowling attack across formats, the 29-year-old was struggling to focus on his cricket, then.

"I was not thinking about cricket at all. We

were living on the 24th floor. They (family) were scared I might jump from the balcony. My brother supported me a lot.

"My 2-3 friends used to stay with me for 24 hours. My parents asked me to focus on cricket to recover from that phase and not think about anything else. I started training then and

sweated it out a lot at an academy in Dehradun," Shami said.

In March 2018, Shami's wife Hasin Jahan had accused him of domestic violence and lodged a complaint with the police, following which the India player and his brother were booked under relevant sections.

The upheaval in his personal life forced

"For myself, I have been out for a long time as well, so for me I just want to come back playing football."

Pogba, 27, has been in regular contact with his United team-mates during the lockdown as they follow the club's fitness regime from home.

Linked with a move away from fifth-placed United earlier this season, Pogba's presence would boost their bid for Champions League qualification if matches can be played again eventually.

"My advice first of all is to stay safe, stay at home and keep practising," Pogba said.

"There is always a way to work, you can work with anything you have at home, you can still do sit-ups, push-ups.

Sweat and saliva aren't big requirements in white-ball cricket, feels Jaydev Unadkat



**NEW DELHI, MAY 3 (PTI):** There is a raging debate on whether the use of sweat and saliva should be banned once cricket resumes after the COVID-19 pandemic but seamer Jaydev Unadkat feels that these components won't make much of a difference with white ball.

Unadkat, who has played 7 ODIs and 10 T20 Internationals for India, is a sought-after name in the IPL and plies his trade for Rajasthan Royals.

"I think white ball won't be a problem as a whole. Even in ODIs, you will be using two new balls 25 overs each. Reverse swing has never been a big factor in white-ball cricket. Even the new ball doesn't require any sweat or saliva as far as white ball is concerned," Unadkat told PTI during an interaction.

The Ranji Trophy-winning Saurashtra captain said the reason behind that is that the quote of white lacquer requires little or no sweat or saliva for swing.

"White lacquer remains shiny even if you just rub it on your trousers while for red ball, the red lacquer and the red leather demands that we shine it more with saliva and sweat," the left-arm seamer said.

That's the reason, he feels, that in limited over contests, it will be a lesser risk for bowlers and can be started before one gets to the Test and first-class games.

"If we are starting with white-ball contests, we will surely have an advantage as saliva and sweat are as big a factor as it could be in red-ball cricket."

Even for red-ball cricket, Unadkat feels that precautions will be necessary only if cricket starts before the pandemic have subsided completely.

"If we start closed doors, then probably certain precautions will be mandatory."

Unadkat says that a prolonged break also means that he will be on even keel with some of the other bowlers who would be vying for their places in the Indian team for the World T20.

In fact, had the IPL started on March 29, Unadkat would have barely got three weeks rest after a gruelling domestic season where he carried the burden of Saurashtra bowling.

"To be honest, the big break evens out a lot of things as far as team selection is concerned. A lot will depend on can carry the form through the break and who can come out sooner.

"You can't really judge now as you dont know how big the break will be. Even if I don't get match time sooner, if we get practice time sooner, it won't take much time to get back the rhythm."

While remaining fit has been a requirement, Unadkat has taken time out to pursue another vocation, which is learning guitar.

It was his fiancée Rinny who encouraged him to take up online guitar classes along with her.

"I had done a a few classes in the past but then lost touch a couple of years back. Luckily my fiancée is also a guitar fan and has taken lessons in the past and both of of us decided to enrol for online classes.

"Two notations that I am currently trying to pick up are Ben King's Stand By Me and John Legend's All of Me are some tunes that I am picking up. Still a little difficult," Unadkat said.

While the fingers strum the strings of guitar, they also want to feel the seam of five and half ounce of hard cherry.

"Now, after more than one month, I am missing being out there on the field and at the same time I know that we have not experienced anything like this before. I think we have to support each other as we go through this.

## Rohit has an edge over Kohli in terms of impact in white-ball format: Gambhir

**NEW DELHI, MAY 03 (PTI):** Former India opener Gautam Gambhir feels that Rohit Sharma has been able to make more impact in white ball cricket compared to Virat Kohli despite Indian skipper's staggering statistics in shorter formats.

Gambhir, however, believes that Kohli will end up scoring more runs than Rohit.

"... for me white-ball cricket is all about impact. Kohli will end up getting many more runs than Rohit, and Kohli is among the greatest right now, but Rohit has an edge over Kohli because of the impact he has," Gambhir told Sports Tak, according to India Today website.

"I think he (Rohit) is the best white-ball cricketer in the world right now. He is not the greatest overall but at the moment he is the best. He is the only player to have hit 3 ODI double hundreds, 5 World Cup hundreds (in one edition) and he is also the only player, who once gets past 100-run mark,

people say that he missed a double century."

Talking further about Kohli and Rohit, the 2011 World Cup winner said, "It is very difficult to compare both of them. Virat Kohli is unbelievable. His stats prove that.

"But when your reputation is such that when you get out after a hundred, people say he has missed out on double hundred, that speaks volumes about you."

The 33-year-old Rohit has scored 9115 runs from 224 ODIs at an average of 49.27 at a strike rate of 88.92. He has 29 hundreds and 43 fifties to his name. In T20Is, Rohit has scored 2273 runs from 108 matches at an average of 32.62 and a strike rate of 138.78.

The 31-year-old Kohli, on the other hand, has scored 11867 runs from 248 ODIs at an average of 59.33 at a strike rate of 93.25. He has scored 43 centuries and 58 half centuries. Kohli has also scored 2794 runs from 82 T20Is at an average of 50.80 and a strike rate of 138.24.

The 38-year-old



Gambhir, now a BJP Member of Parliament, gave credit to Mahendra Singh Dhoni for Rohit's successful career.

"Where Rohit is today, it is because of MS Dhoni. One good thing about MS was that he always kept Rohit in the talks, even if was not part of the team, he was always part of the group. He never let him get sidelined," Gambhir said.

It's the backing of captain that makes or breaks a player, Gambhir said. "You can talk about

the selection committee and team management, but if you do not have the backing from your captain than it is all useless. Everything is in the hands of the captain. How MS Dhoni had backed Rohit Sharma over a period of time, I do not think any player has been given such support."

Rohit made his ODI debut for India in 2007, but it was only after Dhoni promoted him as an opener in 2013 that his career turned around.

He said Kohli and Rohit should groom youngsters in the current team in the same way Dhoni groomed them.

"Rohit is the prime example of how a player's fortunes can turn around if he is nurtured by the seniors. I hope the young cricketers in the current generation, be it Shubman Gill or Sanju Samson, they also get similar kind of support.

"And now when Rohit is a senior, I expect him to back youngsters.

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# UK doctor alerts Indians to poor diet link with COVID-19 deaths

By ADITI KHANNA

**LONDON, MAY 3 (PTI):** Poor diet is a major cause behind the COVID-19 deaths and the Indians must urgently cut down on ultra-processed food to build resilience against the deadly virus, a leading Indian-origin cardiologist in the UK has cautioned.

Dr Aseem Malhotra, who is among the UK's National Health Service (NHS) frontline medics and also a professor of evidence based medicine, said that obesity and excess weight were the "elephant in the room" that need to be addressed as a major factor behind the deaths from the coronavirus.

"India is particularly vulnerable, having a very high prevalence of lifestyle related diseases," says the 42-year-old medic, who is on a mission to spread awareness around lifestyle changes as a major weapon in the fight against coronavirus.

"Specifically, conditions such as Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease are three of the major risk factors for death from COVID-19. This is rooted in excess body fat, a cluster of conditions known as a metabolic syndrome," he noted.

Western countries such as the US and the

UK have seen some of the highest death rates from COVID-19 in the world, which are likely to correlate with unhealthy lifestyles.

"The elephant in the room is that the baseline general health in many Western populations was already in a horrendous state to begin with. In the UK and US, more than 60 per cent of adults are overweight or obese," he pointed out.

In the US, less than one in eight people are metabolically healthy, which means having normal blood pressure, having a weight circumference if you are a man less than a 102cm and less than 88cm for a woman and healthy levels of blood sugar and good cholesterol.

"There's no such thing as a healthy weight, only a healthy person. If people try to maintain all these metabolic health parameters through a healthy lifestyle, this could potentially be achieved within a few weeks of just a change of diet," says Malhotra, who is from New Delhi.

A recent report in the 'Nature' science journal revealed that patients with Type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome might have up to 10 times greater risk of death when they contract COVID-19 and called



for mandatory glucose and metabolic control of Type 2 diabetes patients to improve outcomes.

Malhotra warns that the medications that are used for Type 2 diabetes and many of the other conditions have "very, very marginal effects" in terms of improving lifespan or reducing risk of death, which most people are not made aware of, and they also come with side effects.

"This is not to say that medications should be discontinued but the lifestyle changes are considerably more impactful on health and will reduce the need for medication. The positive news is that you can reverse this, but it is not being made aware

to patients or practised by the majority of physicians as lifestyle prescriptions in India," he said.

Based on his own clinical experience and also reflected across medical literature, the expert recommends giving up ultra-processed foods, which covers any packaged food that comes with five or more ingredients, because usually these are high in sugar, starch, unhealthy oils, additives and preservatives.

In the UK, these foods now represent more than 50 per cent of the diet, which he says is "really quite staggering and

shocking".

Similar figures are there for the US and probably to some degree reflect why there is specifically more increased death rates from COVID-19 in these countries.

"So, what I would advise the Indian population is to completely cut out these types of food from their diet, make sure that you are cooking from scratch, do not snack," the doctor said.

"Beyond that, the other issue in Indian diet is that we have a very high intake of refined carbohydrate foods, these are also foods that are particularly harmful in excess because they raise glucose and insulin

Europe prepares for more lockdown easing as virus hopes rise

Europe on Sunday prepared for a further cautious easing of coronavirus restrictions following signs the pandemic may be slowing, with hard-hit Italy set to follow Spain in allowing people outside.

More than 243,000 people have been killed and 3.4 million infected worldwide by the virus, which has left half of humanity under some form of lockdown and pushed the global economy towards its worst downturn since the Great Depression.

With signs that the spread of the contagion has been brought under control, parts of Europe, Asia and the United States have begun to lift restrictions to try to inject life into economies crippled by weeks of closures and ease the pressure from populations wearying of confinement.

After a two-month lockdown in Italy -- with the second-highest number of virus deaths in the world -- people on Monday will be allowed to stroll in parks and visit relatives. Restaurants can open for takeaway and wholesale stores can resume business, but there was some confusion about the extent of the easing.

"I'm hoping this morning's paper will clear up some of the many questions about what we can and can't do," said Pietro Garlanti, a 53-year-old cleaner, as he queued at a kiosk. "I want to take my old mum to the sea-

side, can I?"

Italian authorities have stressed that preventative measures are still needed.

"On the one hand, we're super excited for the reopening, we're already organising various activities the kids will be able to do with their grandparents outdoors, workshops in the garden, that sort of thing. The kids can't wait to see them," said Marghe Lodoli, who has three children.

"On the other hand, it's disorientating. The rules are not clear, and we're not sure if just using common sense will do." Elsewhere in Europe, Germany will continue its easing on Monday, while Slovenia, Poland and Hungary will allow public spaces and businesses to partially reopen. With health experts warning the disease could hit hard once again, governments are sticking to measures to control the spread of the virus and more testing to try to track infections even as they relax curbs on movement.

Face masks will be mandatory on public transport starting Monday in Spain, where people were allowed to go outdoors on Saturday after a 48-day lockdown.

- Lockdowns ease in Asia -

With pressure growing on governments worldwide to balance public health requirements with the need to ease intense economic pain, some nations in Asia announced similar measures.

## North and South Korea exchange gunfire at border: Seoul

North Korean troops fired multiple gunshots towards the South in the DMZ dividing the peninsula on Sunday, prompting South Korean forces to fire back, Seoul said.

The rare exchange of gunfire comes a day after North Korean state media reported that leader Kim Jong Un had made his first public appearance in nearly three weeks following an absence that triggered intense speculation about his health and fears about the stability of the isolated nation.

A South Korean guard post was hit by several shots from the North, the joint chiefs of staff (JCS) in Seoul said in a statement, adding no casualties were reported in the South.

"Our military responded with two rounds of gunfire and a warning announcement," the JCS said.

The South Korean military later said the North Korean gunshots were "not deemed intentional", according to the Yonhap news agency.

The two neighbours remain technically at

war, after fighting in the Korean War was halted with an armistice in 1953.

Despite its name, the demilitarized zone is one of the most fortified places on earth, replete with minefields and barbed-wire fences.

The last time the two sides exchanged fire on the border was in 2014, with North Korean soldiers also shooting at a defector in 2017 but the South did not fire back.

- Swirling health rumours -

Easing military tensions on their border was one of the agreements reached between Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in at a summit in Pyongyang in September 2018.

But most of the deals have not been acted on by North Korea, with Pyongyang largely cutting off contact with Seoul.

North Korea's discussions with the United States over Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal are also at a standstill, despite

three meetings between Kim and US President Donald Trump.

The uncertainty around the process would have increased had Kim been incapacitated or dead as rumoured in recent weeks.

Speculation about Kim's health has been swirling since his conspicuous no-show at April 15 celebrations for the birthday of his grandfather, the North's founder -- the most important day in the country's political calendar.

His absence triggered a series of unconfirmed reports over his condition, while the United States and South Korea insisted they had no information to believe any of the conjecture was true.

However, North Korean state television on Friday showed Kim walking, smiling broadly and smoking a cigarette at what it said was the opening of a fertiliser factory.

A senior South Korean presidential official on Sunday brushed off rumours

that Kim had undergone surgery during his absence, saying they had enough grounds to believe he had not.

Trump on Saturday welcomed the leader's return.

"I, for one, am glad to see he is back, and well!" the president tweeted.

Before Kim's reappearance, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said last month that he remained hopeful a nuclear deal could be clinched with North Korea.

"Regardless of what transpires inside of North Korea with respect to their leadership, our mission remains the same -- to deliver on that commitment that Chairman Kim made with President Trump... (the) verified denuclearisation of North Korea," Pompeo told reporters.

"We are still hopeful that we'll find a path to negotiate that solution to get the outcome that is good for the American people, good for the North Korean people and for the whole world."

Asymptomatic cases refer to people who are tested COVID-19 positive but develop no symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat. However, they pose a risk of spreading the disease to others.

The novel coronavirus which originated from the Chinese city of Wuhan in December last year has claimed 243,829 lives and has infected over 3.4 million people, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

## China reports 14 new coronavirus cases, toll reaches 82,877

K J M VARMA

**BEIJING, MAY 3 (PTI):** China has reported 14 new COVID-19 cases, including 12 asymptomatic ones, taking the number infections in the country to 82,877 while over 4,630 people have succumbed to the deadly virus, health officials said on Sunday.

China's National Health Commission (NHC) said the two new confirmed cases were

reported on Saturday which included one imported and another locally transmitted.

The death toll remained 4,633 as no fatalities due to the coronavirus were reported on Saturday while the total number cases increased to 82,877 with 531 still undergoing treatment, it said.

China has reported a total of 1,672 imported cases so far, of which 451 Chinese coming from

abroad are still being treated with six in severe conditions, the NHC said.

Also on Saturday, 12 new asymptomatic cases were reported in China. So far, 968 asymptomatic cases, including 98 from abroad, are still under medical observation, it said. The central Hubei province which was cleared of confirmed COVID-19 cases on April 26, reported 651 asymptomatic infections as of Saturday.

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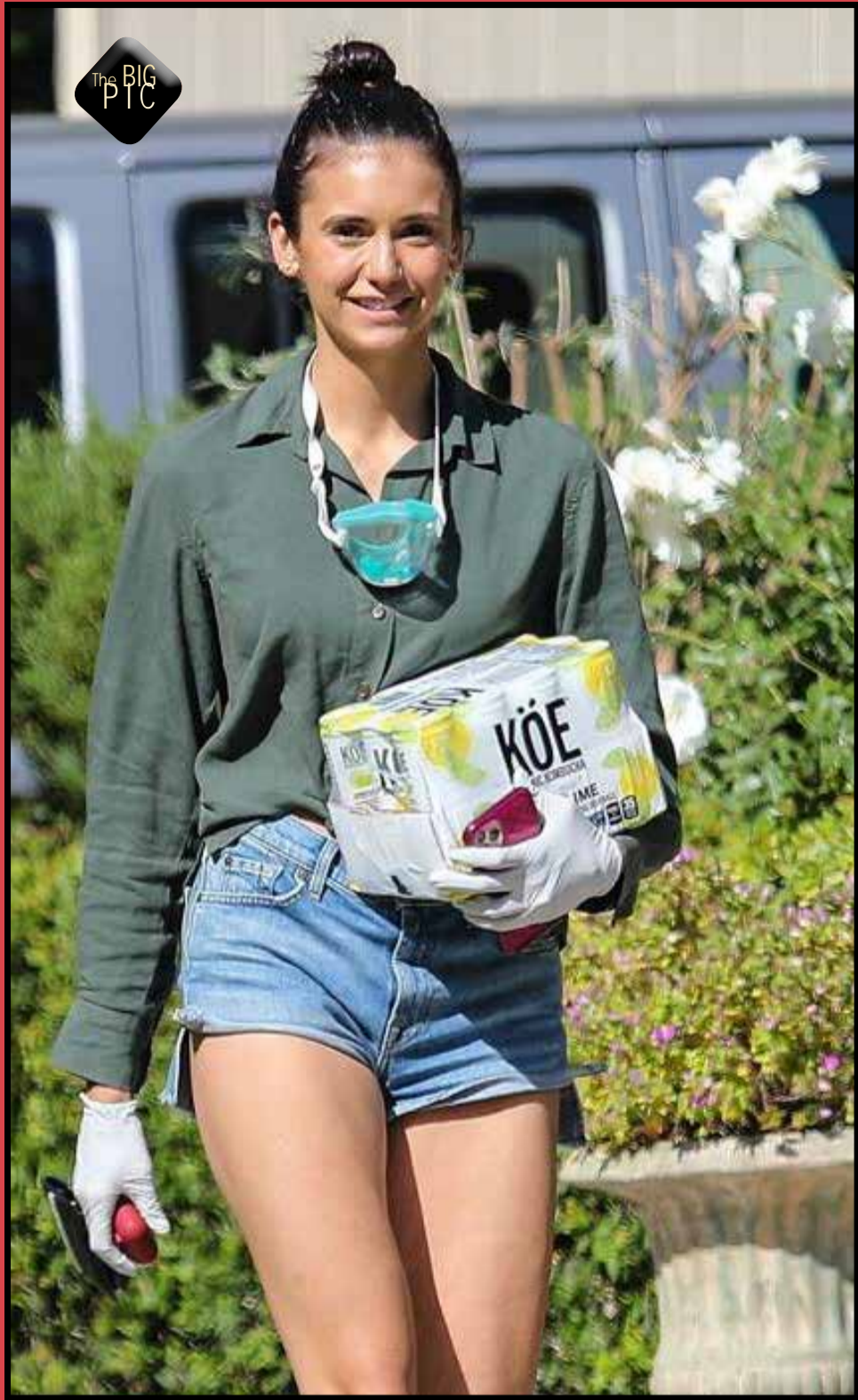
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**SUMMER FUN!** The Vampire Diaries actress, Nina Dobrev rocks some Daisy Dukes as she brings a case of kombucha to a friend's house in Santa Monica, Calif.

## Game of Thrones actor Hafthor Bjornsson breaks world record and deadlifts a mountain



As Gregor Clegane on Game of Thrones, Hafthor Bjornsson has shown the world feats of great strength. From crushing people's skulls like grapes to coming back from the dead, "The Mountain" showed his power time and time again. While resurrection might require some suspension of disbelief, Bjornsson's power is not just "movie magic." Winner of the World's Strongest Man Competition in 2018, he hasn't placed

lower than third since 2012. As of Saturday, he can add a new accomplishment: world record holder.

Reported by ESPN, Bjornsson set a new world record in the deadlift at 501 kilograms (1102.31 pounds). This defeats the previous record by Eddie Hall of England at 500 kilograms, which was set in 2016. You can check out the amazing feat in the video down below.

Following the performance, the 31-year

old Bjornsson said he was happy with the difference between his and Hall's lifts. "I believe today I could've done more, but what's the point? I'm happy with this. My family and friends, they were happy with this, and I've decided to call it." The approximately six 200-pound people he just deadlifted would probably be happy with it as well. With the world record in the deadlift completed, what's next for the Mountain? If we were to guess, probably an actual mountain.

## Chris Hemsworth Is "Blown Away" by Fan Response to 'Extraction'



The actor took to Instagram on Saturday to thank viewers for making the action thriller "the number one film on the planet right now."

Chris Hemsworth posted a video message to his Instagram on Saturday to thank fans for their overwhelming response to Extraction, the Netflix film he stars in from director Sam Hargrave and producers the Russo brothers.

The actor addressed his followers from a gym location among weights and equipment, seemingly before or after a workout. "Hey, what's up guys, I hope you're doing well. I just want to say a massive thank you to everyone who

checked out Extraction, you've made it the number one film on the planet right now, and it looks like it's going to be Netflix's biggest feature film of all time, which is absolutely mind blowing."

He went on to say, "We are blown away by the response and the support. On behalf of myself, the Russo Brothers, Netflix, our director Sam Hargrave, thank you so so much. We love you guys."

The action thriller bowed on the streaming platform last month and immediately attracted a wide viewership, "an estimated 90 million households in the first four weeks" of its release, according to a previous

post on Hemsworth's Instagram account.

He stars as mercenary Tyler Rake who embarks on a dangerous mission to rescue the kidnapped son of an imprisoned crime lord.

Later in the video message, Hemsworth briefly addressed the rumors of a sequel to Extraction, though didn't give anything away.

"There's been a lot of talk and questions about sequels and prequels and all sorts of things, and all I can say is who knows," said the actor. "But with this amount of support, it's something I will be pretty stoked to jump back into."

## Missouri Governor says concerts can be held in the state from Monday

Mike Parson is lifting the state's ban on concerts and large gatherings from tomorrow (May 4)

Missouri Governor Mike Parson has set out a new plan to allow live concerts to be held in the state as of tomorrow (May 4).

The news comes as part of a Show Me Strong plan set out by Parson to gradually reopen the state's businesses as the recovery from coronavirus continues.

According to the new plan, large events and gatherings will no longer be banned in the state, but "seating shall be spaced out according to social distancing requirements" at any concerts or cinema screenings.

"There are currently no limitations on social gatherings as long as necessary

precautions are taken and six feet of distance can be maintained between individuals and/or families," Show Me Strong reads.

Despite this, many local government agencies in Missouri's major cities – St. Louis, Kansas City and more – will stick to their own reopening plan, not welcome back live concerts or large gatherings just yet, with St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson saying: "We will continue to be guided by data, not dates."

Speaking to Billboard, Matt Gerding, who works for FPC Live, the company that runs the Blue Note venue in Columbia, said: "We are currently assessing the details of the announcement and the latest information from health experts."

"We hope to chart a path to

reopening as soon as possible but have not determined the timing of that just yet."

Meanwhile, healthcare experts in the UK have predicted that live concerts will not return until Autumn 2021.

Bioethicist and professor of healthcare management Zeke Emanuel says he has "no idea" how promoters that are rescheduling arts and music events for later this year "think that's a plausible possibility".

"Larger gatherings – conferences, concerts, sporting events – when people say they're going to reschedule this conference or graduation event for October 2020, I have no idea how they think that's a plausible possibility. I think those things will be the last to return."

## Priyanka Chopra Admits That Quarantine Can Change Lives

Some might have a hard time spending all of their time indoors, while others see that as an opportunity to learn something new or change their view on some things in life.

Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas are undoubtedly taking the best out of all the free time they have while isolating together.

She recently told Vogue that Nick has a new role in their home, and that is to teach Priyanka to play the piano.

"I've never played, but I've always wanted to learn an instrument, so I make him give me a half-hour or 45-minute

lesson every day," she said.

"I've taken a hip-hop dance class, too, because I miss dancing!" Chopra added.

Some other things changed too. The 37-year-old actress claims that she learned something new, as she said the following: "Being in this quarantine has made me realize that some of the stresses we put on ourselves in our normal lives may or may not be important."

"It's good to take a breather, take stock of your life, and tell your loved ones you love them," she added.

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### ARIES:

Today you might find that a long-term dream finally comes true. Perhaps a publication you respect wants to pay you for your writing, photography, or graphic design. Or maybe you realize that a particularly difficult yoga pose or physical you've been attempting that seemed impossible a month ago is now actually achievable! Or perhaps you and your partner may finally be on the same page. Whatever it is, take a moment to appreciate where you're at and what it took to get you there, before setting your sites on the next mountain peak you want to climb.

### TAURUS:

Some strange and rather gloomy dreams could come your way tonight, Taurus. They could, if you let them, catapult you into a rather depressed mood during the day. Writing them down might help exorcise these difficult emotions. You could also be a bit depressed over money. This isn't a good day to make investments, start a new business, or open up a savings account. Instead, be thankful for what you have and look for ways to use your resources wisely.

### GEMINI:

A lack of communication with an unhappy family member could have you feeling a little downhearted, Gemini. You might wonder if

you've done something to offend this person. Chances are you haven't. The best way to handle situations like this is to encourage the person to communicate with you. If there's no response, wait a day or so and ask again. The gloomy mood will pass, so don't make yourself crazy over it. The truth will be revealed in time

### CANCER:

Professional, creative, or financial advancement could be on your mind today, Cancer. You might try to visualize the next steps and anticipate tasks that take more effort and concentration than you're used to. Don't panic. It's better to not push yourself so hard. Wait a few days until the planets relax a little and just do what you need to do - no more, no less. You'll be successful in the long run

### LEO:

You might decide to spend a large part of the day working on a project that requires a lot of mental energy. Plans to spend some time with either a close friend or lover might not turn out to be quite what you'd hoped, Leo. Your friend could be in a rather gloomy mood. A relaxing evening, perhaps streaming a concert or funny movie, can release tension and melt grumpy moods into relaxed and silly ones. Enjoy!

### VIRGO:

A friend who is in a gloomy state of mind may reach out to you today, Virgo, and likely need some cheering up. Do the best you can: actively listen and lend them your compassion. Once they've opened up to you, you two may find that playing a game together online or taking a virtual tour of a museum you've always wanted to go to together are great ways to lift your spirits.

### LIBRA:

Today is no time for dreaming, Libra! Quite the contrary. You can expect to have to settle several minor technical problems involving communications or transmissions. On the whole, it will be a somewhat trying day, but at least your mind will be occupied, leaving no room for the difficult internal questions that have been bothering you so much lately. Your mind will enjoy being engaged with practical tasks it can solve, instead of fretting over a future it cannot predict but tries so desperately to.

### SCORPIO:

Gloom over money matters might catch up with you at some point today, Scorpio. A little caution might be in order, especially regarding impulse buying or purchasing

luxuries. Today would be a good day to go through your paid subscription services and decide what's truly necessary and what can go.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Today you might find yourself feeling a little low, Sagittarius, but it doesn't seem as if there's any real reason for it. You may just have had a bad night and need some extra sleep. Some good news from far away could cheer you up in the afternoon. You might receive an invitation to reconnect with a dear friend. Say yes! By interacting with someone you've known and loved for a long time, who has known and loved you in return, you will get back in touch with your core essence and find that your spirits are lifted.

### CAPRICORN:

Old memories, traumas, and phobias from the past could affect your mood today, Capricorn. You might feel depressed without really knowing why. An event in your life has brought these feelings near the surface without revealing the source. If you've had any disturbing dreams or visions lately, write them down. They might offer a clue as to what's bothering you. Meditation or free association could also bring the insight and release you

need.

### AQUARIUS:

A friend might be feeling a little depressed today and need some cheering up. First: listen to what's bothering them without minimizing their feelings or lecturing them on how to fix it. Acknowledge their feelings as valid, and then see if together you can come up with a plan of action for helping them to feel better. Sometimes all a person needs is contact with someone who loves them and a good laugh. If you feel your friend's problems are too big for you to handle, enlist their other loved ones and the help of a professional if necessary to come up with a plan of action and support

### PISCES:

When we think we have found our path, we naturally want to start to walk down it, Pisces. Don't be afraid if you haven't fully mastered your craft yet, or aren't a top expert in your field. Mastery and expertise come with taking things one step and one day at a time. Stay your course! If you keep your head down and keep working, instead of constantly looking at your far off destination, you will be surprised at how far you get. Desire is what creates aptitude, not the reverse.